

THE *PRIMITIVE PHYSIC* CONTROVERSY
Letters and Reviews from December 1775 through August 1776¹

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¹As in original, except with correction of obvious errors and archaic spellings, and adoption of modern capitalization.

1.

Antidote (pseudonym) [1], “To the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.”

A. *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (December 25, 1775), p. 1

Reverend Sir,

Happening to look into your pamphlet, called “PRIMITIVE PHYSIC,” one of the first remedies that I cast my eye upon was, “*To one poisoned, give ONE OR TWO DRAMS of distilled verdigris.*” Every one who has the least acquaintance with the powers of medicine, will, I believe, be equally startled with myself at reading such a prescription. I could scarce believe my eye-sight for some time, nor can at present by any means account for the ignorance and presumption of a man who deals out as an antidote one of the most active poisons in nature in such an enormous dose, and this in such an undetermined quantity, as if the exact dose were immaterial. —But not to prejudice the reader by my own opinion, who have no connection with, nor much knowledge of any branch of medicine, let us see what Dr. Lewes says concerning verdigris.

Verdigris (says he) is rarely or never given internally. Some recommend it indeed in the dose of a GRAIN OR TWO, as an emetic, which operates almost as soon as received into the stomach, and which may therefore be of use, where poisonous substances have been taken, to procure their immediate rejection. It appears, however, highly imprudent to have recourse on such occasions to a remedy in itself so dangerous and so virulent; and more especially as a speedy evacuation may be obtained by means of substances that are not only innocent, but at the same time weaken the force of the poison, by diluting and obtunding it; as warm water, milk, oils.

Thus you see, Sir, Dr. Lewes calls the giving of verdigris, even in the *one hundred and twentieth part* of your dose, highly imprudent; nay, it is very probable that your dose of two drams would effectually poison 20 or 30 people, or operate very sensibly on every man, woman, and child, in one of your largest congregations. Far be it from me to suppose that you had any bad design in publishing this prescription. To the honour of our country, wilful poisoning is but rare, and antidotes would be seldom wanted, were it not that, during every winter, there are many of the common people who are poisoned, as it is called, by eating muscles.²

Your book, Sir, which I have before me, is the 16th edition; so that it is probable near twenty thousand have been sold and dispersed amongst people of inferior rank. Give me leave to put a case, which, if it has not already happened, is extremely likely to happen every day. A person is poisoned by eating muscles; get Mr. Wesley’s book and see what he recommends; the first remedy for one poisoned is one or two drams of distilled verdigris,* as it is an antidote, and recommended by *him*, be sure to get enough of it; if, or rather when, the patient dies, his death is laid to the muscles, and under the sanction of your name, verdigris* is given again when the same occasion offers.

I leave it to your own judgment, to find out by what method you can recall these *firebrands and death*, that you have scattered so plentifully through the land. But I hope you will be speedy and not wait for the interposition of the censors of the College of Physicians, who, as guardians of the public health, have a right to and I doubt not will, if necessary, interfere in a case which calls so loudly for immediate redress.

ANTIDOTE

*Distilled Verdigris is full as acrid as the common sort.

²Almost certainly, he means “mussels.”

B. *The London Chronicle* 38 (23–26 Dec. 1775), 612.

Reverend Sir,

Happening to look into your pamphlet, called “Primitive Physic,” one of the first remedies that I cast my eye upon was, “*To one poisoned, give one or two drams of distilled verdigris.*” — Every one who has the least acquaintance with the powers of medicine, will, I believe, be equally startled with myself at reading such a prescription. I could scarce believe my eye-sight for some time, nor can at present by any means account for the ignorance and presumption of a man who deals out as an antidote one of the most active poisons in nature in such an enormous dose, and this in such an undetermined quantity, as if the exact dose were immaterial. — But not to prejudice the reader by my own opinion, who have no connection with, nor much knowledge of any branch of medicine, let us see what Dr. Lewes says concerning verdigris.

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Wesley's reply to Antidote [1] (28 Dec. 1775).

A. "To the Printer of the *Gazetteer*." *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (1 Jan. 1776), 2.

Dec. 28, 1775.

Between twenty and thirty editions of the *Primitive Physic* (or, a rational and easy Method of curing most Diseases) have been published either in England or Ireland. In one or more of these editions stand these words: "Give one or more drams of distilled verdigris." —I thank the gentleman who takes notice of this, though he might have done it in a more obliging manner.

Could he possibly have been ignorant (had he not been willingly so) that this is a mere blunder of the printer? That I wrote *grains*, not *drams*? However, it is highly proper to advertise the public of this; and I beg every one that has the book would take the trouble of altering that word with his pen.
Yours, &c. J. Wesley.

B. "To the Editor." *Lloyd's Evening Post, And British Chronicle* (29 Dec. 1775 – 1 Jan. 1776), 4.

Sir,

Dec. 28, 1775.

Your printing this in your next paper will much oblige your humble Servant.

JOHN WESLEY.

Between twenty and thirty editions of the *Primitive Physic*, or a rational and easy Method of curing most Diseases, have been published either in England or Ireland. In one or more of these editions stand these words, "Give one or two *drachms* of distilled verdegris." I thank the gentleman who takes notice of this in the *Gazetteer*, though he might have done it in a more obliging manner. Could he possibly have been ignorant (had he not been willingly so) that this is a mere blunder of the printer? That I wrote *grains*, not *drachms*? However it is highly proper to advertise the public of this; and I beg every one that has the book would take the trouble of altering that word with his pen.

3.

