

criticism would be correct if the sole end of the poet was to *please* his readers. It is not pleasure but *truth* that constitutes the mission of the poets of the Bible. Hence the necessity of here introducing this grovelling creature, that he may show the truth as regards the subject in hand. When a nation, or a church, or an individual is compared to a worm, there is told us in that comparison, in language that all the world can understand, that that nation, or church, or individual has sunk into a degraded miserable condition. To be a worm is to be weak and helpless, liable to be crushed by every one that crosses its path. To be a worm is to be loathsome in the eyes of others. To be a worm is to be of a cowardly heart, living in constant terror and seeking ever to hide from the light. Are not these features the very features that distinguished the Jews during the years of their captivity in Babylon. That proud city was in the height of its glory: into its slave markets conquering armies brought these miserable men from the cities of Judah. They were bought and sold like cattle, and counted as worms of the earth.

But is the language applicable to Christ and his followers? Yes, though not in the same sense. In the eyes of his Pharisaical countrymen Christ was a worm. "I am a worm, and no man," is his own interpretation of public sentiment in regard to him. As for his followers, they were mean and miserable in the eyes of Jews and Greeks. "Away with such a fellow, he is not fit to live," is the shout with which the city of Jerusalem greeted the greatest of the early Christians. That same man was greeted in Athens in a similar fashion. "What will this babbler (or base fellow, or worm) say?" And in one of his letters he says, "We (the apostles of this new faith) are made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things

unto this day." "Worm" is therefore descriptive of the church of God in Babylon during the captivity, and of the christian church in the early stage of its history. It is a worm mean, despised; a worm weak and helpless; a worm in the weakness of its faith till Pentecost comes. Such also is the position in which God finds each individual of his church. A worm in misery, in weakness, in abject terror. Man began by aiming at being a god: he has ended in being a worm. "Ye shall be gods" is the lying promise. "I was afraid and hid myself" is the awful reality." But there a ray of hope in the full name given here to the church. It is the worm *Jacob*. What is implied in this will appear as we go along.

II. The second Act in this drama introduces on the stage a man. "*Ye men of Israel*." The noun is plural, but the idea is singular all through the verses. The worm is changed into a man. This need not startle us as a thing impossible. It is uncommon, and to man impossible and unnatural to talk of turning a worm into a man. It is a common enough sight for man to be changed into worms; but the contrary is different business,—to change a worm into a man. It is, however, within the scope of God's doings on this earth. Did he not at the beginning turn a lump of clay into a living man? Did he not in the valley of Vision turn a field of dry bones into an exceeding great army of living men? And on the great day of the resurrection will not the same God raise from the dust of the grave the bodies of a buried world? Why, therefore, should it be thought a thing incredible unto you that God should do this thing, even turn him, a crawling worm, into a free man? (1) This is done every time a sinner is converted. Conversion is a change from the darkness and degradation of a creeping thing into the glorious