

Protestant Association (1781)¹

[Baker list, #419]

Editorial Introduction:

While Roman Catholics were officially tolerated, or allowed to hold their own worship, after the Elizabethan settlement, they suffered under a number of economic and political restrictions. These restrictions were based on the fear that Catholics were bound to follow the direction of the Pope in civil matters, as well as the connection of Catholicism to the deposed Stuart line and to France and Spain, long-time enemies of England.

The Catholic Relief Act of 1778 was one of the first moves to set aside these restrictions. It allowed Roman Catholics to purchase and inherit land, and to join the army, if they swore an oath against the Stuart claim to the throne and the papal claim to civil jurisdiction. This move came as Britain was enmeshed in battle with their colonists in North America, who were supported by the French. There were also growing strains with Spain. The British army was stretched thin and one purpose of the act was to provide a new source for recruits.

Many Protestants had misgivings about the Catholic Relief Act, which were heightened when Spain declared war on Britain in June 1779 and began to plan a naval invasion. Lord George Gordon (1751–93) took the lead in organizing this concern, forming the “Protestant Association” in late 1779, with the explicit purpose of repealing the Relief Act. On June 2, 1780, he led nearly 60,000 persons to petition Parliament against the Act. As Gordon was presenting their petition, the crowd outside became riotous. Over the course of a week they burned many Roman Catholic chapels and homes in London. They attacked several prisons and freed the inmates. They stormed the Bank of England and burned the house of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield (an old school friend of Charles Wesley), destroying his vast library. Order was restored by the army only after arresting 450 persons and hanging at least another 25. Lord Gordon was tried for high treason, but gained an acquittal through the efforts of his lawyer, Thomas Erskine.

While Charles Wesley was an ardent Protestant, and shared concern about the loyalty of Roman Catholics in Britain to the Hanoverian throne, he was even more committed to the rule of law and respect for public property. His outrage against the mob and its leaders, as well as his gratitude when peace was restored, are captured well in this set of sarcastic poems. See also his *Tumult Hymns* (1780). For a manuscript draft of this set of poems, which supplies some of the missing names, see MS Protestant Association.

Edition:

[Charles Wesley.] *The Protestant Association*. London: Paramore, 1781.

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**THE
PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION,
WRITTEN
IN THE MIDST OF THE TUMULTS,
JUNE 1780.**

Canto 1.

Arms, and the good old cause I sing,
Which threatened vengeance on our king,
Brought down the storm so long a brewing,
And Britain to the brink of ruin,
While all her foes intestine join
To execute the dark DESIGN,
And glut the patriotic zeal
Of France, America, and hell.

An army of Associators,
Of rebels, regicides, and traitors,
(With here and there a warm Dissenter,
Geneva Jack, and John the painter)
Of real, or pretended zealots,
Of Scots, sworn enemies to prelates,
Of patriots a countless throng
Their banners rear, and pour along;

[10]

Russians and Frenchmen in disguise,
Americans, their sworn allies,
And all the friends of Congress meet,
To make th' infernal host complete. [20]

See, where the Protestant crusade,
With Masaniello* at their head,
March from the fields with mild intent,
T' address, and purge the Parliament!
With loud huzzas their friends they greet,
And safe escort them through the street:
But woe to those they can't *confide in!*
Unfit their carriages to ride in,
They drag 'em out, and thrust, and bruise 'em,
And most *papistically* use 'em. [30]
Commons and lords alike they shake,
Compelled the *Covenant* to take;
Judges, and ministers of state,
On these they wreck their keenest hate;
Or roll with Oliverian² sport
Their legislators in the dirt,
Or bishops† o'er the houses fright,
Right glad to save their lives by flight.

Less fierce the saints of forty-one
With 'prentices their work begun, [40]
And carrying on the Reformation,
O'erturned at last both church and nation.

But now the dupes of meek condition,
Who blindly followed their petition,
Shocked at the madness of their fellows,
(While Masaniello blows the bellows)

* Of Naples.³

† B[isho]p of L[ondon].

²Reference to Oliver Cromwell, leader of the Puritan forces in the civil war of the last century.

³Masaniello of Naples, whose original name was Tommaso Aniello, was a fisherman who led a revolt in 1647 of the lower classes, burdened by high taxes, against the Spanish Habsburg's rule.