Fly-Flap (pseudonym). "To the Rev. Mr. Wesley." (1 Jan. 1776)
The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Thursday, January 4, 1776), 2.

Instead of making such an apology as the public had a right to expect, from the nature and extreme danger of the blunder contained in your *Primitive Physic*, relative to taking so destructive a quantity of distilled verdigris in the case of poison; I cannot help considering your answer as a most crafty piece of evasion, and only worthy of an unfeeling Quack, regardless of, and sporting with the health and lives of his fellow creatures.

In the true stile of such a person, you begin your answer by mentioning what you call your *Primitive Physic's* having passed through between twenty and thirty editions. Had you not been lost to shame, as well as humanity, on this occasion, it must have occurred to you, that this circumstance must be an exaggeration of your fault, as a book, which has been greedily bought by the ignorant, in the nature and principles of medicine, for whom it is declaredly intended, ought to have been corrected with the utmost care; but it seems as if you designed to balance the number of its editions in exultation, against the most evident and most dreadful consequences.

The weak attempt to throw blame upon the printer is as uncandid as it appears improbable. The words, *drams* and *grains*, are so unlike, that it is almost impossible to mistake the one for the other; at least, it argues an unpardonable carelessness, to have suffered so dangerous an error to have appeared not only in one, but as yourself owns, perhaps in more, which probably means in most of the editions. However, is it a debt required of you by the public, to point out THAT edition of your work which may be used WITHOUT the hazard of losing their lives, by following yours or your printer's prescriptions.

Jan. 1, 1776 Yours, &c. FLY-FLAP

4.

Civis (pseudonym). “To the Rev. Mr. Wesley” (2 Jan. 1776)
The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Thursday, January 4, 1776), 1–2.

When an honest man is convinced of his error, he immediately repairs it by an ingenuous confession. But if it has been attended with consequences dangerous to society, he will do more; he will earnestly endeavour by all possible means to amend the past, or at least to prevent the like consequences in the future; and the integrity of his heart will plead strongly in his favour. Had you, Reverend Sir, acted thus discreetly, in a recent instance, you would have had a claim to the indulgence of the public. But the despicable apology you have had the effrontery to offer in print, renders you totally inexcusable in the mind of every unprejudiced person.

A writer in this paper of the 25th of last month has detected an error of the most pernicious tendency, in your *Primitive Physic*. You begin your apology by telling us that between twenty and thirty editions have been published in England and Ireland. What has Ireland to do with this matter, unless it be to make us conclude that your work has done havoc in other countries besides this? Those *numerous* editions, of which you boast, ought to have been so many motives to care and circumspection. Is it not the constant practice of every writer (the most slovenly excepted) to revise each sheet before it is committed to the press? Was it not a duty highly incumbent upon you, Sir, in return for the very generous encouragement you have met with from the public, to examine every page with a watchful eye, and to correct with the most scrupulous caution any error therein, before it was printed? Or, when you had not done so, one would think any regard for the safety of your fellow-creatures would have induced you to take a review of the pamphlet, when finished, in order to discover whether any material error had crept in, and in such cast to print a fresh leaf, or an *erratum* at least with every copy. But was [p. 2] your thirst of gain too ardent to suffer a moment’s delay? Or did more important avocations (political ones perhaps) render you totally forgetful of you duty in this particular?

With an air of conscious dignity, you say “The gentleman might have taken notice of this in a more obliging manner.” Undoubtedly, an uncommon degree of respect is due to the *Reverend Mr. WESLEY*, even when publishing a book containing a PRESCRIPTION OF POISON by way of *antidote*! I truly declare that I am entirely a stranger to the writer who has detected that egregious blunder. In my humble opinion, he has delivered his sentiments like a man of sense, and a gentleman; and what is more, like a man who has a due concern for the welfare of society, in which point you, Reverend Sir, appear miserably defective!

“Could he possibly have been ignorant (had he not been willingly so), that this is a *mere* blunder of the printer?” Nothing like a good assurance; *hic murus aheneus esto*.⁴ —But how comes it, worthy Sir, that *you* could possibly have been ignorant of this so long? The printer’s blunder cannot save you credit; for I believe every impartial reader will agree with me, that had not the writer, who so unfortunately galls you, detected this fatal prescription, it would have remained undiscovered by *you*.

But supposing, as you say, that person to have been *willingly* ignorant of the printer’s blunder, could your numerous readers have been aware of it, especially the lower, uninformed classes of people, who have purchased your book? I will appeal to your own congregations. I will venture to say, there is not one person in fifty who would not place an unlimited confidence in a recipe that has the sanction of your name. And do you weakly imagine that your caution, inserted in a few newspapers of a day, will be sufficient to counteract the poisonous prescription in your books dispersed over the three kingdoms? How will you answer it to your own conscience? How will you answer it to your country?

⁴Horace, “here is your wall of bronze,” or “be this your brazen wall of defense” (Pope).

I have the 16th edition of your book now before me (printed in London) in which I observe a *Postscript* dated indeed so long ago as 1755, but which you have thought proper to subjoin to the Preface in this edition. Your Postscript begins thus: “It was a great surprize to the editor of the following collection, that there was so swift and large a demand for it. This encouraged him CAREFULLY TO REVISE THE WHOLE, with several alterations, which it is hoped may make it of greater use to those who love common sense and common honesty.”

Now, Sir, who would not have reason to conclude from hence, that this *last edition* had undergone the same CAREFUL REVISAL as any former one? Else, to what purpose, I ask, is that paragraph made to strike the reader’s eye, in the name of *common sense* and *common honesty*!

