

God.' The book of Job contains several clear instances of this application of the name. Thus the angels are unquestionably meant in chapter xxxviii. 7. where it is said, 'all the sons of God shouted for joy'; because the period referred to in the context, was prior to the creation of the human race. The same order of beings is also meant in chap. i. 6. and chap. ii. 1., where we read that 'the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.' Here the highly poetic fancy of the writer represents Satan, himself an angel, as mingling in the assemblies of pure intelligences, to whom he is equal in nature, though inferior in character. These assemblies are supposed not to be held on earth among men; because Satan is represented as leaving the haunts of men for the purpose of attending them. In Daniel iii. 25, we find a similar name given to an angelic being. As the passage reads in our version, it is naturally understood by most persons to mean Jesus Christ; but the translation is incorrect, and therefore the reference to our Lord, unfounded. The original Chaldee signifies not 'the Son of God,' but 'a son of the gods'—an expression, which in the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar could only mean, a superhuman or angelic being. This is indeed put beyond all doubt by the 28th verse, in which this wonderful personage is expressly called an angel. There does not seem, in fact, to be any passage of the Old Testament, in which the appellation 'Sons of God' can be proved to designate any beings but angels. A fair interpretation cannot attach to it another sense, however much that sense may be desired by prejudice and the spirit of system.

The most probable reason for calling the angels by this name, was their pre-eminent resemblance to God, as possessing a spiritual nature and excelling in strength and wisdom. They

rank highest in the scale of derived existence, and therefore deserve to be styled, by way of eminence, 'the sons of God.'

II. Godly men are called 'the sons of God.' This is unquestionably the meaning of the appellation, wherever it occurs in the New Testament. As it would be useless to multiply passages to prove this most familiar usage, the following examples shall suffice. In Matt. v. 9, we read, 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children (the Greek means rather, the sons) of God.' Again in Rom. viii. 14, the title occurs in a similar sense: 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'

The propriety of calling the godly by this name may appear, if we consider

1. That they derive spiritual life from God. They are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. They are even said (2 Pet. i. 4) to be 'partakers of the divine nature.'

2. That they bear the image of God. They are required (Matt. v. 48) to be perfect, even as their Father who is in heaven is perfect. God is love, and consequently those, who are justly styled his sons, must cherish and manifest the like spirit. 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.' 1 John iii. 10.

3. That they receive a fatherly treatment at the hands of God. As one part of this treatment, must be mentioned, the discipline which is constantly exercised over them. 'If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons.' Heb. xii. 7, 8. And as another part is to be