

Tomus ad Antiochenos

By Saint Athanasius (296 – 373)

Used with thanks to www.newadvent.org

To our beloved and much-desired fellow-ministers Eusebius, Lucifer, Asterius, Kymatius, and Anatolius, Athanasius and the [bishops](#) present in [Alexandria](#) from [Italy](#) and Arabia, [Egypt](#) and Libya; Eusebius, Asterius, Gaius, Agathus, Ammonius, Agathodæmon, Dracontius, Adelphius, Hermæon, Marcus, Theodorus, Andreas, Paphnutius, another Marcus, Zoilus, Menas, George, Lucius, Macarius and the rest, all greeting in [Christ](#).

We are persuaded that being ministers of [God](#) and good stewards you are sufficient to order the affairs of the Church in every respect. But since it has come to us, that many who were formerly separated from us by jealousy now wish for peace, while many also having severed their connection with the [Arian](#) madmen are desiring our communion, we think it well to write to your courtesy what ourselves and the beloved Eusebius and Asterius have drawn up: yourselves being our beloved and [truly](#) most-desired fellow-ministers. We [rejoice](#) at the said tidings, and [pray](#) that even if any be left still far from us, and if any appear to be in agreement with the [Arians](#), he may promptly leave their [madness](#), so that for the future all [men](#) everywhere may say, 'One Lord, one [faith](#) [Ephesians 4:5](#).' For as the psalmist says, what is so good or pleasant as for brethren to dwell in unity. But our dwelling is the [Church](#), and our mind ought to be the same. For thus we [believe](#) that the Lord also will dwell with us, who says, 'I will dwell with them and walk in them' and 'Here will I dwell for I have a delight therein.' But by 'here' what is meant but there where one [faith](#) and religion is preached?

2. Mission of Eusebius and Asterius.

We then of [Egypt](#) [truly](#) wished to go to you along with our beloved Eusebius and Asterius, for many reasons, but chiefly that we might embrace your affection and together enjoy the said peace and concord. But since, as we declared in our other letters, and as you may learn from our fellow-ministers, the needs of the church detain us, with much regret we begged the same fellow-ministers of ours, Eusebius and Asterius, to go to you in our stead. And we thank their [piety](#) in that although they might have gone at once to their [dioceses](#), they preferred to go to you at all costs, on account of the pressing need of the [Church](#). They therefore having consented, we consoled ourselves with the consideration that you and they being there, we all were present with you in mind.

3. The '[Meletians](#)' to be acknowledged, and all who renounce [heresy](#), especially as to the [Holy Spirit](#).

As many then as desire peace with us, and specially those who assemble in the Old [Church] and those again who are seceding from the [Arians](#), call to yourselves, and receive them as [parents](#) their sons, and welcome them as tutors and guardians; and unite them to our beloved Paulinus and his people, without requiring more from them than to anathematise the [Arian heresy](#) and confess the [faith](#) confessed by the [holy](#) fathers at Nicæa, and to anathematise also those who say that the [Holy Spirit](#) is a Creature and separate from the Essence of [Christ](#). For this is in [truth](#) a complete renunciation of the abominable [heresy](#) of the [Arians](#), to refuse to divide the Holy Trinity, or to say that any part of it is a creature. For those who, while pretending to cite the [faith](#) confessed at Nicæa, venture to [blaspheme](#) the [Holy Spirit](#), do nothing more than in words deny the [Arian heresy](#) while they retain it in thought. But let the impiety of Sabellius and of [Paul of Samosata](#) also be anathematised by all, and the [madness](#) of Valentinian and [Basilides](#), and the folly of the [Manichæans](#). For if this be done, all [evil](#) suspicion will be removed on all hands, and the [faith](#) of the [Catholic Church](#) alone be exhibited in purity.

4. *The parties at [Antioch](#) to unite.*

But that we, and they who have ever remained in communion with us, hold this [faith](#), we think no one of yourselves nor any one else is [ignorant](#). But since we [rejoice](#) with all those who desire re-union, but especially with those that assemble in the Old [church], and as we glorify the Lord exceedingly, as for all things so especially for the good purpose of these men, we exhort you that concord be established with them on these terms, and, as we said above, without further conditions, without namely any further demand upon yourselves on the part of those who assemble in the Old [church], or Paulinus and his fellows propounding anything else, or anything beyond the Nicene definition.