I am persuaded you cannot answer these plain truths to the satisfaction of the public, and in charity I will believe, not to your own. You preach repentance to others; be penitent yourself: make, if possible, amends for the mischief your book has occasioned, by using all the means in your power to prevent the like mischief in future. Need I point out to you these means?

You will immediately advertise an *erratum*, not once, but repeatedly from time to time, in the several London papers, and in all the country papers throughout the kingdom, as well as in those of Scotland and Ireland. You will give particular charge to your Deacons, and other Superintendents of every one of your congregations, to make known this caution to ALL your people. You will suppress the sale of your pamphlet in its present state, and without further delay, apply yourself to a careful, diligent revisal of the whole. Believe me, there is more than *one* blunder to be found in it. But future animadversion, I hope, will be precluded.

I now take my leave of you, Reverend Sir, with a word of advice. If ever hereafter you should give occasion to be set right in any matter that concerns the public, assume less importance; have a more humble opinion of yourself; and less indifference, when the life of your neighbour is in danger.

Soho, Jan. 2. CIVIS

5.

Antidote (pseudonym) [2]. “To the Rev. Mr. John Wesley.”
The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Wednesday, January 10, 1776), 2.

Being possessed of the *eighth* edition of your *Primitive Physic*, printed in 1759, I looked for your famous poisonous recipe, and there it stands, sure enough, though the *title page* declares that this edition is *corrected*, and the *postscript*, that you have been encouraged carefully to *revise* it. Notwithstanding, therefore, your *correctness* and *care*, I am afraid that the recipe, instead of having escaped in *one or more editions*, as you artfully insinuate, stands unmolested in more than twenty editions. This you are better convinced of than disposed to acknowledge.

ANTIDOTE.*

*[In a letter on January 25, the original Antidote suggests that this is not from him]

6.

A Friend to Truth (pseudonym). “Pro bono Publico.” (2 Jan. 1776)
The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Saturday, January 13, 1776), 2.

One *drachm* of “*distilled verdigris*,” according to an experienced apothecary, contains *sixty* grains; and according to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley’s letter or card, in the *Gazetteer* of the first instant, “one or more” editions of his pamphlet on that subject, through the “blunder of his printer,” have been published, containing a confession of the *fatal blunder*! This the Rev. Gentleman, with his *usual levity*, treats so lightly as only to thank his corrector, or the gentleman that took notice of it, without humanely or candidly expressing any *sorrow* for this sad *blunder*, or marking how many *more* than *one* edition contains this fatal mistake; but was it not the blunder or fault of the editor or publisher, as well as of the printer, who should surely have revised and corrected the press, and not let so fatal a blunder or mistake go forth to the public? —How many thousands may have fallen by it is not easily estimated, but is hoped this, with other *fatal* blunders and mistakes in politics, will at last teach this Reverend Methodist gentleman, scholar, Christian, physician, and politician, to be more serious, and remember in his next *Calm Address*⁵ the adage of “*ne sutor ultra crepidam*,”⁶ that

One science only will one genius fit,

So vast is human knowledge, so narrow human wit.⁷

He will therefore for the future *to his pulpit and text*, as the cobbler should to his stall and *last*, lest by his pamphlets, sermons and prescriptions, he brings his other foot, and “grey hair, with sorrow to the grave.”⁸

Jan. 2. A Friend to Truth.

⁵Referring to Wesley’s *Calm Address to Our American Colonies* (1775).

⁶Pliny, “cobbler, stick to your trade.”

⁷Alexander Pope, “Essay on Criticism,” lns 60–61.

⁸Gen. 42:38.

7.

W. S. "To the Printer of the *Gazetteer*." (8 Jan. 1776)
The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Saturday, January 20, 1776), 2.

The Rev. John Wesley is charged home by the Rev. Caleb Evans with a double falsehood published to the world in his preface to the second edition of his *Calm Address* to the Americans.⁹ The Rev. Dr. Tucker is also charged home by another person with prevarication and misrepresentation. When *such* characters are publicly assaulted, we expect, for the honour of the religion they profess, that they should defend themselves; but if they do not attempt it in as public a manner as they are accused, I shall think these Rev. Gentlemen have as little of what is sacred about them as the *most sacred* Charles I had when the nation could not believe a word he said. I have every post this month been expecting Mr. Wesley's reply, and cannot but wish he would attempt his justification very shortly (as the truth needs no study) or else publicly to acknowledge his fault.

Bristol, Jan. 8.

W.S.

⁹See Caleb Evans, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, occasioned by his 'Calm Address to the American Colonies'* (London: Dilly, 1775).

8.

XXX (pseudonym). "To the Printer of the Gazetteer."
The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Wednesday, January 24, 1776), 1–2.

I find that Mr. Wesley is too proud, too self-sufficient, and too much wrapt up in his present supposed state of self-importance, to vouchsafe either Mr. Caleb Evans, or any other correspondent, any thing in the shape of an answer.

I cannot help thinking that he hath not yet pleaded the true and genuine apology for his blundering prescription of distilled verdigris. —If he had spoke out, he would have owned, "that not being an adept in *weights and measures*, he really mistook a *dram* for a *grain*."

