



## TO the READER.

**I**N conformity to custome which sends few books into the world, be they never so mean, without some fair bespeaking of the Reader, or giving him an account of the Author or his work, it was thought convenient that some little thing in that kinde should be prefix'd to these few sheets, and that I should doe it, who may reasonably be presumed to have a greater knowledge and interest in this Affair then any other. Know therefore, Reader, that somewhat agoe, upon a certain occasion which would be to no purpose here to mention, there was begot in me a curiosity to know the Opinions of that pious Father of the Church the learned Origen; and being neither by natural temper nor the way of my studies nor condition of life either so punctually informed what was in general esteem accounted Orthodox, or much awed by the word, I suffered that curiosity to grow so great in me, that I was even afflicted till it was satisfied. But having neither time enough to spare from my own secular employments, nor philosophy enough to pierce into those recondite mysteries, I quickly perceived I could not by my own industry and meditation come to the end of my desires. I therefore wrote unto a Friend of mine competently well

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*enabled with those advantages of leisure and metaphysical knowledge, conjuring him by our long acquaintance and friendship, to give himself the trouble of sending me an account of some Quæres I there put to him, tending to my contentment and satisfaction in this particular. He by good hap having just before finished a Treatise, which may one day see the light to the benefit of the Church, and having nothing new in the Forge, pitied my anxiety, and promised to doe something for the ease of my mixde; and accordingly shortly after did me the honour to send me the following papers. Thou maiest easily imagine I received so obliging a present with all due resentment, and entertained the fair conceptions in it with extraordinary emotion of spirit. For really several things before lay so cross and scurvily in my Soul, that I took no pleasure to look into it, nay I was sensibly pained and prick'd when I had the hardiness so to doe. But I quickly felt all those unevennesses begin to wear away, and every thing to range it self in its right place and order, principles and conclusions fairly accorded, and a lasting peace and calm (for so I boldly presaged) possessed me throughout. Having received so great a benefit my self, and conjecturing that in this inquisitive Age, the minds of other men as well as mine might need, and would joyfully receive Relief by the same means which ministered to my tranquillity, and having by trial aloof off upon some capable persons found that my conjecture was real, I thought I should be envious if I did not endeavour to obtain leave of my Friend to make his papers publick. Whereupon after some time I resolved to give him a visit at his Hermitage (as he is wont to call the place of his retirement) for the effecting of my purpose. Where  
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*amongst many learned and pleasant Entertains, the clear  
witnesses of a benigne nature, an innocent Conscience  
and satisfied understanding, I moved my design unto  
him. He with an amazed look ask'd me what I meant.  
I plainly told him that I meant to doe what was in me,  
that others might receive that ease and benefit which I  
my self had felt by his labour; for others there were in  
the world, I doubted not, in the same condition I was  
then in when I requested his assistance: and in exchange  
for his question I asked him, why he should be so un-  
willing to it as his looks shewed him to be. To which  
after some little recollection, The questions discussed in  
those inconsiderable Papers you talk of (replied he) are  
great and bold, and you mistake the world if you imagine  
they will finde an equal hearing, but are certainly much  
out in your account if you think men will be convinced  
of their truth by so mean an handling as mine is. For  
though I thought that would be enough to entertain your  
curiosity a little till the fit was over, and to offer some  
hints to your more deliberate meditations, yet I did not  
then while I was scribling of them, much less now in my  
cooler thoughts, conceive them convictive to any who  
were not in a very forward preparation to the belief of  
them already. For neither are the foundations of my rea-  
sonings lay'd low enough, nor firmly settled, (being I was  
to follow Origen rather then my own invention) nor is the  
order of my conceptions upon any of the Opinions such as  
it ought to be: for I remember very well upon my rea-  
ding the papers over after I had finish'd them, I dis-  
cern'd some things in the entrance of a question or an ar-  
gument which by the right laws of discourse ought to  
have come behinde; and others I saw were cast into the*

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close of it which would have done better service more forwardly placed. To tell you the truth, I did not scrupulously set my self any method, but took all thoughts that came, and as they came (if homogeneous to the whole) and there upon the spot fetter'd them in words, lest they might not have been at hand when I needed them, nor I been able to recall such fugitive things when their turn came. My Answers to Objections have the same carelessness in them, no applying this or that to such or such a proposition, but a diffuse speaking to the whole, being loth, as it should seem, to lose any good words that came in my mind, which must needs render my answer weak and obscure to strict logical readers. Many of my interpretations of Scripture are rather extravagant or pleasant than the serious confirmations of a weighty cause, and which affect to make the holy pen-men of Sacred writ speak Notions where in all likelihood they never meant it. I am also much too short in most of the points debated. Which faults though they be pardonable in a private letter to a familiar friend, will be sottish and ridiculous in a publish'd piece. Do you then impartially judge whether so short a discourse, full of so many and such monstrous defects, pretending the defence of high and rais'd mysteries against strong inveterate prejudices, be not a thing rather to be laugh'd at, than received as useful to any better purpose. To this I smilingly replied, that he might be as bold as he pleas'd with his own; yet if he would that I should be of his minde for the present and acknowledge with him these Faults (as he call'd them) I was content, upon condition that he would take his papers back and mend them in all the particulars he was pleas'd to say they were defective in, and then give me that leave which

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*which I then came to begge. This I preſſ'd him to with all earneſtneſſ poſſible, hoping that either he would do it, and ſo I might receive his ſecond and (as the proverb ſays) better cogitations, whoſe firſt pleaſed me ſo much : or elſe that he would be forced out of civility to grant me my firſt requeſt, if he was reſolved to deny the ſecond. And it fell out according to my hope ; for being obſtinately ſet againſt all Review, partly becauſe he was now more ſeriouſly employed, partly becauſe that would look like an Approbation of Origen's Opinions, he at laſt unwillingly permitted me to doe what I would with that I had. Which I here offer to thy candid acceptance, being confident thou wilt not be offended with any thing in it if thou beſt of my humour, to think no Opinion formidable which does honour to God, renders him moſt amiable to men, and a ſure object of our Faith and Hope, which juſtifies the waies of his Providence, and reconciles them with his moſt precious Attributes, Equity and Benignity. Farewell.*

C. L.