Wisely escape from hell broke loose,
And slip their necks out of the noose.

Meantime the resolute crusaders,
(No longer psalm-singing paraders) [50]
From outraged senators returning,
Begin their work of chapel-burning;
The choicest imps of hell employ
To tear, demolish, and destroy,
(Themselves at a convenient distance
To give their instruments assistance.)
“Courage, my lads! ’Tis now, or never:
Down with the mass-houses forever!”
’Tis said: ’tis done; in half a minute
The chapel’s stormed: the foe within it, [60]
With Gothic, or with Scottish feelings,
Batter the walls, or mar the ceilings,
Compassionate as stones and stocks,
And gentle as reforming Knox;*
Altar and cross their fury feel,
On pictures they let loose their zeal,
On organs they discharge their rage,
On books; nor spare the sacred page:
Bibles must aid to feed the fire,
Till Popery all in smoke expire. [70]

Flushed with success, without their head
The sons of anarchy proceed,
Satan anew their violence rouses
To gut, and then to burn the houses.

*In Scotland.⁴

⁴I.e., John Knox (1514–72).

And first they an example make,
And vengeance on the wretches take,
(All vile informers to deter)
Who durst against their comrades swear.
And next the men that dared commit them,
And like atrocious villains treat them, [80]
They justly to destruction doom,
And burn them out of house and home.

Of neither evidence nor warrant
Afraid, as an outrageous current,
They now the dams and banks o'erflow,
And menace every Popish foe;
"Down with the mass-houses," they cry:
And Walworth's* successor stands by:
The city's meek administrator, [90]
A tame, not *unconcerned*, spectator,
Quakes, as the conflagration rages,
And pays the devil's slaves their wages,
With "Come, my lads, enough is done;
Take this—and quietly be gone!"
The aldermen in corners hide,
And wisely for themselves provide;
The shrieves⁵ an awful distance keep,
Or—sometimes—venture at a peep!
The justices with dread look on, [100]
Till their own houses are pulled down,
Content the mob shall burn their hives,
If they will only spare their lives.

* Wat Tyler's Mayor.⁶

⁵I.e., sheriffs.

⁶I.e., William Walworth, Lord Mayor of London, who struck Wat Tyler, leader of a peasant revolt in 1381. Wesley is criticizing the current Lord Mayor of London (Brackley Kennett) for not similarly resisting the revolt.

The generous mob, too brave to martyr
Meek citizens who beg for quarter,
Or storm the houses marked for burning
Without a fair, sufficient warning,
Seeing the gallant city yield,
Th' acknowledged masters of the field
To all their victims send advice,
And scorn to take them by surprise. [110]

Canto 2.

And now from street to street they roam,
And ruin spread where'er they come;
The tutored boys, without dismay,
Pursue their work in open day,
As lords of the surrendered town,
As hired to pull old houses down.
Young Allen's* fate untaught to fear
From men inured to massacre,
They smile to see the troops draw nigher
With no authority to fire, [120]
As sent to mark how they go on,
And guard them, till their work is done.

When nothing can their force resist,
Allowed to do whate'er they list,
They next the welcome word obey,
And to the prisons march away.

* A rioter killed in St. George's Fields.⁷

⁷William Allen was killed by a soldier while participating in a protest in St. George's field in 1768, calling for the release of John Wilkes from prison. The incident became symbolic of military response to popular uprisings.

But promise first at morning-light
To burn and pillage them at night,
Set all the lawful captives free,
And make a jail-delivery. [130]
A principle of self-compassion,
Of self-defence, and preservation,
To loose th' oppressed, their heart engages,
Let the birds fly, and burn the cages,
Desp'rate, in case of a defeat,
Thus to cut off their last retreat.

The keepers warned, in time prepare,
And send for succour to the mayor.
But is the aid they ask refused?
He only begs to be excused [140]
"From raising the combustion higher,
From pouring oil upon the fire,
Provoking a mad multitude,
And rashly shedding Christian blood."

As lovers at th' appointed hour,
True to their word, with wasteful power,
Dread executioners of fate
They fire the house, and burst the gate,
The fortress stormed, their fellows seize,
And with triumphant joy release. [150]
Who can describe the mutual greeting
Of friends, at such a happy meeting!
As brethren and companions dear
Redeemed from bonds and death so near,
They gladly their deliv'ers join
To carry on th' humane design,

The business of Association,
And break the shackles of the nation.