Every person who has only passed the threshold of arithmetic, knows the difference between Averdupoize and Troy weights; and everybody knows that medicines are weighed by Troy weights. But I have often thought that many arithmetical books are herein very faulty; that in hasty arrangement of such articles as are weighed by Troy weight, *in general*, you find *medicines*, without the least hint, till two or three pages forward, that *Apothecary's Troy* is a particular specific kind of Troy weight, different in the intermediate divisions, from Troy weight *in genere*. Thus it often happens that people who (according to a *favourite* misapplication of a text in scripture) generally *run as they read*, and fling books aside as soon as they fancy themselves possessed of what they were *prepossessed* in favour of *before*, are perpetually falling into great errors. Mr. Wesley's whole progress in life stands as a proof, that he is one of that species of readers. In that mode he has read the scriptures, and in that mode (it is probable) doth he read every book, from the *Pentateuch* of Moses down to Wingate's *Arithmetic*.

I have often met with many persons (who either never did know, or have forgot what they once knew) who have insisted, in conversation, that apothecary's weights were *exactly* the same with common Troy weights. But, being reminded that they never heard the term *penny-weight* used in medicine, nor the two terms *scruple* and *drachm*, or *dram*, in common Troy, they will immediately correct themselves, and reply, "that the terms are indeed different, but, in quantity and effect, it is the same thing, whether you say *ounce*, *penny-weight*, and *grain*, as the common Troy, or *ounce*, *scruple* and *dram*, as the apothecary's Troy." And here, unless they are so lucky as to be corrected again, it is odds but they go off, *full gallop*, with the idea that a [p.2] scruple is the 20th part of an *ounce*, and a dram the 24th part of a scruple. And if this had been the case, Mr. Wesley's *dram* of distilled verdigris would have been only equal to a *grain*, and might have been innocent; but every intelligent person knows, that the Apothecary's ounce is first divided into 8 *drams*, each dram subdivided into three *scruples*, and each scruple into 20 *grains*; and that the term *grain* is common to both modes, and, in both, is the 480th part of an ounce.

If Mr. Wesley has a desire that the world should not estimate his abilities so lightly as to conceive *him* capable of a mistake of that nature, I think he would do well, and it is incumbent on him, to answer the two following queries:

1st, Can he name to us any one edition of his book (published previously to the detection of this error in the *Gazetteer*) where the *supposed misprinting* of *dram* for *grain* stands corrected?

2d, Is it corrected in the body of the work, as it ought to be? Or is it only slightly referred to in the errata, with a "*Vide page ditto, line ditto, pro dram, lege grain?*"

I hope he will be able to answer both these queries in the affirmative, especially the last. For (as Mr. Wesley knows very well) few people ever look in the errata, unless they happen to be gravelled in the construction of some confused sentence; and it would be very hard upon Mr. Wesley's *patient readers* to have so many chances against their lives, as (according to the following calculation) they would stand subject to: —First, *twenty* to *one*, that they never cast an eye upon the errata; and next, *forty* to *one*, that they do not understand a syllable of Latin.

I am, Sir, &c. XXX.

9.

Antidote (pseudonym) [1]. “To the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.”
The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Thursday, January 25, 1776), 2.

“O THOU MAN OF GOD, THERE IS DEATH IN THY POT.”

I went into the country soon after I called on you, to prevent the fatal effects of your enormous prescription of *one or two drams* of VERDEGRIS: On my return to town, I find your very unsatisfactory and evasive reply. Motives of humanity and benevolence have induced several gentlemen, in my absence (who are entirely strangers to me), to favour the public with their remarks on your publication, and their directions how you ought to proceed to prevent, as far as possible, its destructive consequences: As you have not thought proper to take any farther notice, I think it incumbent on me, as a duty I owe to the public, and in justice to myself, to declare that *I do really think that you wrote ONE OR TWO DRAMS OF VERDEGRIS in your prescription, and that the printer is not to blame.*

One of the gentlemen, who has signed *Antidote*, to whom I am totally unknown, tells you he has your *eighth edition*, which agrees exactly with the *sixteenth* in prescribing *one or two drams*, and not *grains*.

You have been called on to tell the public which is the edition that is free from this unlucky blunder of the printers; you make no reply. When you produce an edition with the *words one or two grains of verdegris* in this prescription, you may assure yourself the public shall be again convinced that there is still DEATH IN THE POT, and you will have farther occasion to hide yourself behind this unfortunate printer.

But I forget myself; my style is offensive to you; it will therefore be a “more obliging manner” of communicating my thoughts, to produce a passage from a book, with the letter of which at least you are well acquainted.

There was a dearth in the land, and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him (Elisha), and he said unto his servants, set on the great pot, and see the pottage for the sons of the prophets.

And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap-full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage, FOR THEY KNEW THEM NOT.

So they poured out for the men to eat; and it came to pass as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O THOU MAN OF GOD, THERE IS DEATH IN THE POT; and they could not eat thereof.

But he said, then bring meal, and he cast it into the pot; and he said, pour out for the people, that they may eat, and there was no harm in the pot. [2 Kings 4:38–40 (KJV)]

I make no comment. I neither expound or apply; the public are left at large to find out who gave the false alarm of a dearth of physic in the land, and then ostentatiously produced his great pot of *Primitive Physic*; or who was the officious person who gathered his lap-full of wild gourds, and, ignorant of their good or bad qualities, shred them into the pot. But where shall the[y] find the holy hand to cast in the healing meal, that there may be no harm in the pot!

Indeed, Mr. Wesley, it is much your wisest and best way to throw away the whole mess.

ANTIDOTE.

10.

John Wesley. “To the Editor of *Lloyd’s Evening Post*.”
Lloyd’s Evening Post, And British Chronicle (26–29 Jan. 1776), 102.

