

Letter of Arius and his fellows to Alexander of Alexandria (*Dok. 1*)

Reference	<i>Dok. 1; Urk. 6; CPG 2026</i>
Incipit	Ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν
Date	318-320
Ancient sources	Athanasius, <i>De Synodis</i> 16.2-6 Epiphanius, <i>Panarion</i> 69.7-8 Hilary, <i>De Trinitate</i> , 4.12-13, 6.5??
Modern editions	<i>AW</i> 2.7:243-244; <i>AW</i> 3.1:3 Holl, <i>Epiphanius, 3: Ancoratus und Panarion. GCS</i> 37. (1933): 158-159.

The documents that survive from this early period are difficult to date or even to place in order. At some point early on, however, it seems that Arius sent the letter below to Alexander to clarify in writing what he did and did not teach. Already he has a following in Egypt, and he is able not only to say “This is *our* faith,” but to append the names of 5 presbyters/priests, 6 deacons, and several bishops.

A portion of the creed given in this document is quoted also by Eusebius of Caesarea in his [letter to Alexander of Alexandria \(*Dok. 9*\)](#). Lewis Ayres points out the difficulty in dating this document: “The question here turns on whether or not one reads this letter as conciliatory! (*Nicaea and its Legacy*, 17 n. 16). Rowan Williams (*Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, 96) notes that the similarity of the creed to the [creed of the council of Antioch \(*Dok. 20*\)](#) supports the claim of Arius that he is drawing on earlier statements of faith and teaching.

The letter has been preserved both by Athanasius and Epiphanius with only minor differences. The text given below is from *AW* 3.1:12-13 as edited by H.-G. Opitz. He provides the concluding greeting from the *Panarion* since the *De synodis* omits it (*AW* 2:244). Hilary gives a Latin translation of the creed twice (also without the concluding greeting) in his *De Trinitate* 4.12-13 and 6.5-6. The translation is that of G. Thompson (See also D. Robertson in *NPNF*² 4:458).

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Athanasius, <i>De Synodis</i> 16.2-5. (<i>AW</i> 2:7:243-4)	
2. Μακαρίῳ πάπα καὶ ἐπισκόπῳ ἡμῶν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ οἱ διάκονοι ἐν κυρίῳ χαίρειν.	2.The priests and deacons to our blessed father and bishop, Alexander; greetings in the Lord.
Ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν ἢ ἐκ προγόνων, ἦν καὶ ἀπὸ σοῦ μεμαθήκαμεν, μακάριε πάπα, ἔστιν αὕτη: οἶδαμεν ἓνα θεόν, μόνον ἀγέννητον, μόνον αἰδίων, μόνον ἀναρχον, μόνον ἀληθινόν, μόνον ἀθανάσιαν ἔχοντα, μόνον σοφόν, μόνον ἀγαθόν, μόνον δυνάστην, πάντων κριτὴν, διοικητὴν, οἰκονόμον, ἀτρεπτον καὶ	Our faith from our forefathers, which also we learned from you, blessed father, is this: We acknowledge One God, alone unbegotten, alone eternal, alone without beginning, alone true, alone having immortality, alone wise, alone good, alone sovereign, judge of all, governor, and provider, unalterable and unchangeable, just and good, God of the Law and the

