

writings of the Fathers, and in the constant and uniform customs of the universal church.'

And why cannot traditions of this nature exist? Could the Redeemer of mankind speak nothing else of importance to us, 'when he appeared among men and conversed with them,' than what is recorded in the sacred pages? Shall little man thus confine the operations of divinity and address him, as he did the waves of the ocean, "so far shalt thou go and no farther?" It cannot be, that the word of God should be disregarded because it is not written. To make this assertion would be to constitute the divine authority of God's word, in the fact of its having been committed to paper.—That authority indeed rests on a very different basis. Traditions of this nature have existed both in the old and the new law. Before Moses wrote his inspired Pentateuch, the facts which he recorded descended by tradition. There was some means of freeing infants from original sin, if they did not live till the eighth day, on which day they received circumcision, and yet the scripture is silent throughout on the subject. This very necessary point then was handed down by tradition.—Before the new scripture was written, which was by no means immediately after the ascension of Christ, tradition was the only rule of faith. And St Paul writes to his converts, 'Stand fast, and hold the traditions, which you have received either from my discourse or epistle.' (2 Thess. ii.) Our opponents will not say, that he afterwards committed to writing, what he had told them in his discourse. And yet he ought to have done so in their system, for the divine truths which he told them were of equal importance with those which he wrote, as will be evident from the inspection of the text. *Then traditions have existed in the new law as well as in the old.*

Tradition is absolutely necessary. Without tradition, we should not know that infant baptism is valid, that it was proper to change the Lord's day from Saturday to Sunday, or that it was lawful to transgress the precept enacted by the apostles, (Acts, xxi.) On each of these subjects the scripture is perfectly silent, and yet their importance stands universally confessed. In fact, although our dissenting brethren reject tradition in words, they admit it, and must admit it, in fact; besides, they have no other arms than those which are afforded by tradition, to defend themselves against Socinians and Deists. I would ask one of my dissenting friends, how he knew the scripture to be the word of God. He must prove it from his rule of faith, or his proof is nugatory; for the fact of its being the word of God, is the foundation of his religion. And can he prove this from scripture? Certainly not; for surely no authority can prove itself, by simply appealing to itself. An ambassa-

dor would be an object of ridicule in a foreign court, if to prove his character, he only referred the inquirer to his own assertion, and did not produce his credentials. The fact of the divinity of scripture cannot be proved, unless by the authority of the church or of tradition. Nor can we learn which books constitute the canon of scripture, without having recourse to one, or other or both of these authorities. These two facts that the scripture is the word of God, and that such determinate books constitute it, are of eternal importance to our dissenting brethren. The very existence of their rule of faith depends on them, and requires that the most satisfactory answers may be given. They are like the first principles of a science, that ought to be so true and so removed from this possible reach of doubt, that they are universally admitted. Without some external evidence these facts cannot be ascertained, for, as remarked above, it would be foolish to assert that the scripture is the word of God, because the scripture says so. If it be asserted as it may be, that the authenticity or veracity of scripture is proved, like the same qualities of any other book, from contemporaneous evidence and the testimony of men, this is indeed appealing to human tradition. But the belief which this species of testimony creates, is merely human, and God requires divine faith.—And as for the divine inspiration of scripture, no human testimony is able to establish it. God alone, can aver the divine inspiration of a work; surely, then, the tradition by which we know that the scripture is the word of God, must be divine, or such as I have defined above. Was it not a rash act, then, to reject tradition, and maintain the sufficiency of an exclusive scriptural rule of faith?

The scripture nowhere points out the number of canonical books; and indeed it is acknowledged on all sides to be utterly impossible to ascertain them from the sacred pages. The books which our dissenting brethren conceive to constitute sacred canon, must be admitted on some authority. It cannot be asserted that their having been written by apostles, is sufficient to render the books canonical; (and even this cannot be always ascertained,) for we know from St. Paul's own words, that he wrote an epistle, which is not now extant, and which, of course, was never canonical. For if it ever were canonical, our dissenting brethren have lost a part of their complete rule of faith. Some external authority then is absolutely requisite to define which books are canonical and which apocryphal.

If the scripture be the only rule of faith, why did not the master and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ, write it himself, or at least command his apostles to write it. He frequently ordered them