Sir,

Last week an angry man, (sometimes styling himself “Antidote,” sometimes S.E. or P.P.) inserted two letters in some of the papers.¹⁰ From what motive was this done? I return him his motto, “*Satis apparet cur versus factitat.*”¹¹ It sufficiently appears, from the remarkable words which conclude his second letter: “I think Mr. Wesley may be a very good divine, but when he writes upon physic, he proves himself extremely weak and ignorant; and when he writes upon politics, he proves himself an artful knave.” Here the vizor drops off. The *Primitive Physic* might have escaped, had it not been for the *Calm Address*,¹² but he will shew no mercy to this poor tract, in order to be revenged on the other.

“But how came this tract into the world, and from what motive was it published?” Above fifty years ago, Mr. Boyle’s *Remedia Parabilia, or Remedies easy to be procured*,¹³ fell into my hands. I transcribed many of them for my own use, adding a few more from books or conversation, and afterwards from a treatise I found in Carolina, entitled *Every Man his own Physician*.¹⁴ After proving the virtue of many of these near forty years since, I published *Receipts for the Use of the Poor*. Some years after, this was greatly enlarged, and printed under the title of *Primitive Physic*. My motive for printing it stands in the title-page, in the well-known sentence,

Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto.

Come we now to the charge. This writer begins with a round peremptory assertion—“he treats the whole body of physicians and apothecaries as a set of ignorant and designing knaves.” Shamelessly false! In this very piece, I speak of Dr. [George] Cheyne and [Thomas] Dover with honour, as well as the great and good Dr. [Thomas] Sydenham. —“He treats all chemical and Galenical medicines as useless and dangerous compounds.” Galenicals! A cruelly hard word, which this writer does not seem to understand. I acquit him from being either apothecary or physician. Why, I recommend few but Galenical medicines; such simple and uncompounded medicines as Galen himself used to prescribe.

“But the greatest part of them are inefficacious.” How do you know? Have you ever tried them? “Some are extremely dangerous.” Point out six, if you can, out of seven or eight hundred, “and the doses are for the most part indeterminate.” Not so; for the most part they are determinate, and whenever they are not, common sense is sufficient to determine.

“The greatest part of them he does not mark tried. How then can he recommend them?” Perfectly well; partly on the testimony of those who have tried them, though I have not; partly on the authority of

¹⁰These two letters have yet to be located, despite searching all of the prominent papers.

¹¹Horace, “It is not easy to discover why he bothers himself with writing.”

¹²Wesley’s *Calm Address to Our American Colonies* (1775).

¹³Robert Boyle (1627–91). Perhaps referring to *Some Receipts of Medicines, For the most part Parable and Simple. Sent to a Friend in America* (London, 1688).

¹⁴John Tennent, *Every Man His Own Doctor: or, The Poor Planter’s Physician* (Williamsburg, VA: William Parks, 1734).

eminent physicians, such as Dr. Willes,¹⁵ Sydenham, Radcliff,¹⁶ Friend,¹⁷ and [Richard] Mead.

Hitherto we had only general charges. Now we come to particulars. [1.] “He recommends cold bathing in deep consumptions.” My words are, “Cold bathing has cured many deep consumptions.” It has so; yet I do not recommend it, (as you affirm) “for every kind of consumption.” That is a gross wilful slander. Let him prove it that can.

2. “He recommends bleeding six ounces every day.” I do not recommend it at all. I barely transcribe a case from Dr. Dover. The words, “if he live,” are his, not mine. But I now add, I have known the experiment tried, and I never knew it kill one patient.

3. “For a pleurisy and a quinsy he recommends trifling things.” Trifling or not, they cure, and that without any bleeding; nay, three times in four, without any internal medicine.

4. “He advises the Cold Bath for the following diseases.” So far I advise this. I say on the authority of Dr. [Edward] Barnard and Sir John Floyer,¹⁸ *it frequently cures* these diseases, and does it not? Can any man deny it? If he can, these physicians must bear the blame.

5. Nay, “Mr. Wesley is bold enough to recommend the cold bath, without *any kind of restriction* and without any previous evacuation.” O blush, if you *can*; blush, if you have any regard left, either for truth or shame! My very words are (art. 23. *Works*, 25:26) use the cold bath, *unless you are in a far advanced age, or extremely weak*. But when you use it, on any account whatever, it is proper to bleed or purge *before you begin*.

Who can account for these palpable, barefaced falsehoods, advanced without rhyme or reason? Only on this supposition; a red hot American will say any thing to blacken one that loves King George.

Whatever candid men have to object, either against the *Primitive Physic*, or any other part of my writings, I am willing to consider and shall be thankful to those who do it in a calm dispassionate manner. Fifty years ago I imagined I knew a great deal; now I am convinced I know exceedingly little. And the voice of my heart both to God and man is, “What I know not, teach thou me.”

I am, Sir, Your very humble servant,

JOHN WESLEY

¹⁵I.e., Thomas Willis (1621–75).

¹⁶I.e., John Radcliffe (1650–14).

¹⁷I.e., John Freind (1675–1728).

¹⁸John Floyer, *The Ancient Psychrolousia Revived; or, an essay to prove cold bathing both safe and useful ... also a letter of Dr. [Edward] Baynard’s containing an account of many eminent cures done by the cold baths in England* (London: Samuel Smith & Benjamin Walford, 1702).

11.

John Wesley. "To the Printer of the *Gazetteer*."
The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Wednesday, January 31, 1776), 2.

In one respect I am much obliged to the gentlemen (or gentleman) who spend so much time upon the *Primitive Physic*; and would humbly entreat them to say something about it (no matter what) in half a dozen more of your papers. If nothing was said about it, most people might be ignorant that there was any such tract in the world. But their mentioning it makes many inquire concerning it, and so disperses it more and more.