Behold them rush from jail to jail,
Resolved their promise shall not fail [160]
To set imprisoned *virtue* free,
Erase the marks of tyranny,
Afford the frailer sex protection,
Burn all the houses of correction,
Destroy the *scourges* of mankind,
Nor leave one whipping-post behind.

The threatened jails, an hour before,
The magisterial aid implore;
But cannot gain what they require;
But sink, like Newgate,⁸ in the fire, [170]
While issuing from their burning hives,
The vermin that by plunder thrives,
Augment the gang of public spoilers
With a fresh regiment of Tylers.

One glorious enterprise remains,
To recompense the heroes' pains,
Th' unguarded bank by storm to take,
A bonfire of the books to make,
Assist the insufficient state,
And pay at once the nation's debt. [180]

Fired with the hope so rich a treasure
To seize, and then to take their pleasure,
They run, they fly, where booty calls,
And force the gate, and scale the walls,

⁸A London prison that was burned by the rioters.

Ready th' important fort to win,
When answered by a guard within,
Repulsed, o'erthrown, on heaps they lie,
And in the bed of honor die!

(Yet, on the point of being sacked,
The bank, they say, was ne'er attacked: [190]
And three months hence, the Cits will tell us,
No accident at all befell us,
No Popish chapel was pulled down,
And not a house was burnt in town.)

Canto 3.

Baffled for once, the mob retreat,
Yet conq'rors still in every street,
The prostrate citizens they see,
And haste t' improve their victory;
The list of the proscribed make known,
For lives and fortunes are their own. [200]

“The chapels were a good beginning,
An hint to signify our meaning;
But Protestants, or Papists all
Shall now without distinction fall:
Whether of high or low condition,
Whoever signed not the petition:
The foreigners by labour fed,
Who rob the people of their bread,

“Bishops, and lords, and gentlemen,
Who proudly o’er the people reign, [210]
And all the men on gain intent,
And all the tools of government,
The government o’erturned shall see,
And mourn its sad catastrophe.

“But O! What death doth he require,
Who cast our names into the fire,
Repulsed, and treated us with scorn?
He, and his house, and church shall burn.
That rogue Romaine⁹ we soon shall have him;
Nor Mence’s¹⁰ tuneful voice shall save him,” [220]
(Who would not the Associates join,
Or list beneath a madman’s sign.)
“Old Wesley too, to Papists kind,
Who wrote against them for a blind,
Himself a Papist still in heart,
He, and his followers shall smart.
Not one of his fraternity
We here beneath our standard see,
To which whole regiments resort
Both from the Lock¹¹ and Tottenham-Court,”¹² [230]
(Who rave, like patriots disappointed,
And roar, and curse the Lord’s anointed.)

The rabble speak, and spread their bands,
To execute their own commands,
Impetuous, as the torrent pours,
Resistless, as the flame devours,
And scatt’ring ruin far and wide,
While terror is on every side,

⁹William Romaine, a prominent evangelical Anglican clergy person in London, who was sympathetic to the Calvinist Methodists.

¹⁰The Rev. Benjamin Mence, supposed to be the finest counter-tenor in England. He was Minor Canon at St. Paul’s.

¹¹The Lock hospital chapel was served by Martin Madan, a Calvinist Methodist.

¹²Chapel built by George Whitefield, belonging to the Calvinist Methodists.

With blasphemies they rend the sky,
And both their king and God defy. [240]

But chiefly those they hate and fear
Who bear the noblest character;
The hoary guardian of our laws,
Most adverse to rebellion's cause,
Most faithful to his king and true,
Most zealous for his country too,
On him with keenest rage they fly,
As justice would with Mansfield¹³ die.
The feeble guards stand by and see
The basest tools of anarchy, [250]
Our age and nation's foul disgrace,
Who set his mansion in a blaze:
Pictures, and monuments of art,
The utmost genius could exert,
Compilers of th' historic page,
The bard, and lawgiver, and sage,
Writings for gen'ral use, designed
To teach, and to improve mankind,
With manuscripts of price unknown, [260]
Upon the flaming heap are thrown,
More than a Vatican contains
Is lost, and not a wreck remains.