<p>ἀναλλοίωτον, δίκαιον καὶ ἀγαθόν, νόμου καὶ προφητῶν καὶ καινῆς διαθήκης τοῦτον θεὸν γεννήσαντα υἱὸν μονογενῆ πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων, δι' οὗ καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας καὶ τὰ ὅλα πεποίηκες, γεννήσαντα δὲ οὐ δοκῆσει ἀλλὰ ἀληθεία, ὑποστήσαντα ἰδίῳ θελήματι ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον κτίσμα τοῦ θεοῦ τέλειον, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἐν τῶν κτισμάτων·</p>	<p>Prophets and the New Testament; he begot an only-begotten Son before time and the ages, through whom he made both the ages [Heb 1:2] and all that was made; who begot him not in appearance, but in reality; and that he made him subsist at his own will, unalterable and unchangeable, the perfect creature of God, but not as one of the creatures;</p>
<p>3. γέννημα, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἐν τῶν γεγεννημένων, οὐδ' ὡς Οὐαλεντίνος προβολὴν τὸ γέννημα τοῦ πατρὸς ἐδογματίσεν, οὐδ' ὡς Μανιχαῖος μέρος ὁμοούσιον τοῦ πατρὸς τὸ γέννημα εἰσηγήσατο, οὐδ' ὡς Σαβέλλιος τὴν μονάδα διαιρῶν υἰοπάτορα εἶπεν, οὐδ' ὡς Ἰέρακας λύχρον ἀπὸ λύχρου ἢ ὡς λαμπάδα εἰς δύο, οὐδὲ τὸν ὄντα πρότερον ὕστερον γεννηθέντα ἢ ἐπικτισθέντα εἰς υἱόν, ὡς καὶ σὺ αὐτός, μακάριε πάπα, κατὰ μέσην τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἐν συνεδρίῳ πλειστάκις τοὺς ταῦτα εἰσηγησαμένους ἀπηγόρευσας, ἀλλ' ὡς φαμεν θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸ χρόνων καὶ πρὸ αἰώνων κτισθέντα καὶ τὸ ζῆν καὶ τὸ εἶναι παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς εἰληφότα καὶ τὰς δόξας, συνυποστήσαντος αὐτῷ τοῦ πατρὸς.</p>	<p>3. offspring, but not as one of the other things begotten; nor as Valentinus pronounced that the offspring of the Father was an emanation; nor as the Manicheans taught that the offspring was a one-in-essence-portion of the Father; nor as Sabellius, dividing the Monad, speaks of a Son-Father; nor as Hieracas speaks of one torch [lit] from another, or as a lamp divided into two; nor that he who existed before was later generated or created anew into a Son, as you yourself, O blessed father, have often condemned both in church services and in council meetings; but, as we say, he was created at the will of God, before time and before the ages, and came to life and being from the Father, and the glories which coexist in him are from the Father.</p>
<p>4. οὐ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ δοὺς αὐτῷ πάντων τὴν κληρονομίαν ἐστέρησεν ἑαυτὸν ὧν ἀγεννήτως ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ πηγὴ γάρ ἐστι πάντων. ὥστε τρεῖς εἰσιν ὑποστάσεις. καὶ ὁ μὲν θεὸς αἴτιος τῶν πάντων τυγχάνων ἔστιν ἀναρχος μονώτατος, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς ἀχρόνως γεννηθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ πρὸ αἰώνων κτισθεὶς καὶ θεμελιωθεὶς οὐκ ἦν πρὸ τοῦ γεννηθῆναι, ἀλλὰ ἀχρόνως πρὸ πάντων γεννηθεὶς μόνος ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπέστη. οὐδὲ γάρ ἐστιν αἰδιος ἢ συναίδιος ἢ συναγέννητος τῷ πατρί, οὐδὲ ἅμα τῷ πατρί τὸ εἶναι ἔχει, ὡς τινες λέγουσι τὰ πρὸς τι δύο ἀγεννήτους ἀρχὰς εἰσηγούμενοι, ἀλλ' ὡς μόνος καὶ ἀρχὴ πάντων, οὕτως ὁ θεὸς πρὸ πάντων ἐστί. διὸ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἔστιν, ὡς καὶ παρὰ σοῦ μεμαθήκαμεν κατὰ μέσην τὴν ἐκκλησίαν κηρύξαντος.</p>	<p>4. For when giving to him [the Son] the inheritance of all things [Heb 1:2], the Father did not deprive himself of what he has without beginning in himself; for he is the source of all things. Thus there are three subsisting realities. And God, being the cause of all that happens, is absolutely alone without beginning; but the Son, begotten apart from time by the Father, and created and founded before the ages, was not in existence before his generation, but was begotten apart from time before all things, and he alone came into existence from the Father. For he is neither eternal nor co-eternal nor co-unbegotten with the Father, nor does he have his being together with the Father, as some speak of relations, introducing two unbegotten beginnings. But God is before all things as monad and beginning of all. Therefore he is also before the Son, as we have learned also from your public preaching in the church.</p>

<p>5. καθὸ οὖν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ εἶναι ἔχει καὶ τὰς δόξας καὶ τὸ ζῆν καὶ τὰ πάντα αὐτῷ παρεδόθη, κατὰ τοῦτο ἀρχὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ θεός. ἄρχει γὰρ αὐτοῦ ὡς θεὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ πρὸ αὐτοῦ ὢν. εἰ δὲ τὸ “ἐξ αὐτοῦ” καὶ τὸν “ἐκ γαστρὸς” καὶ τὸ “ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐξῆλθον” καὶ ἦκως ὡς μέρος αὐτοῦ ὁμοουσίου καὶ ὡς προβολὴ ὑπὸ τινων νοεῖται, ! σύνθετος ἔσται ὁ πατὴρ καὶ διαιρετὸς καὶ τρεπτόν καὶ σῶμα κατ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ τὸ ὅσον ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς τὰ ἀκόλουθα σώματι πάσχων ὁ ἀσώματος θεός.</p>	<p>5. Therefore he thus has his being from God; and glories, and life, and all things have been given over to him; in this way God is his beginning. For he is over him, as his God and being before him. But if the expressions “from him” [Rom. 11:36] and “from the womb” [Ps. 109:3 (LXX), 110:3 English] and “I came from the Father,” and “I have come” [John 16:28], are understood by some to mean that he is part of him [the Father], one in essence and as an emanation, then the Father is, according to them, compounded and divisible and alterable and material, and, as far as their belief goes, the incorporeal God endures a body.</p>
<p>Eriphanus, <i>Panarion</i> (GCS 37: 159).</p>	
<p>Ἐρρωσθαί σε ἐν κυρίῳ εὐχομαι, μακάριε πάπα. Ἀρειος, Ἀειθαλῆς, Ἀχιλλεύς, Καρπώνης, Σαρμάτας, Ἄρειος πρεσβύτεροι. διάκονοι Εὐζώϊος, Λούκιος, Ἰούλιος, Μηνᾶς, Ἑλλάδιος, Γάϊος. ἐπίσκοποι Σεκουῦνδος Πενταπόλεως, Θεωνᾶς Λίβυς, Πιστός [ὃν κατέστησαν εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν οἱ Ἀρειανοί].</p>	<p>6. I pray that you fare well in the Lord, blessed father. Arius; the priests Aethales, Achilles, Carpones, Sarmatas and Arius; the deacons Euzoios, Lucius, Julius, Menas, Helladius, and Gaius; the bishops Secundas of the Pentapolis, Theonas of Libya, and Pistus whom the Arians [later] set up [as bishop] at Alexandria.</p>