The gentleman signing himself XXX, in your last week's paper (probably Mr. Antidote) seems now to have shot his last bolt, and that feebly indeed. But he begins magnanimously: "Mr. Wesley is too proud, too self-sufficient, and too much wrapt up in his self-importance, to vouchsafe either Mr. Caleb Evans or any other correspondent anything in the shape of an answer." How grievously does this man stumble at the threshold! With what glaring, palpable falsehood does he set out! Have I not given a direct answer, both to Mr. Evans and Antidote, and S.E. and P.P. in the public papers?

However, I am obliged to him for informing me of the difference between "ounces, scruples, drachms, or drams, and grains." Otherwise, after mistaking a dram for a grain, I might have mistaken an ounce for a dram.

But a dreadful objection comes next: "Some people *run as they read*. Mr. Wesley's whole progressive life stands as a proof that he is one of that species of readers. In that mode he hath read the scriptures, and in that mode doth he read every book."

There is some truth in this. —For several years, while my brother and I traveled on foot, our manner was for him that walked behind to read aloud some book of history, poetry, or philosophy. Afterwards for many years (as my time at home was spent mostly in writing) it was my custom to read things of a lighter nature, chiefly when I was on horseback. Of late years, since a friend gave me a chaise, I have read them in my carriage. But it is not in this manner I treat the scriptures: these I read and meditate upon day and night. It was not *in running* that I wrote twice over the *Notes on the New Testament* (to say nothing of those on the Old), containing above 800 quarto pages.

"But was this *supposed misprint* of dram for grain ever corrected before the error was detected in the *Gazetteer*?" Your next question answers this: "Or was it only referred to in the errata, with *pro dram, lege grain*?"

I add a word concerning the former objection. I do still in a sense *run as I read*. I make haste, though I do not hurry. It behooves me to do, as my work is great, and my time is short. For how much can a man expect to remain who has seen between seventy and eighty years? —And may I not plead for some indulgence, even on this account, if I am mistaken in more points than one?

12.

**Advertisement for Hawes's *Examination of ... Primitive Physic*
The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Saturday, February 3, 1776), 1.**

Next month will be published, AN EXAMINATION of a PAMPHLET, written by the Rev. Mr. JOHN WESLEY, entitled PRIMITIVE PHYSIC; showing that a great number of the prescriptions therein contained are founded on ignorance of the medical art, and of the power and operation of medicines; and that it is a publication calculated to do essential injury to health and constitution of those persons who place confidence in it.

By W. HAWES, Apothecary.

Published by the same Author, *The Effects of Dr. James's Powders, in the late Dr. Goldsmith's Illness. To which is added, Remarks on the Use and Abuse of Powerful Medicines in the beginning of Fevers and other Acute Diseases.* The third edition, with corrections and an appendix.

N.B. Mr. Hawes thinks it his duty, as a member of society, to return his thanks to the writer who signed himself Antidote, in this paper, on the 25th of December last, who happily discovered the prescription of one or two drachms of verdigris advised to counteract poison; as he acknowledges that it was his humane and sensible letter to Mr. Wesley, which made him examine critically the other parts of this work; and although there are not many prescriptions that have so immediate a tendency to destroy the persons who may take them, yet there are very many that evince the extreme imprudence of those who follow so injudicious and erroneous a guide.

[After Hawes' *Examination* appeared, the *Gazetteer* published a series of excerpts, in recognition of the fact that Hawes credited the letter by Antidote for sparking his work. See (13 July 1776), 2; (19 July 1776), 2; (23 July 1776), 2; (25 July 1776), 2; (3 Aug. 1776), 2; and (24 Aug. 1776), 2.]

13.

Reviews of William Hawes's *Examination of ... Primitive Physic*.***The Critical Review: Or, Annals of Literature. By a Society of Gentlemen* 41 (April 1776): 406.**

Those who reflect that the science of medicine can only be improved by observation, and who likewise know how much advantage it has derived from the discoveries in natural philosophy, will entertain but a very unfavourable idea of *Primitive Physic*. Had Mr. Wesley prudently restricted himself within the limits of his profession, by elucidating the principles of *primitive religion*, he might have edified his readers much more, without either endangering their temporal welfare, or exposing his own opinions to the imputation of medical ignorance, of which he is so clearly convicted in this examination. A person may dogmatize with plausibility on speculative subjects, but the errors of practical empiricism are open to the plainest detection.

***Gentleman's Magazine; and Historical Chronicle* 46 (May 1776): 226–227.**

The design of this publication is sufficiently apparent from the very prefix title page. Mr. Wesley's *Primitive Physic* has now gone through between twenty and thirty editions; yet his, we think, is the first attack that has been made upon it by any of the faculty, though its author has endeavoured to give the world very unfavourable ideas of physicians and apothecaries both as to their abilities and integrity. With a good intention and much credulity, Mr. Wesley, it must be owned, has prescribed many remedies that are trifling, and some that are pernicious. Of the latter class is No. 623, "To one poisoned. *Give one or two drachms of distilled verdigris, it vomits in an instant.*" Some just animadversions on this in the *Gazetteer* of December 25, 1775, "as being sufficient to poison twenty or thirty people," gave rise to these remarks, and in truth Mr. Wesley's saying, in answer, that "this is a mere blunder of the printer (*drachms for grains*) in one or more of the editions," when it has actually been found in many more,* and it is supposed has passed through all, and when *drams* and *grains* are so unlike that no printer could easily mistake them—and his only advertising the error in one or two papers, instead of cancelling the leaf—are not consistent with his usual candour and humanity.