So when ferocious Omar comes,
And learning to destruction dooms;
Ptolemy's stores* erect the pyre,
His volumes all in smoke expire,

* The Alexandrian library.

¹³William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield (1705–93), currently Lord Chief Justice. His house was destroyed in the riots, including his immense library. Murray had been a fellow student of Charles at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford.

And the barbaric flames devour
The work of ages in an hour.

What hinders now the fell banditti
From plund'ring the devoted city? [270]
Boldly they cast the mask away,
And stand confessed in open day;
Hourly with fresh recruits increased;
The cry of Popery now is ceased:
They threaten gen'ral desolation,
A fire to purify the nation;
A fire impartial to consume
The friends and enemies of Rome,
"Th'roughly to purge is our intent,
Is—to blow up the Parliament, [280]
The rich to level with the poor,
Unbounded freedom to restore,
To pull the courts and churches down,
And all the palaces in town,
Demolish every public place,
Set all your records in a blaze,
And warm you with the glorious sight—
Expect a specimen tonight!"

O what a night was that! The crowd
As congregated waters loud, [290]
Tremendous as the sea in storm,
Their promise terribly perform!
Fierce flames on every side aspire,
And vault the firmament with fire!
The clash of arms, the thund'ring sound,
The pierced, who fall and bite the ground,

The roaring of Abaddon's sons,
The shoutings, and the dying groans,
The shrieks of anguish and dismay,
(A picture of that final day) [300]
Horrible sympathy impart,
And thrill with fear the boldest heart!

Where'er we turn our blasted eyes,
The torrent roars, the flames arise:
The old, the sick, the women fear,
Or die through dread of death so near!
Swiftly the catching fire proceeds,
From house to house destruction spreads,
And streets* entire are doomed to fall,
And vengeance vows t' o'erwhelm us all. [310]

Unhappy Langdale!¹⁴ Who could see
Unmoved his mournful tragedy,
Enough to mollify the nature
Of the most stern Associator!
His num'rous babes, an helpless throng,
They deprecate the cruel wrong;
The father sad, with fruitless prayer,
Entreats the savages to spare,
(Whom wine inflames, and fury blinds)
Talks to the waves, and courts the winds; [320]
In vain to magistrates applies,
Before his house in ashes lies,
To aldermen most humbly suing,
While trembling on the verge of ruin,
He instantaneous aid requires,
Or to prevent, or quench the fires.

* Newgate-Street, etc.

¹⁴Roman Catholic owner of a large distillery in Holborn that was destroyed in the riot.

Compassion steals into their breast,
And W—¹⁵ assents to his request,
(That hero in tumultuous fights,
That champion for the city's rights!) [330]
“Let's save him then,” he cries, “from murder—
But all things must be done in order,—
Let's save him from the mob so curst—
But let us call a council first!”

Vain help, alas, which never came!
Consumed by the voracious flame
His all is lost! And numbers more
His ruin, and their own deplore,
Recalling oft with fresh affright
The havoc of that dreadful night! [340]

At morn we see the fiery void,
And glorying o'er their foes destroyed,
We shrink from the assassin band,
Possessed of absolute command:
The nation's scum together rise,
To swell their host with new supplies,
From smoking gaols¹⁶ a desp'rate crew,
Who rob the gibbet of its due,
Vile instruments of depredation [350]
Let loose on an abandoned nation,
Incendiaries from every side
Heighten the wild tumultuous tide:
Hibernians join to rend and tear,
And Papists last, the spoils to share,
(As vultures to the carcase fly,
Smelling the bloody banquet nigh)

¹⁵MS Protestant Association reads “Wilkes”; i.e., John Wilkes (1725–97).

¹⁶Ori., “goals.”

Flock to the city of confusion
Giv'n up to mobbish execution.

Who can against the ruffians stand,
Or dare deny their just demand? [360]
Religion's friends, our faith's protectors,
Our guards—an army of collectors,
May they not maintenance require,
As workmen worthy of their hire,
And lay us under contribution,
And bring us to a good conclusion?

