

the 136th Psalm, while the people answered to every verse, "For his mercy endureth for ever." As they were answering, the soldiers came into the church, and the people about Athanasius begged him to leave them and make his escape. But he offered a prayer to God and then dismissed the congregation, for fear that they should suffer on his account. "It is better," he said, "for me to meet the danger alone, than that any of our people should experience the least injury." After the congregation, weeping because of their bishop's great danger, had nearly all left the church, and the soldiers stood round about him, thinking that he was quite safe in their hands, some of his friends laid hold of him and hurried him quietly out. When the officers went to the place where he had been sitting to take him away, no Athanasius was there, so wonderfully had God blinded these men. But, although Athanasius had escaped and was in safe hiding in the Egyptian desert with others that had fled from persecution, many of his people who loved Christ remained, and these endured dreadful sufferings at the hands of those who denied their Lord. The worst of their persecutors was the new bishop, who had taken the place of Athanasius. He was an Arian, a very wicked man, generally called George of Cappadocia; and, strange to say, it is this wicked persecutor of them that honoured Christ who is the patron saint of England. He is the famous St. George, and the dragon that he pierced was the holy Athanasius. What a pity that Christian England should have its name coupled with that of this bad man and cruel persecutor.

Two years later, and the whole of the Churches became Arian, while those who honoured the Son equally with the Father had to flee into deserts and far off places, where the rage of their enemies could not find them. Many councils were called, and, although some good men who sat in them gave their consent to doctrines which they did not understand because the Arians had artfully worded them, most of the ministers were afraid of the Emperor and denied their Lord, while they condemned His exiled servant, Athanasius. Even his old friend Hosius, of Corduba, a bishop of Spain, who had long stood side by side with him, battling for the truth, signed an Arian creed in his hundredth year; and the bishop of Rome was glad to buy peace with the Emperor by doing the same. He was all alone, it seemed. So Elijah once thought, but God told him that there were seven thousand men in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and doubtless there were more than seven thousand in the world at this time who still said, like Thomas to Jesus, "My Lord and my God." But Athanasius felt that God was with him, and "if God be for us; who can be against us?" What if all the world was against him, the truth was on his side, and Christ, for whose glory he suffered all, was his strength and his shield. So he spoke the true brave words, the like of which I trust we all will be able to speak when we find ourselves alone on the side of truth against its enemies, however many and wise and powerful they may be,—“I, Athanasius, against the world.” What a spectacle for the angels in heaven was this one loyal stout-hearted man alone standing up for Jesus, while Church and State, bishops and emperor, all that was great and noble and learned in the earth, stood up in arms against him! And what a sight to inspire us as we look back through these fifteen long centuries and say, “I believe with Athanasius.”

When Constantius died, he came back to Alexandria again; but Julian, the new Emperor, who is called the Apostate because he became a Pagan after being educated in the Christian religion, banished him once more. “This