From such a miscellaneous production it is difficult to know what to select. We shall content ourselves, therefore, with one or two paragraphs which we think may be generally useful:—"Mr. Wesley" (says this writer) "has given sundry directions respecting young children, and their diseases. But I must do him the justice to observe, that he has never once recommended *Godfrey's cordial*. And, indeed, this is a very pernicious opiate, however frequently it may be administered by ignorant nurses. They give it to children for their own ease, without considering or understanding its tendency. It has unquestionably been productive of much mischief. It tends to ruin the constitution of children, and the consequences of taking it have been much more frequently fatal than is generally apprehended. It is the earnest wish of the writer that this hint may be duly attended to by parents and those who have the care of young children. The state of our national population is at too low an ebb for the lives of children to be sacrificed to the ignorance of old women, or to the indolence of nurses." This caution is doubtless highly proper. We wish therefore to extend it as much as possible, and may it sink deep into the hearts of all nurses, all parents, who peruse this article! When they know that this sleep is *the sleep of death*, as being procured merely by intoxication, no other arguments surely can be wanting to prevail with them to restrain and abolish the use of this destructive dram.

The other passage we shall select may be useful to another branch of our readers, the drinkers of

punch. "I have often observed" (says this practitioner) "upon enquiring, when sent for to patients affected with complaints of the stomach or bowels, that they had overnight or the preceding day *drank punch*; and, from the effects and the smell of the matters thrown up, had every reason to think that, instead of lemon juice, the acid used was the vitriolic spirit; and indeed it is hardly possible for any one to know, in such a farrago as punch, what kind of ingredients it consists of." To prevent such bad consequences, he advises the *punch drinkers* to become *punch makers*, and also dissuades the making it with preserved *lemon juice*, "as it is always rushing into new fermentations, and though not so bad as vitriol, yet it is by no means so wholesome as the juice when squeezed immediately from the fruit itself."

Just and seasonable as these and many other observations are, much more weight would they have had with the reader, and reflected much more credit on the writer, if less *lemon-juice* had been squeezed into them, if they had been free from a sourness and rancour full as nauseating as the *vitriolic spirit* with which a man of Mr. Wesley's acknowledged abilities, and (we must add) integrity and zeal in *the labour of love*, deserves not to be treated, however fallible and mistaken he may be in his prescriptions both for the soul and the body, politic as well as natural. Such treatment may irritate and provoke, but can never convince or conciliate an opponent. Yet, strange as it seems, "Mr. H. has no personal animosity against Mr. W. to whom he is totally unknown." We are sorry that he does not know himself.

*"The 5th, the 8th, and 16th," mentioned by this writer: to which may be added "the 19th and 13th," now lying before us.

***London Chronicle* (25–28 May 1776), 1.**

The design of this pamphlet appears to be very laudable, being intended, as the writer says, to prevent these fatal accidents which arise from the use of the various improper prescriptions upon which he has here animadverted. We believe there was some necessity for such a publication, having remembered to have seen in the public prints some severe and just strictures on Mr. Wesley's directions for using verdigrease as an antidote to poison. Mr. Hawes appears to have convicted that gentleman of being equally ignorant and credulous, and has urged his proofs with the united force of ridicule and professional knowledge.

The following extracts will afford a specimen of the writer's manner of treating his subject.—The Reader will be pleased to observe, that the passages printed in italics are taken from Mr. Wesley's pamphlet, to each of which Mr. Hawes's remarks are subjoined.

No. 135. *Take horse spurs, and dry them by the fire till they will beat to powder, sift and infuse two drachms in two quarts of ale; drink half a pint every six hours; new milk warm.—It has cured many. Tried.*

No. 136. *Apply goose dung and celandine beat together, and spread on a fine rag. It will both cleanse and heal the sore.*

Mr. W. advises *horse spurs* as an internal medicine, and *goose dung* as an outward application; together with many other remedies for the cure of cancers, equally unaccountable. It is a melancholy truth, that ignorant men have always curatives in abundance for incurable complaints: as for the medical virtues of the many prescriptions advised by Mr. W. for cancers, there can be little more objection to them, than to his powder of toad in the convulsive asthma.

A Cancer in the Mouth.

No. 141 to 150, Mr. W. has prescribed several external applications for the cure of cancers affecting the mouth; and although one has the mark of *infallibility* affixed to it, and another the word *tried*; notwithstanding all his boasted remedies, it will be highly prudent in so serious a complaint to

apply to a good surgeon, who, it may reasonably be presumed, will make use of those applications which his experience and judgment inform him are the most likely to prove successful.

I shall conclude my observations on cancers with one general remark; which is, that interested and designing men have called every ulcer of *difficult cure*, which attacks the breast or mouth, a cancer; and unfortunately the person so afflicted is unable to distinguish the one from the other. But it may safely be affirmed that no real cancer was ever cured, it being a disease dependent on the laws of fermentation, and for that reason cannot be eradicated out of the constitution; as one particle of cancerous matter remaining is sufficient to renew all the aggravated symptoms of this horrid distemper. It is well known that experienced and able surgeons daily cure the worst ulcers; and it is equally well known, that the humane and worthy part of that profession lament the many impostors who are every day starting up, to deceive the public with their pretended nostrums, and which too often, by their corrosive applications, increase the misery and hasten the death of the unhappy sufferer.

Old Age.

