

Yet all those Letters were not writ to all ;
Nor first intended but occasional,
Their absent Sermons ; nor if they contain
All needful Doctrines, are those Doctrines plain.
Clearness by frequent Preaching must be wrought ;
They writ but seldom, but they daily taught.

And what one Saint has said of holy *Paul*,
He darkly writ, is true apply'd to all.

For this obscurity cou'd Heaven provide
More prudently than by a living Guide,
As doubts arose, the difference to decide ?
A Guide was therefore needful, therefore made ;
And, if appointed, sure to be obey'd.

Thus, with due Reverence to th' Apostles writ,
By which my Sons are taught, to which submit ;
I think, those truths, their sacred Works contain,
The Church alone can certainly explain ;
That following Ages, leaning on the past,
May rest upon the Primitive at last.

Nor wou'd I thence the Word no Rule infer,
But none without the Church-interpreter.

Because, as I have urg'd before, 'tis mute,
And is it self the subject of dispute.

But what th' Apostles their Successors taught,
They to the next, from them to us is brought,
Th' undoubted Sense which is in Scripture sought.
From hence the Church is arm'd, when Errors rise,
To stop their Entrance, and prevent surprise ;
And, safe entrench'd within, her Foes without defies.
By these all festring foes her Councils heal,
Which time or has disclos'd, or shall reveal ;
For Discord cannot end without a last appeal.
Nor can a Council national decide,
But with Subordination to her Guide :

(I wish the Cause were on that issue try'd.)

Much