men, and expect them to believe, upon the authority of his divine commiſſion, that God *exists* ; for he well knew that the being of God muſt be admitted, and tolerably juſt no­tions entertained oſ his attributes, before man can be re­quired to pay any regard to miracles which afford the only evidence of a primary rcvelation. “ In the beginning (says he) God created the heavens and the earth.” Here the being of God is aſſumed as a truth univerſally received ; but the ſentence, ſhort as it is, reveals another which, as we ſhall afterwards shew, human reaſon could never have diſcovered.

It will however be proper, before we conſider the crea­tion of the world, and compare what the ſcriptures ſay of it with the opinions of the moſt enlightened ancients on the ſame ſubject, to attend to the appellation which is here given to God ; and inquire what light is thrown upon it by ſubſequent revelations. The paſſage in the original is בדאשח בדא אלהים, where it is remarkable that the Creator is denominated by a noun in the plural number, ſignifying li­terally “ perſons under the obligation of an oath to perform certain conditions.” This is certainly a very extraordinary denomination for the one ſupreme and ſelf-exiſtent Being ; and what adds to the ſtrangeneſs of the phraſeology is, that the verb with which this plural noun is made to agree is put in the ſingular number. What now could be the ſacred hiſtorian’s motive for expreſſing himſelf in this manner ? His ſtyle is in general remarkable for its plainneſs and gram­matical accuracy ; and we believe it would be difficult to find in all his five books a ſingle phraſe not relating to the Supreme Being in which there appears ſuch a violation of concord.

In anſwer to this queſtion, it has been ſaid, that Moſes uſes the plural noun to expreſs in a magnificent way the majesty of God, juſt as it is cuſtomary for kings and earthly potentates, when publishing edicts and laws, to call them­ſelves w*e* and us. But there is no evidence on record that ſuch a mode of speaking was introduced among kings at a period ſo early as the era of Moles. Pharaoh was probably as mighty a potentate as any who then reigned upon the earth ; but though he is often mentioned by the ſame ſacred hiſtorian as iſſuing edicts with regal authority, he is no­where remeſented as ſpeaking of himſelf in the plural num­ber. Let it be obſerved, too, that whenever this phraſeology was introduced among men, the plural noun was in every grammatical tongue joined to a plural verb ; whereas Moſes not only puts the noun and the verb in different numbers in the verſe under conſideration, but afterwards repreſents the אלהים as saying, “ let *us* make man in *our* image ;” and, “ behold the man is become as *one of us.”* Such phraſes as theſe laſt were never uſed by a ſingle man, and therefore cannot have been borrowed from human idioms.

Do they then denote a plurality of gods ? No ; there is nothing which the ſcriptures more frequently or more earneſtly inculcate than the unity of the divine nature. The texts aſſerting this great and fundamental truth are almoſt numberleſs. “ Unto thee (says Moſes to his countrymen@@\*) it was ſhewed, that thou mighteſt know that the Lord is God; there is *none else besides him.* Know therefore that the Lord *he is God* in *heaven above* and upon the *earth beneath : there is none else.* And again, “ Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is *one Lord,”* or, as it is expreſſed in the original, “ Je­hovah our God is one Jehovah,” one Being to whom exiſtence is eſſential, who could not have a beginning and cannot have an end. In the prophecies of Isaiah, God is intro­duced as repeatedly declaring @@\*. “ I am Jehovah, and there is *none elſe* ; there is *no God besides me ;* that they may know from the rising of the ſun and from the west, that there is *none besides me* : I am *Jehovah,* and there is *none else :* Is there a God beſide me ? Yea there is no *God* ; I know not any.” In perfect harmony with theſe declarations of Moſes and the prophets, our Saviour, addressing himſelf to his Father, says@@\*, “ This is life eternal, that they might know *Thee, the only true God,* and Jeſus Chriſt whom Thou. hast sent ;” and St Paul, who derived his doctrine from his divine Maſter, affirms @@\*, that “ an idol is nothing in the world ; and that there is *none other God but one.”*

The unity of the divine nature, which, from the order and harmony of the world, appears probable to human reaſon, theſe texts of revelation put beyond a doubt. Hence the firſt precept of the Jewiſh law, and according to their own writers, the foundation of their whole religion, was, “ Thou ſhalt have none other gods before Me.” Hence, too, the reaſon of that ſtrict command to Jews and Chriſtians to give divine worſhip to none but God : "Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve ;” becauſe he is *God alone.* Him only muſt we fear, becauſe he alone hath infinite power; in him alone muſt we truſt, becauſe “ he only is our rock and our ſalvation ;” and to him alone muſt we direct our devotions, becauſe “ he only knoweth the hearts of the children of men."

It is paſt dispute, then, that the word אלחים does not in­dicate a plurality of gods. In the opinion, however, of many eminent divines, it denotes, by its junction with the ſingular verb, a plurality of perſons in the one Godhead ; and ſome few have contended, that by means of this peculiar conſtruction, the Chriſtian doctrine of the Trinity may be proved from the firſt chapter of the book of Genesis. To this latter opinion we can by no means give our aſſent. That there are three diſtinct perſons in the one divine nature may be inferred with ſufficient evidence from a multitude of paſſages in the Old and New Teſtaments diligently com­pared together ; but it would perhaps be raſh to rest the proof of ſo ſublime a myſtery upon any ſingle text of holy scripture, and would certainly be ſo to reſt it upon the text in queſtion. That Moſes was acquainted with this doc­trine, we, to whom it has been explicitly revealed, may reaſonably conclude from his ſo frequently making a plural name of God to agree with a verb in the ſingular number; but had we not posseſſed the brighter light of the New Teſtament to guide us, we ſhould never have thought of drawing ſuch an inference. For ſuppoſing the word אלחים to denote clearly a plurality of persons, and that it cannot poſſibly signify any thing elſe, how could we have known that the number is neither more nor leſs than three, had it not been aſcertained to us by ſubſequent revelations ?

There are indeed various paſſages in the Old Teſtament, of the phraſeology of which no rational account can be given, but that they indicate more than one person in the God-head. Such are thoſe texts already noticed ; “ and the Lord God ſaid, let us make man in our image, aſter our. likeneſs ;” and “ the Lord God ſaid, behold the man is be­come like one of us.” To theſe may be added the fol­lowing, which are to us perfectly unintelligible upon any other ſuppoſition ; “ and the Lord God ſaid, let us go down, and there confound their language @@\*.” “ If I be a Master (in the Hebrew *adonim,* masters), where is my fear @@\* ?” “ The fear of the Lord (Jehovah) is the beginning of wiſdom, and the knowledge of the Holy (in the Hebrew holy ones) is underſtanding@@\*.” “Remember thy Creator (Hebrew, thy Creators) in the days of thy youth@@\*.” “And now the Lord God and his Spirit hath ſent me@@\* ” “ Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read ; for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them@@\*."

That theſe texts imply a plurality of divine persons, ſeems to us incontrovertible. It has been already ob­ſerved, that when Moſes repreſents God as saying, let us

@@@[m]\* Deut. iv. 35. and 39. vi. 4.

@@@[m]\* Isaiah xiv. 5, 6, 18, 21. xliv. 8.

@@@[m]\* John xvii. 3.

@@@[m]\* 1 Cor. viii. 4.

@@@[m]\* Gen. xi. 6, 7.

@@@[m]\* Mal. i. 6.

@@@[m]\* Prov. ix. 10.

@@@[m]\* Eccl. xii. 1.

@@@[m]\* Isaiah xlviii. 16.

@@@[m]\* Isaiah xxxiv. 16.