

John that Jesus was the Son of God. It divinely witnessed the fact that the Messias had come, and to the consequent fact that John was subordinated and united to Christ. Jesus entered into John's work to end it by ratifying it; John entered into Jesus' work to establish and to complete his own.

John illustrates this union in a striking way by calling himself the friend of the bridegroom. That office involved not mere subordination, but hearty sympathy, and unity of purpose with the bridegroom. It fulfilled a function as tender as it was important. It required the utmost unselfishness; the "friend" must do nothing for himself, but everything for the bridegroom's interest. He must negotiate the marriage and prepare for the wedding. He rejoices greatly in the bridegroom's words of instruction and commendation; and when, at last, he sees his favorite in safe and happy possession of the bride, he is perfectly content. His unselfish mission is successful; his unenvious joy is fulfilled.

In the final verse of the chapter we may find a still warmer characterization of the union between John and Jesus. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John stakes the salvation of the soul on the fact of union with Christ by faith. He advances to our own standpoint, and points out the great remedy for pride in the common panacea for all sins. Union with Christ, in proportion as it is actually realized in our experience, renders pride impossible. The tap-root of pride is selfishness; and the seed of selfishness is the exaggeration of our own individuality. But this distinguishing of ourselves necessarily grows less and less as union with Christ becomes closer and closer. Pride dies of inanition as we become one with Him.

The humility which grows of this union with Jesus Christ is far higher and sweeter than any other form of humility. It certainly is nobler than

the sense of absolute dependence, and more honorable than the mere feeling of inferiority. It is a form of unselfish love, which finds its longings satisfied in another. It glories not in self, but in Christ. He is the vine, of which we are the branches; He is the head, of which we are the members. Our life is hid with Him in God. In ourselves we do, indeed, "decrease;" but as He "increases," we increase in Him. Nay, we rejoice to decrease in ourselves in order that we may increase in Him. We bury self, that we may rise with Christ. Pride is impossible in such a state; it starves to death. The feeling of dependence vanishes in a life of trust; the ambition to be great is forgotten in the shared pre-eminence of the glorious Master; and so humility, unconscious of its own existence, nestles in the arms of perfect love.

The heroic life of John the Baptist is for us at once an incentive and a rebuke. Though he was great as the greatest that had lived before him, our Savior says that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. He died at the day-dawn of Christianity, while the shadows of Judaism were still lingering around him. Yet, which of us, who flourish in the noontide, can hope to rival his sublime lowliness? How many of us heartily acquiesce in all that Providence appoints for us, and joyfully accept subordinate positions and decreasing influence? Who among us all has so exalted a conception of the greatness of Christ, and so clear an idea of our relations to Him, that no success on our own part, nor any inferiority in other men, can make us boastful or proud? Have we so mortified pride that we can rejoice even in tribulation or apparent failure for the dear sake of Christ? Have we sunk self in the blessed love which vaunteth not herself, is not puffed up, and seeketh not her own?

If we fear to answer such questions we should remember that, with fuller light than John, we can get larger and clearer knowledge. Why should we love darkness rather than light? Above