

## SELF-COMMUNION.

By Rev. Octavius Winslow, D. D.

"Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."—Psalm iv. 4.

It will be acknowledged by every spiritual and reflecting mind, that the tendencies of the age are not the most favourable to the calm, solemn, holy duty of *self-communion*. We are fallen upon times of great religious, as well as worldly activity and excitement. So strong and rushing, indeed, is the tide, that there exists a fearful and fatal liability in those who profess to walk with God, as did Noah and Enoch, to neglect entirely one of the most essential and effectual helps heavenward—the due, faithful, and constant examination of the spiritual state and condition of their own hearts. To the consideration of this vitally-important subject—a subject so intimately entwined with our progress in the divine life—let us now address ourselves. The Divine precept is emphatic—“*Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still;*” or, as it is rendered in another and a beautiful version of the Psalms, “*Commune with your own heart in your chamber, and be still.*”<sup>\*</sup>—Both renderings are good, but perhaps the latter conveys more distinctly and impressively the idea of *retirement* for self-communion. “*Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers,*” is the invitation of God to His Church. Like to this is the Saviour’s exhortation—“*When thou prayest, enter into thy closet.*”

With everything but *themselves* the great mass of human beings by whom we are surrounded are in the closest communion. Man is in communion with nature in its glories, with science in its wonders, with art in its triumphs, with intel-

lect in its attainments, with power in its achievements, with the creation in its attraction. There is but one object with which he holds no rational, sacred, and close communion,—from which, though the nearest and the most important, he seems the most widely isolated; that object is—*himself!* He studies not the wonders of his being, the spirituality of his nature, the solemnity of his relations, the accountability of his actions, the immortality of his destiny. He thinks not of himself, and of death, and judgment, and eternity at the same moment. He will examine and prepare himself for worldly preferment, but his state as a moral being, his position as a responsible being, his future as an accountable and deathless being, absorbs not a moment, awakens not a thought, inspires not an aspiration of his soul.—What a fearful verification of and comment upon the word of God, “*DEAD IN TRANSGRESSES AND IN SINS!*” But the saints of God present another and a widely-different class. The religion of Jesus, while it is designed to disarm man of selfishness, and, when enthroned supremely upon the heart, ennobles and expands it with the “*expulsive power of a new affection,*” yet concentrates his most serious, devout, and earnest consideration upon himself. “*Man, know thyself,*” becomes a heathen maxim, in its highest and noblest sense, Christianised. It is of the utmost moment, then, that the saint of God should be kept in perpetual remembrance of this sacred duty of self-communion: its neglect entails immense spiritual deterioration and loss; its observance will, more than all other engagements—for it stimulates to activity all

\* The Book of Common Prayer.