
Letter from Arius to Eusebius Bishop of Nicomedia c.318 AD

Text taken from J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius: Documents illustrating the history of the Church to AD 337* (London: SPCK, 1987), pp.324-5

1 To his very dear lord, the faithful man of God, orthodox Eusebius, (from) Arius, unjustly
2 persecuted by Pope Alexander on account of that all-conquering truth which you also
3 defend as with a shield, sends greeting in the Lord.
4

5 As Ammonius, my father, was going to Nicomedia, I thought it right and my bounden duty
6 to greet you by him, and also to make mention of that inborn love and kindly disposition
7 which you bear towards the brethren for the sake of God and of his Christ; I want to tell
8 you that the bishop makes great havoc of us and persecutes us severely, and is in full sail
9 against us: he has driven us out of the city as atheists, because we do not concur in what
10 he publicly preaches, namely, that 'God has always been, and the Son has always been:
11 Father and Son exist together: the Son has his existence unbegotten along with God, ever
12 being begotten, without having been begotten: God does not precede the Son by thought
13 or by any interval however small: God has always been, the Son has always been; the Son
14 is from God himself.'

15
16 Eusebius, your brother in Caesarea,¹ Theodotus, Paulinus, Athanasius,² Gregory, Aetius,
17 and all the bishops of the East, have been made anathema³ because they say that God has
18 existence without beginning prior to his Son: except Philogonius, Hellenicus, and
19 Macarius, who are heretical fellows, and uncatechized. One of them says that the Son is
20 an effusion, another that he is an emission, another that he is also unbegotten.
21

22 These are impieties to which we could not listen, even though the heretics should threaten
23 us with a thousand deaths. But as for us, what do we say, and believe, and what have we
24 taught, and what do we teach? That the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the
25 unbegotten; nor from some lower essence (i.e. from matter); but that by his own (i.e. the
26 Father's) will and counsel he has subsisted before time, and before ages as God *full <of*
27 *grace and truth>*, only-begotten, unchangeable.
28

29 And that he was not, before he was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established. For
30 he was not unbegotten. We are persecuted because we say, 'the Son had a beginning, but
31 God is without beginning'. This is really the cause of our persecution; and, likewise,
32 because we say that he is from nothing. And this we say, because he is neither part of God,
33 nor of any lower essence. For this are we persecuted; the rest you know. Farewell in the
34 Lord. As a fellow-disciple of Lucian, and as a truly pious man, as your name implies,
35 remember our afflictions.

¹ The Church historian

² Not St Athanasius!

³ Anathema = "an accursed thing"