“That good and full conclusion's come,
Your sure, inevitable doom:
Th' exterminating word is past,
And the next night shall be your last: [370]
'Tis fixed (the hellish murd'rer cries)
A thousand fires at once shall rise;
Your aqueducts cut off shall fail,
And flames unquenchable prevail,
(Strange flames that never can expire,
A compound of Tartarian fire)
Destruction shall your city sweep,
Burnt down into a ruinous heap
Your proud metropolis shall lie,
And London's boast forever die.” [380]

What can their purpose fell defeat,
Or snatch us from the gaping pit?
We shudder on the brink of fate,
And for our sure excision wait:
Let but another night pass o'er,
And England's glory is no more,
Triumph the Luciferian host,
Abaddon reigns, and all is lost!

Canto 4.

But lo! At the appointed time,
On his eternal throne sublime, [390]
The Lord, who o'er all nature reigns,
And holds rebellious powers in chains,
Who sets the raging sea its bounds,
HE looks—and all our foes confounds!

He calls the man of his right hand,
His image, in the gap to stand,
Inspired with wisdom from above,
Clothed with authority and love,
Deputed by the Lord most high
To deal the vengeance of the sky, [400]
Root out the sons of wickedness,
And save a most unthankful race.

His faithful troops from every side
Are brought to turn the rapid tide,
To scatter the wild beasts of prey,
The felons and destroyers slay,
To seize th' appointed heirs of death,
And pluck the prey out of their teeth,
The brands half-burnt out of the fire,
And pay th' incendiaries their hire. [410]

Compelled at last the loyal bands
To execute their king's commands,
(Their king by heaven's Almighty Lord
Intrusted with the nation's sword)
No more they *tenderly forbear*,
No more with *cruel* pity spare,

Nor slaughter *all* with fury blind,
But where the *active* fiends they find
In their infernal work *employed*,
The hell-hounds are at once destroyed! [420]

The pale, remaining sons of riot,
Atrocious foes to public quiet,
Quaking before their swift pursuers,
(A terror now to evil-doers)
Into remotest corners fly,
(Their badges and their arms thrown by)
Or wish in the deep dungeon's gloom
To screen them from the death to come,
Or long to hide their guilty head
In ruins which their hands have made. [430]

But vain your hope of a reprieve,
Ye see the sad alternative,
Mercy itself is forced to cry,
The innocent or you must die.

What streams of blood already shed!
Heaps of intoxicated dead,
Beneath the flaming ashes found,
And carcases without a wound!
(While many a slaughtered parricide
Is dragged away, their names to hide) [440]
Patricians here in rags remain,
There female fiends and furies slain,
To every shocked spectator show
"There is a God that reigns below!"
But now fulfilled his dread design,
The ministers of wrath divine

Behold the public peace restored,
And gladly sheath the vengeful sword.

Extinct we see the fatal blaze,
Saved by a miracle of grace, [450]
The national escape we view,
And scarcely dare believe it true.
Yet now beginning to respire,
We anxiously the cause inquire
Whence our calamities began,
Or who contrived the burning plan.
Too evident th' accurst design
We see; but where's the Catiline?¹⁷
The wisest grant, we are not got
To the dark bottom of the plot; [460]
The least acute, methinks, might smell
The counsel¹⁸ of Ahithophel.¹⁹
Or is there no resentment rankling
In the unnatural heart of Franklyn?²⁰
Does nothing treasonable lurk,
Nothing American in ——?²¹
No depths of Luciferian art
In F—'s²² foul, infernal heart?
(That son of vice and dissipation,
Implunged in debt and desperation, [470]
For each flagitious purpose fit,
A fiend in malice and in wit!)
No hope in the ejected race?
No mischief hatching in His Grace—
So forward to defend the crown,
And turn the soldiers out of town,
So willing, in our last extreme,
Our safety should be left to him!

¹⁷Reference to Lucius Sergius Catilina (108–62 BC), a Roman politician who led a conspiracy to overthrow the republic.

¹⁸Ori., “council.”

¹⁹A counselor who deserted King David to support his rebellious son Absalom (see 2 Sam 15).

²⁰Benjamin Franklin, whom some accused of encouraging the riot.

²¹MS Protestant Association reads B—; surely a reference to Edmund Burke (1729–97).

²²Charles James Fox (1749–1806), supporter in Parliament of American independence.

How came Mynheer our doom to know,
And publish it two months ago? [480]
French prophets—whence could they foresee
Our swift-approaching destiny?
Or Congress, from across th' Atlantic,
Behold th' Associate mob so frantic,
And *promise* the destruction near
Of London and of Westminster?

