

Fragment of a letter of Eusebius of Caesarea to Alexander of Alexandria (*Dok.* 9)

Reference	<i>Dok.</i> 9; <i>Urk.</i> 7
Incipit	Μεθ' ὄσης μὲν ἀγωνίας
Date	c. 320
Ancient source	2nd Council of Nicaea, Session (<i>Actio</i>) 6
Modern editions	ACO ² 3:734-736 (E. Lamberz) AW 3.1:14-1

The Seventh Ecumenical Council was held in Nicaea in AD 787. The main reason for the council was to once and for all deal with the long-running controversy about the use of icons. During the sixth session (*actio*), Bishop Gregory of Neocaesarea and a certain deacon Epiphanius were appointed to read out loud in turns the various testimonies that had accumulated on the subject. One of those testimonies was a letter of the long-dead Eusebius of Caesarea to Alexander of Alexandria in which Eusebius tries to clarify the teaching of Arius and his party. Except for this fragment, the letter has been lost, but it seems quite clear that it was sent fairly early on in the controversy as a response to an accusatory letter of Alexander. In section 2, Eusebius gives a lengthy quote directly from Arius's early letter (*Dok.* 1, §2).

The text below is taken from Lamberz's edition of the Second Council of Nicaea (ACO, Series 2, 3:734-736). The FCC translation below is by Aaron West. See also the recent translation of R. Price *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, TTH 68, 512-513.

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1. Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ πρὸς τὸν ἅγιον Ἀλέξανδρον ἐπιστολῇ τὸν καθηγητὴν τοῦ μεγάλου Ἀθανασίου, ἧς ἡ ἀρχή·	1. Similarly also in his letter to St. Alexander (the instructor of the great Athanasius) which begins:
Μεθ' ὄσης μὲν ἀγωνίας καὶ μεθ' ὄσης φροντίδος ἐπὶ ταῦτα ἦλθον τὰ γράμματα· (τρανότατα βλασφημῶν οὕτω φησὶ περὶ τοῦ Ἀρείου καὶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ·)	I came to [write] this letter with great anxiety and concern... (He clearly is speaking blasphemy when he says the following concerning Arius and his party:)
2. Κατηγορεῖ αὐτῶν τὰ σα γράμματα ὡς λεγόντων, ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος γέγονεν ὡς εἷς τῶν πάντων. οἱ δὲ προήνεγκαν ἑαυτῶν γραμματεῖον, ὃ πρὸς σὲ πεποιήκασιν, ἐν ᾧ τὴν ἑαυτῶν πίστιν ἐκθέμενοι αὐτοῖς ῥήμασιν τάδε ὡμολόγουν: “Τὸν νόμου καὶ προφητῶν καὶ καινῆς διαθήκης θεὸν γεννήσαντα υἱὸν μονογενῆ πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων, δι' οὗ καὶ	2. Your letters have misrepresented them [the Arians] as though they were saying that since the Son came into being from nothing, he must therefore be just like the rest of creation. But they have brought forth their own document, which they have written for you, in which they explain their faith, confessing it with these very words: “The God of the Law and of the Prophets and of the New Testament begat an only begotten son before time began, through whom he also made the

<p>τοὺς αἰῶνας καὶ τὰ πάντα πεποίηκε, γεννήσαντα δὲ οὐ δοκῆσει, ἀλλὰ ἀληθεία, ὑποστήσαντα ἰδίῳ θελήματι, ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον, κτίσμα τοῦ θεοῦ τέλειον, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἔν τῶν κτισμάτων.”</p>	<p>ages [Heb1:2] and all things, begetting him not in appearance but in reality, causing him to exist by his own will. He is unchanging and unchangeable, God's perfect creation, but not a creation in the same way like one of God's other creations.”</p>
<p>εἰ δὴ οὖν τὰ παρ' αὐτῶν γράμματα ἀληθεύει, πάντως δὲ καὶ παρὰ σοὶ φέρεται, ἐν ᾧ ὁμολογοῦσι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων, δι' οὗ καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας πεποίηκεν, εἶναι ἄτρεπτον καὶ κτίσμα τοῦ θεοῦ τέλειον, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἔν τῶν κτισμάτων.</p>	<p>And so surely indeed their writings speak the truth, since these opinions are certainly held by you also when they confess that the son of God existed before time began, that God also made the ages through him, that he is unchanging, God's perfect creation, but not like God's other creations.</p>
<p>3. ἡ δὲ σὴ ἐπιστολὴ κατηγορεῖ αὐτῶν ὡς ἂν λεγόντων, ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς γέγονεν ὡς ἔν τῶν κτισμάτων. αὐτῶν τοῦτο μὴ λεγόντων, ἀλλὰ σαφῶς διορισμένων, ὅτι “Οὐχ ὡς ἔν τῶν κτισμάτων,” ὅρα εἴ μὴ εὐθὺς πάλιν αὐτοῖς ἀφορμὴ δίδοται εἰς τὸ ἐπιλαβέσθαι καὶ διαβάλλειν ὁρμᾶσθαι ὅσα καὶ θέλουσι.</p>	<p>3. But your letter surely misrepresents them as saying that the son is the same as the other created things. They are not saying this! But they clearly draw a distinction, saying that he is, “not like one of the created things.” Take care, then, lest immediately again a pretext be found for arresting them and keeping them (from moving about as much as they wish).</p>
<p>4. πάλιν αὐτοὺς ἠτιῶ λέγοντας ὅτι “Ὁ ὠ τὸν μὴ ὄντα ἐγέννησε.” θαυμάζω δέ, εἰ δύναται τις ἄλλως εἰπεῖν. εἰ γὰρ εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ ὦν, δηλὸν ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ γέγονε πᾶν ὄ, τι καὶ ἔστι μετ' αὐτόν· εἰ δὲ μὴ μόνος αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ ὦν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ἦν ὁ ὦν, καὶ πῶς τὸν ὄντα ὁ ὦν ἐγέννησεν; οὕτως γὰρ ἂν δύο εἶη τὰ ὄντα.</p>	<p>4. Again, you accuse them of saying, “He-who-was begat he-who-was-not”? I would be astonished if someone were able to speak differently. For if there is only one who exists [eternally], it is clear that everything which exists has come into being from him, whatever indeed exists after him. If it were not he alone who exists eternally, but the son also exists eternally, how indeed could one who exists beget another who already exists? It would have to follow that there would actually be two who exist eternally.</p>
<p>5. [καὶ ταῦτα μὲν Εὐσέβιος πρὸς τὸν αἰοίδιμον Ἀλέξανδρον: ἀλλὰ καὶ ἕτεροι ἐπιστολαὶ αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν αὐτὸν ἱερὸν ἄνδρα φέρονται, ἐν αἷς εὑρῆνται ποικίλαι βλασφημίαι τοὺς περὶ Ἀρειῶν διεκδικοῦσαι.</p>	<p>5. [So wrote Eusebius to the famous Alexander. But also other letters of his were taken to that holy man, in which were found other various blasphemies, which those of the Arian party defend]</p>