

re sacred and equal in all; that as every one is accountable for himself, he shall be allowed to reason, judge and determine for himself; and as his character for virtue or vice, religion or irreligion, depends entirely on his own judgment, and his choice, and not at all, on that of others, both his sentiments and conduct, in matters that purely relate to conscience, and do not directly affect the security and welfare of societies, should be free and uncontroul'd. A careful examination, and free choice for our religion, appears to be the chief end for which we were endued with reason. For if the great Creator design'd that the bulk of mankind should submit implicitly to a certain set of establish'd opinions, reason, except only in the compilers and conductors of the public faith, must be in a great measure *impotent and useless*. Nay, it would be a very *absurd and unruly* ingredient in our composition; which, unless it were well disciplin'd, and kept under severe command, would be apt to rebel against authority, to question its decrees, and believe nothing but what was intelligible in itself, and had good evidence to support it. The right of private judgment is indeed an *unalienable* right, which so directly results from our make, and is so inseparably connected with it, that the one cannot be abrogated or invaded, without destroying or offering violence to the other. A man may alienate his honour, his estate, and several branches of his property, and give up his rights to them to others; but he can't transfer the rights of conscience, unless he could efface his moral and rational faculties, and substitute another to be judged for him at the righteous tribunal of God.

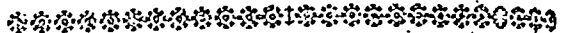
If all christians were duly sensible of the value of that inestimable privilege which I am now pleading for; if they made a proper use of it, and were honest and diligent in the pursuit of truth; if they proceeded in all their religious enquiries with candour and impartiality, and were neither corrupted by irregular passions, nor prevented by prejudice, nor enslaved by education, nor controuled and awed by the restraints and terrors of human authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical; such an *openness and ingenuity*, such a *cool, disinterested, and free* examination of the grounds of religion, and the principles it contains, must be attended with eminent advantages to themselves, to christianity, and mankind in general. If freedom of thought, and rational enquiry, universally prevail'd, men could not be so easily practis'd upon by every *insinuating, crafty, or bold* impostor; but if their understandings are brib'd or terrified, and either of these ways brought to a tame and servile submission to *imposed and popular* opinions, to receive implicitly whatever the church has set her stamp upon, or has been transmitted down by a *solemn* tradition from their forefathers; they must of necessity be exposed to endless delusions, to the most *stupid, impious, and hurtful* superstition, and may easily be *cajoled or frighten'd* out of their senses, and the common principles of humanity.

Another great use of allowing the people to judge for themselves, both of the proofs of christianity, and the nature of it's doctrines, is this, that they will of course be more firmly establish'd in the belief of it; whereas an implicit faith, or the believing what we don't understand, we know not why, must be soon *buffed and untinged*, and naturally tends to *scepticism and infidelity*.

And now, if the right of every man to determine, by his own reason, what scheme of religion is most worthy of God, and most acceptable to him, be not only attended with most signal advantages, but *natural and absolutely unalienable*; it follows, that no constitutions and rules of civil society can be just, that are inconsistent with this right; nay farther, that no true divine revelation can either wholly destroy, or *restrain and limit* the exercise of it. So that if christianity had really abridg'd that freedom of enquiry about religious principles, which cannot be denied to any man, without supposing that he is neither an *intelligent* nor an *accountable* being, this would have been such a strong *intrinsic* mark of imposture, as the plea of miracles could hardly have counterbalanc'd.

But if the direct reverse of this be the truth, if the gospel frankly recommends to men the use and improvement of their *rational faculties*; if it invites to and encourages the *strictest* and most *critical* enquiries, and submits its pretensions to the *test* of sober unprejudic'd reason; if we find in the sacred records of our religion, the first christians commended for discovering a *sobleness and ingenuity* of temper, because they search'd the scriptures, and such *apostolical* exhortations as the frequently inculcated, to be *men in understanding, to prove all things, try the spirits, whether they are of God, and judge for ourselves, what is right*. And if the great God himself has appealed to human reason, which is so much disgrac'd and vilified, as to the enquiry of his proceedings, and the general rules by which he

governs the moral world: What must we think of the man, who, pretending to be ambassadors from heaven, and *insupportable* interpreters of the Divine will, would vainly persuade christians, in these latter times, to renounce their understandings, in order to be Religious, and to be *blind and indolent*, that they may clearly perceive the pure light of the gospel.