In answer to these choking questions,
Or ministerial suggestions,
The patriots say, "No harm was *meant*,
No plot; but all was accident!" [490]
By *accident* the rabble came
Together, in religion's name;
By *accident*, without a *plan*,
They with the mass-houses began;
They next suppressed all evidence,
And all who justice could dispense;
The statesmen to destruction doomed;
By *accident* the jails consumed;
(While water we in vain require
To quench the hell-compounded fire) [500]
By accident the people's leas
Concurred our wealth and arms to seize;
From step to step, by measures just
To lay our cities in the dust,
Our name and nation to erase,
And build their empire in its place;
To reign—yet still with no *intent*
To reign—"for all was *accident*!"

So, as the sons of Epicurus
With modest confidence assure us, [510]
Atoms did into order dance
And formed an universe;—by *chance*!

“But why is no discovery made?
We see the tail, without the head.”
Our rulers may know more, and see
Farther, perhaps, than you or me;
And at the time that best befits
To bring the nation to their wits,
Unravel the complete DESIGN,
And show the face of CATILINE! [520]

Meantime in spite of all your covers,
And sly, political manoeuvres,
This inference the public draws,
Th’ effect must presuppose a cause,
The mischief point at the contrivers,
The headlong herd detect the drivers.

**Address to the City,
Written in June, 1780.**

Ye citizens of London, why
So coy, and diffident, and shy,
Who should with open arms receive
The instruments, through whom ye live;
Why shun the soldiers' company,
And wish the valiant city free,
And call for arms yourselves at last?
Is it, because the danger's past?

Should bloody arms entrusted be
With men of your *temerity*, [10]
Who, when ye in the ground assemble
Your bands, bid all the council tremble?
Who, firing but with powder, make
Yourselves, and the whole city quake?
What would become of us, if all
The liverymen should fire with ball?
The fright we never could endure;
Nor would his lordship be secure
Within the wind of such commotion,
But death again might be his *portion*! [20]

Can ye so suddenly forget
Those ragged ministers of fate,
All law and order's over-turners,
The furious mob of chapel-burners;

The scum and refuse of the nation,
The panic-dread, and devastation,
The ravage and the flames they spread,
With king Apollyon at their head!

Aghast ye stood, nor dared oppose
Your feeble, despicable foes, [30]
Boys, women, chimney-sweeps, collected
To act, as wiser heads directed,
With horror every heart t' inspire,
To burn your stately domes with fire,
Your shackled felons to release,
Your wealth and arsenals to seize,
And gall you with the triple chain
Of France, America and Spain.
No need of hostile *fleets combined*
To execute what hell designed, [40]
Suffice the miscreants most base
Your proud metropolis to rase.

So, if almighty wisdom will,
The meanest instruments of ill,
Vermin out of the dust shall rise,
To deal the vengeance of the skies.

What angel in that darkest hour
Saved you from the destroyer's power?
Whose arm did the deliverance bring?
Was it the patriots or the king? [50]
From George the timely rescue came,
And plucked the brands out of the flame:
Swift to your help his legions flew,
And crushed the desolating crew,

The authors of your woes and fears,
Your slaves—and executioners.

But do ye king and soldiers thank
Or for the mansion-house or bank?
With joy the kind preservers see
Both of your lives and property? [60]
Rather the benefit to own
Ye scorn, and urge them to be gone,
Your friends impatient to exclude:
Such is the city's gratitude!

After the fight, ye breathe anew,
And who so valiant now as you?
Recovered from the recent squall
Which threatened to o'erwhelm us all,
Ye plead your right to guide the helm,
(The city is your proper realm) [70]
And but your own militia need,
With dauntless K—²³ at their head.

So sailors when the storm is o'er,
Look up, and think of it no more,
Forget their fears, and what is stranger,
They swear they never were in danger.

²³Kennett; i.e., Brackley Kennett Lord Mayor of London.

**Advice to the City,
Written in June, 1780.**

What means this melancholy ditty,
Resounding through the ransomed city?
Why do our aldermen exclaim,
So lately plucked out of the flame?
“Because His Majesty defends
Our lives, for his own private ends;
For spite, his courtiers interpose
Their help, to screen us from our foes:
The arbitrary ministry
Refuse to leave our city free, [10]
And the officious soldiers kill,
By saving us against our will.