5. *The creed of Sardica not an authorised formula. Question of 'hypostasis.'*

And prohibit even the reading or publication of the paper, much talked of by some, as having been drawn up concerning the Faith at the synod of Sardica. For the synod made no definition of the kind. For whereas some demanded, on the ground that the Nicene synod was defective, the drafting of a creed, and in their haste even attempted it, the [holy](#) synod assembled in Sardica was indignant, and decreed that no statement of [faith](#) should be drafted, but that they should be content with the Faith confessed by the fathers at Nicæa, inasmuch as it lacked nothing but was full of [piety](#), and that it was undesirable for a second creed to be promulgated, lest that drafted at Nicæa should be deemed imperfect, and a pretext be given to those who were often wishing to draft and define a creed. So that if a man propound the above or any other paper, stop them, and persuade them rather to keep the peace. For in such men we perceive no motive save only contentiousness. For as to those whom some were blaming for speaking of three Subsistences, on the ground that the phrase is unscriptural and therefore suspicious, we thought it right indeed to require nothing beyond the confession of Nicæa, but on account of the contention we made enquiry of them, whether they meant, like the [Arian](#) madmen, subsistences foreign and strange, and alien in [essence](#) from one another, and that each Subsistence was divided apart by itself, as is the case with creatures in general and in particular with those

begotten of [men](#), or like different substances, such as gold, silver, or brass;—or whether, like other [heretics](#), they meant three Beginnings and three Gods, by speaking of three Subsistences.

They assured us in reply that they neither meant this nor had ever held it. But upon our asking them 'what then do you mean by it, or why do you use such expressions?' they replied, Because they [believed](#) in a Holy Trinity, not a trinity in name only, but existing and subsisting in [truth](#), 'both a Father [truly](#) existing and subsisting, and a Son [truly](#) substantial and subsisting, and a [Holy Spirit](#) subsisting and really existing do we acknowledge,' and that neither had they said there were three Gods or three beginnings, nor would they at all tolerate such as said or held so, but that they acknowledged a Holy Trinity but One Godhead, and one Beginning, and that the Son is coessential with the [Father](#), as the fathers said; while the [Holy Spirit](#) is not a creature, nor external, but proper to and inseparable from the Essence of the Father and the Son.

6. The question of one Subsistence (Hypostasis) or three, not to be pressed.

Having accepted then these men's interpretation and defence of their language, we made enquiry of those blamed by them for speaking of One Subsistence, whether they use the expression in the sense of Sabellius, to the negation of the Son and the [Holy Spirit](#), or as though the Son were non-substantial, or the [Holy Spirit](#) impersonal. But they in their turn assured us that they neither meant this nor had ever held it, but 'we use the word Subsistence thinking it the same thing to say Subsistence or Essence;' 'But we hold that there is One, because the Son is of the Essence of the [Father](#), and because of the identity of nature. For we [believe](#) that there is one Godhead, and that it has one nature, and not that there is one nature of the [Father](#), from which that of the Son and of the [Holy Spirit](#) are distinct.' Well, thereupon they who had been blamed for saying there were three Subsistences agreed with the others, while those who had spoken of One Essence, also confessed the doctrine of the former as interpreted by them. And by both sides [Arius](#) was anathematised as an adversary of [Christ](#), and Sabellius, and [Paul of Samosata](#), as impious men, and [Valentinus](#) and [Basilides](#) as aliens from the [truth](#), and Manichæus as an inventor of mischief. And all, by God's [grace](#), and after the above explanations, agree together that the [faith](#) confessed by the fathers at Nicæa is better than the said phrases, and that for the future they would prefer to be content to use its language.

7. The human Nature of Christ complete, not Body only.

But since also certain seemed to be contending together concerning the fleshly Economy of the Saviour, we enquired of both parties. And what the one confessed, the others also agreed to, that the Word did not, as it came to the [prophets](#), so dwell in a [holy](#) man at the consummation of the ages, but that the [Word](#) Himself was made flesh, and being in the Form of [God](#), took the form of a servant, and from Mary after the flesh became man for us, and that thus in Him the [human race](#) is perfectly and wholly delivered from [sin](#) and quickened from the dead, and given access to the kingdom of the heavens. For they confessed also that the Saviour had not a body without a [soul](#), nor without sense or intelligence; for it was not possible, when the Lord had become man for us, that His body

should be without intelligence: nor was the [salvation](#) effected in the [Word](#) Himself a [salvation](#) of body only, but of [soul](#) also. And being [Son of God](#) in [truth](#), He became also [Son of Man](#), and being God's Only-begotten Son, He became also at the same time '[firstborn](#) among many brethren [Romans 8:29](#).' Wherefore neither was there one [Son of God](#) before [Abraham](#), another after [Abraham John 8:58](#) : nor was there one that raised up Lazarus, another that asked concerning him; but the same it was that said as man, 'Where does Lazarus lie;' and as God raised him up: the same that as man and in the body spat, but divinely as [Son of God](#) opened the eyes of the man blind from his birth; and while, as Peter says [1 Peter 4:1](#), in the flesh He suffered, as God opened the tomb and raised the dead. For which reasons, thus understanding all that is said in the [Gospel](#), they assured us that they held the same [truth](#) about the Word's Incarnation and becoming Man.