Head Quarters at Ryssel, September 14.

THE French regiment of Orleans dragoons, that was posted on the Maese, between Liege and Huy, has been surpris'd by general Tripps, and almost intirely ruin'd. This accident so alarmed the enemy, that they immediately march'd a body of 10,000 men to oppose our passing the river, as they imagin'd we were going to do. We have received a reinforcement of three of his majesty's Electoral battalions; and the other two will arrive this week, as well as 2200 Austrian soldiers, who have been returned this Day by the French.

Paris, September 11. We have lately had a good deal of news here, which however is conceal'd as much as possible. There was an insurrection on the 27th at Lyons, occasioned by the dearth of bread; which is said to have been suppress'd before it came to any height, but that is a little uncertain. On the other hand, a most dangerous conspiracy has been discovered at Rocelle, for betraying that important port to the English; upon which great numbers of persons, and some of distinction, have been apprehended, and it is said will be severely punished. In short, the ministers that remain here appear strangely perplexed; and the report of his Catholic majesty's having concluded a separate peace obtains more and more, notwithstanding the declarations made to the contrary.

Brague, September 14. We have just received certain advice, that major Colignon, of Frangipani's regiment, at the head of 100 Bavarian Hussars, having passed the Nethe at Walbar, advanced to Willebrook upon the Demer, and there destroyed, burnt, or sunk, five vessels laden with all sorts of necessaries for the troops under count Lowendahl, such as shirts, stockings, shoes, coverlets, &c. They also very much damaged the stores that are there, and endeavour'd to set fire to a powder-magazine: But the major having notice that the enemy had detach'd some regiments to surround him, he was obliged to quit the last enterprize, and happily retired by the same way he advanced.

Extract of a Letter from a Dutch Matress, of the Garrison of Bergen-op-zoom, to his Wife at Rotterdam; dated 16th, September 16, Ten o'Clock at Night.

"As soon as this comes to hand, I would have you pack up all our little effects, and send them away to Amsterdam, when even I shall hardly believe them safe from the French Griffs, after what has happened to us this morning. In short, my dear Bergen is lost, and lost most unaccountably, as if the Dutch owed us a spite for our long defence against his countrymen, and would make us lose in two hours time all the honour we had gain'd in a siege of nine weeks. We all went to bed in high spirits and secure last night, but had such a breakfast this morning as I shall never forget. Hearing the alarm bell, I popp'd my head out of the window, and was immediately beset with a volley of bullets from the market place, where I saw near 4000 of the enemy advancing with all the fury of a deluge, and so fast, that I had hardly time to get over the tiles into the back street; where I joined our men, who did as good a defence as possible under their circumstances, but to no purpose. We were driven out of the town with prodigious slaughter, and about 400 of us have reach'd this place. Others are continually coming in, by whom I learn the best part of the garrison have taken the road to Steenberg, whither we are preparing to follow. Pray send me some linen, and other necessaries; for I have not saved one rag, but it was on my back."

L O N D O N.

September 10. Several men of war of 20 guns are crid to be built upon a new model, and are to be rowed.
September 11. On Friday the following men of war sail from Plymouth to the Westward, under rear admiral Chamberlain, viz. Princess Louisa, Nottingham, Desance, Tilbury, East Romney, Oxford, Dover, and the Speedwell sloop.
September 12. General Tripps, with a body of 3000 men having suddenly pass'd the Maese, forced the French to rout a regiment of dragoons, and the Grassins set fire to the magazines at Chokier, carried off above 40 prisoners, and a standard and 100 horses, and returned without loss.

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