“What need of government’s assistance,
When mob, and danger’s at a distance;
What need of military care
To guard, when K—²⁴ is our mayor?
When all the rioters in town
Are governed by the scarlet gown,
And see our livery in array
Prepared to fight—another day? [20]

“Besides, ourselves the city guard,
And hunt the rogues through every ward:
Intrepid W—²⁵ appears our chief,
And who so fit to catch a thief?

²⁴[Brackley] Kennett.

²⁵[John] Wilkes.

His old vagaries he forgets,
Lives honestly, and pays his debts,
As bent immortal fame to win,
And die a royalist, like Prynne.²⁶

“Why send us troops who cannot need ’em?
Only to rob us of our freedom, [30]
Debar us of our native right,
And dearest privilege, to fight,
And standing on our own defence,
Again to drive the rebels hence.

“Deny us arms? We cannot see
The meaning of His Majesty:
Does he suspect his faithful lieges,
Because he knows our skill in sieges,
In party-clubs, and coalitions,
Address, remonstrance and petitions? [40]
Our conduct past must have convinced him
We cannot turn our arms against him;
He knows our bold train-bands for valour
As famed and dreadful—as a tailor!
Nor are our aldermen such fools
To meddle rashly with edged tools;
Since not a crow that flies is shyer
Of gunpowder, when soldiers fire,
Which makes us first the redcoats* order
To shoot—and try them then for murder! [50]

“Unless the king his troops withdraw,
He means to rule by martial law,
And for our most unfeigned affection
Dragoon us into tame subjection,

* In St. George’s Fields.

²⁶William Prynne (1600–1669).

At last to change the constitution;
By military execution
Accomplish his despotic plan,
And as the Swedish monarch reign.

“How can we now preserve the nation,
But by a new Association? [60]
Put arms into our hands, and see
If we can fight for liberty,
If each will not his castle guard:
Plenty of muskets be prepared,
Let every householder have one,
And teach him to let off his gun,
Then when the bridle you withdraw,
Which keeps the rioters in awe,
No longer when the troops restrain,
The rabble freed may rise again. [70]
And let them rise, a desperate herd
To take us lions by the beard!
Let every boy—and girl—come on,
And all the chimney-sweeps in town,
They to their own destruction come,
They rush upon their instant doom.

“Or if the beast will but be civil,
Committing only *useful* evil,
Let loose their prowess on our foes,
Who all our patriot-schemes oppose, [80]
Their rage on N²⁷ and S²⁸ vent,
And the vile tools of government;
Pity the troops should keep them under,
Or rob them of their lawful plunder,

²⁷MS Protestant Association reads “North”; i.e., Lord Frederick North (1732–92).

²⁸MS Protestant Association reads “Sandwich”; i.e., John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich (1718–92).

Pity the troops should tear and rend them
For want of arms—which we could lend them.

“If mob is totally suppressed,
How can a grievance be redressed?
Or how revived the good old cause?
Or how supplied defective laws? [90]
But rabble-government, we see,
With soldiers never can agree;
Unless we then the redcoats chase,
The mob can hardly show his face,
Or pull a courtier’s mansion down,
Or strip a bishop of his gown.
But when the people’s reign is o’er,
Freedom and property’s no more,
With the mob’s power religion fails,
And Popery over all prevails.” [100]

Ye gentle citizens, attend
The cooler counsels of a friend:
Let not your hasty courage rise,
Or blind self-love put out your eyes;
Let not a spirit of opposition
Conceal from you your own condition,
But learn in time yourselves to know,
Nor triumph o’er an absent foe.
Your fortitude, a reed so weak,
Will play you still a slippery trick: [110]
To fight ye never were intended,
Only to be yourselves defended;
Witness the absolute defeat
Which now ye labour to forget,

When fearing goods and lives to lose,
Your hearts sunk down into your hose!
Ye did not then the mob defy,
But piteously for mercy cry,
Panting, and pale, and out of breath,
And quashed, as in the arms of death! [120]

But now your courage is returned,
The foe suppressed, the danger scorned:
Yet, if the army stand aloof,
He still may put you to the proof;
And when the rabble reappears,
O'erwhelmed with stupefying fears,
Ye may for help cry out again,
And wish the soldiers back, in vain.