8. *Questions of words must not be suffered to divide those who think alike.*

These things then being thus confessed, we exhort you not hastily to condemn those who so confess, and so explain the phrases they use, nor to reject them, but rather to accept them as they desire peace and defend themselves, while you check and rebuke, as of suspicious views, those who refuse so to confess and to explain their language. But while you refuse toleration to the latter, counsel the others also who explain and hold aright, not to enquire further into each other's opinions, nor to fight about words to no useful purpose, nor to go on contending with the above phrases, but to agree in the mind of [piety](#). For they who are not thus minded, but only stir up strife with such petty phrases, and seek something beyond what was drawn up at Nicæa, do nothing except 'give their neighbour turbid confusion to drink [Habakkuk 2:15](#),' like men who grudge peace and [love](#) dissensions. But do ye, as good men and faithful servants and stewards of the Lord, stop and check what gives offence and is strange, and value above all things peace of that kind, [faith](#) being sound. Perhaps God will have pity on us, and unite what is divided, and, there being once more one flock [John 10:16](#), we shall all have one leader, even [our Lord Jesus Christ](#).

9. *The above terms unanimously agreed upon.*

These things, albeit there was no need to require anything beyond the synod of Nicæa, nor to tolerate the language of contention, yet for the sake of peace, and to prevent the rejection of men who wish to [believe](#) aright, we enquired into. And what they confessed, we put briefly into writing, we namely who are left in [Alexandria](#), in common with our fellow-ministers, Asterius and Eusebius. For most of us had gone away to our [dioceses](#). But do you on your part read this in public where you are wont to assemble, and be pleased to invite all to you thither. For it is right that the letter should be there first read, and that there those who desire and strive for peace should be re-united. And then, when they are re-united, in the spot where all the [laity](#) think best, in the presence of your courtesy, the public assemblies should be held, and the Lord be [glorified](#) by all together. The brethren who are with me greet you. I [pray](#) that you may be well, and remember us to the Lord; both I, Athanasius, and likewise the other [bishops](#) assembled, sign, and those sent by Lucifer, [bishop](#) of the island of Sardinia, two [deacons](#), Herennius and Agapetus;

and from Paulinus, Maximus and Calemerus, [deacons](#) also. And there were present certain [monks](#) of Apolinarius the [bishop](#), sent from him for the purpose.

10. *Signatures.*

The names of the several [bishops](#) to whom the letter is addressed are: Eusebius of the city of Virgilli in [Gaul](#), Lucifer of the island of Sardinia, Asterius of [Petra](#), Arabia, Kymatius of Paltus, Cœle-[Syria](#), Anatolius of Eubœa.

Senders: the Pope Athanasius, and those present with him in [Alexandria](#), viz.: Eusebius, Asterius, and the others above-mentioned, Gaius of Paratonium in Hither Libya, Agathus of Phragonis and part of Elearchia in [Egypt](#), Ammonius of Pachnemunis and the rest of Elearchia, Agathodæmon of Schedia and Menelaitas, Dracontius of Lesser Hermupolis, Adelphius of Onuphis in Lychni, Hermion of Tanes, Marcus of Zygra, Hither Libya, Theodorus of Athribis, Andreas of Arsenoe, Paphnutius of Sais, Marcus of Philæ, Zoilus of Andrôs, Menas of Antiphra.

Eusebius also signs the following in Latin, of which the translation is:

I Eusebius, according to your exact confession made on either side by agreement concerning the Subsistences, also add my agreement; further concerning the Incarnation of [our Saviour](#), namely that the [Son of God](#) has become Man, taking everything upon Himself without [sin](#), like the composition of our old man, I ratify the text of the letter. And whereas the Sardican paper is ruled out, to avoid the appearance of issuing anything beyond the creed of Nicæa, I also add my consent, in order that the creed of Nicæa may not seem by it to be excluded, and [I agree] that it should not be published. I [pray](#) for your health in the Lord.

I Asterius agree to what is above written, and [pray](#) for your health in the Lord.

11. *The 'Tome' signed at [Antioch](#).*

And after this Tome was sent off from [Alexandria](#), thus signed by the aforesaid, [the recipients] in their turn signed it:

I Paulinus hold thus, as I received from the fathers, that the Father perfectly exists and subsists, and that the Son perfectly subsists, and that the [Holy Spirit](#) perfectly subsists. Wherefore also I accept the above explanation concerning the Three Subsistences, and the one Subsistence, or rather Essence, and those who hold thus. For it is [pious](#) to hold and confess the Holy Trinity in one Godhead. And concerning the Word of the Father becoming Man for us, I hold as it is written, that, as John says, the Word was made Flesh, not in the sense of those most impious [persons](#) who say that He has undergone a change, but that He has become Man for us, being born of the [holy](#) Virgin Mary and of the [Holy Spirit](#). For the Saviour had a body neither without [soul](#), nor without sense, nor without intelligence. For it were impossible, the Lord being made Man for us, that His body should be without intelligence. Wherefore I anathematise those who set aside the Faith

confessed at Nicæa, and who do not say that the Son is of the Father's Essence, and coessential with the Father. Moreover I anathematise those who say that the [Holy Spirit](#) is a Creature made through the Son. Once more I anathematise the [heresy](#) of Sabellius and of Photinus, and every [heresy](#), walking in the Faith of Nicæa, and in all that is above written. I Karterius [pray](#) for your health.