Be cautioned then by good advice,
And learn your happiness to prize, [130]
Your *rage* for liberty repress,
Nor turn it to licentiousness;
No more your gracious king mistrust
So mild, and merciful, and just;
No more by cruel insults wrong,
Because he suffers you so long,
With pity your perverseness sees,
And saves you in your last distress.

And if you wish in peace to live, [140]
No credence to your leaders give,
But every demagogue dismiss,
Those worst of all incendiaries,
Who, foes to king and country, dare
Usurp the patriot's character,

Pleaders for liberty and laws,
Supporters of rebellion's cause,
Who set the nation in a flame,
And on their monarch cast the blame.

All counsels to sum up in one,
Do, what so few of you have done,
Poor, guilty worms, your Maker fear,
And then ye *must* your king revere!

[150]

**Second
Address to the City,
Written in June, 1780.**

Ye Londoners, with smiles regard
The homage of a nameless bard,
(Ambitious, had he power, to raise
A lasting monument to your praise)
Who reads you with a lover's eye,
Exalts your virtues to the sky,
Admires your zeal and public spirit
In strains unequal to your merit,
And with astonished Europe sees
Your truly wonderful police.

[10]

All-wise omnipotent creators
Of senates, kings, and legislators,
Creators, and deliv'ers too,
Our safety we ascribe to you.

Whose magnanimity so late
Redeemed us on the edge of fate,
And from a general conflagration
Preserved the city and the nation.

Yet having your dear country freed,
Ye lessen the heroic deed, [20]
The plot your valour has defeated
By you is as a nothing treated,
Who now with confidence maintain
“The mob had no concerted plan,
No thought, or previous consultation
For burning, or for desolation.
But simply meant to do no more
Than all the mischief in their power:
No counsel was in the destroyers,”
But was there none in their employers? [30]
Here, gentlemen, we issue join:
The mob, *you* say, had no DESIGN:
The mob had no design, *we* say,
Only for plunder and for pay:
The instruments ostensible,
Actors howe'er of every ill,
Contrivers they were not, that's certain:
But were there none behind the curtain?
No heads, or counsellors, more able
To influence the thoughtless rabble? [40]
To teach them what, and how perform?
To manage and direct the storm?
Were none of the Associators
American or English traitors?

It cannot now be doubted whether
They helped to bring the mob together:
But could it not be once suspected
The rabble might be ill-directed?
Or would the multitude increase
To myriads, and then part in peace? [50]

We grant it, the Associate host,
The bulk of them were dupes at most:
But might not *some be hired* t' advance
The cause of Congress, and of France?
A knave behind a madman lurk?
A G²⁹ be the tool of ——?³⁰
America might seize th' occasion,
And use the blind Association,
Amidst our national confusion,
To put their scheme in execution, [60]
To perpetrate their hellish plan,
And kings by our excision reign?

Why would ye then, ah, tell us why,
Through modesty the truth deny,
Ye rulers of the gallant town
That still subsists, to your renown?
Your fame, which fears no more eclipses
From boys, or chimney-sweeps, or gipsies,
In spite of all your foes' designs,
Illustrious, and immortal shines. [70]

If bards on those who greatly dare
Can immortality confer,

²⁹MS Protestant Association reads "Gordon"; i.e., Lord George Gordon.

³⁰[Edmund] Burke.

Your patriotic deeds shall blaze,
Brilliant, in everlasting lays.
But stand it, far above the rest,
In England's chronicles confessed,
That when our foes had laid the train,
And ripened their pernicious plan,
Rebels with regicides conspired,
And London was already fired; [80]
Then all who wore the scarlet gown
Stood up—and trod the ruffians down:
A W—³¹ did on our side appear
And charged the faction—in the rear;
A B—³² preserved the city's right,
And put the soldiery to flight,
A second Walworth³³ graced the chair,
And KENNETT³⁴ was our GLORIOUS MAYOR!

³¹[John] Wilkes.

³²MS Protestant Association reads “Bull”; likely short for “John Bull,” which was colloquial in Wesley’s day for “a typical Englishman.”

³³See page 6, note 6, above.

³⁴Ori., “KENNET”; i.e., Brackley Kennett.