No. 629. *Take tar-water morning and evening. Tried.*

No. 630. *Or, decoction of nettles; either of these will probably renew the strength for some years.*

No. 631. *Or, be electrified daily.*

Mr. Wesley, who is a most incomparable practitioner, has remedies for a disease, of all others the most inveterate; viz. *old age*. *Tar water* is a *tried* remedy; or if that *tried* prescription should be found not sufficiently efficacious, *decoction of nettles*; and “either of these (he says) will probably renew the strength for some years.” Or if the patient feels old age, an unconquerable disorder, he recommends being *electrified daily*. This hint is worthy the attention of the ingenious Dr. Priestley; as when the arcana of electricity are completely laid open, an electrical shock judiciously administered, and repeated with sufficient frequency, might peradventure extend a man’s life to a thousand years; or if it were only *five hundred*, it might be as advantageous to the public as Dr. Priestley’s discoveries respecting fixed air; though these have justly entitled this gentleman to that applause which he hath universally received in the philosophic world.

No. 652 to 664. These are external applications for the cure of the piles: but they deserve little regard. This is one of those disorders, which though very painful, generally tend to do great good to the constitution; for when a person is of a sanguineous or melancholic temperament, or his vessels act very strongly, this is the most happy determination that nature can take; and although the piles may return several times, and no evacuation of blood be occasioned, yet the stimulus is tending that way; and if the pain and uneasiness should be removed by repellents or astringents, it will often be at the hazard of the life of the patient. I have been a melancholy eye-witness of the truth of this assertion in two or three cases in my own practice, where persons, from the uneasiness they suffered, have (contrary to my advice) rashly applied some astringent, which has suddenly removed the piles, and made a very slight and salutary complaint terminate in an apoplexy.

To Stop Vomiting.

No. 943. *Apply a large onion slit to the pit of the stomach. Tried.*

That a slit of onion applied externally should be a good and a *tried* remedy for an internal disease, is somewhat extraordinary; but extraordinary remedies can excite no surprise to any man who is well read in Mr. W.’s *Primitive Physic*, and who gives any degree of credit to the marvelous assertions which are contained therein.

No. 945. *Infuse an ounce of quicksilver in a large glass full of water for twenty-four hours. Then drink the water: I.*

This is given as an infallible prescription; for the unerring letter *I* is affixed to it; but as the writer is no friend of implicit faith, he is apt to entertain some doubts of its efficacy. When a person is afflicted with a vomiting, according to Mr. W.’s rule, he must wait 24 hours before he can apply his remedy; and when it is procured, it is not very probable that any good effects can be produced from it, as not the ten

thousandth part of a grain will be dissolved in the menstruum, (the water) and will prove as insipid and inefficacious as the water would have done, before the digestion of the quicksilver and water had taken place.

Mr. Wesley prescribes many remedies to stop vomiting; but he never once recommends the mints, camomile, or carduus, though infusions of these stomachic and bitter vegetables are often very serviceable in many complaints of the stomach, such as sickness, retchings, and vomiting. Indeed, Mr. Wesley, in his wonderful performance, seems disposed to fall out with the good old women, as well as with the apothecaries; for the remedies that the former have and do often prescribe with success, he has taken no notice of. But he has in sundry diseases recommended things much more absurd and injurious than what are advised by them.

As we are on the subject of vomiting, the reader will perhaps excuse me if I make a little digression, relative to what has appeared to me to be a frequent cause of a propensity to vomiting. I have often observed upon enquiry, when sent for to patients affected with complaints of the stomach or bowels, that they had over-night, or the preceding day, *drank punch*; and the effects, and the smell of the matters thrown up, had every reason to think, that instead of lemon juice, the acid used was the vitriolic spirit; and, indeed, it is hardly possible for any one to know in such a farrago punch, what kind of ingredients it consists of.

I am firmly convinced, that there is hardly any thing tends so much to weaken and relax the stomach, and bring on various ill consequences, such as indigestion, loss of appetite, &c. as bad punch. And therefore I earnestly advise the *punch drinkers* to have their fruit, spirits, &c. brought to them separately, and to become *punch makers*; by which means they will know what the compound consists of, and that it is not a composition of bad sprits, vitriol, &c. Indeed, I would recommend that preserved *lemon juice* should never be used, as it is always running into new fermentations, and though not so bad as vitriol, yet is by no means so wholesome as the juice when squeezed immediately from the fruit itself. As vomiting and other disagreeable symptoms affecting the stomach, may eventually injure the whole system; because the stomach can never be long disordered, without mischief arising to the animal economy in general; therefore these hints may not be unworthy of attention, and if they are productive of any utility, there will be the less reason to apologise for the digression.

London Magazine: Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer 45 (July 1776): 381–83.

Mr. Wesley's ignorance, or what is worse, his versatility and duplicity, both in religion and in politics, have been lately sufficiently detected and exposed—one thing more was wanting to complete his character, and that was, to show the world what an excellent physician he also was. This our author hath done effectually, and before Mr. Wesley dabbles any more with politics, it becomes him to defend himself, or satisfy the world how he came to put the words *tried* and *infallible* to prescriptions, which instead curing, bid fairer for killing the patient. As Mr. Wesley's *Primitive Physic* is in the hands of almost all his followers, we with them have also the performance now before us, to prevent their trifling with dangerous diseases, and suffering irreparable mischief, if not becoming self destroyers. Mr. Hawes's views are laudable, and his observations judicious. The remarks on Wesley's receipts are according to his own arrangement of them, and we shall select a few as a specimen of the abilities of each person.

Abortion, to prevent.

No. 1. *Use a decoction of lignum guaiacum; boiling an ounce in a quart of water.*

Of all the remedies to prevent abortion, this is one of the most improper; for if it were to produce any effect, it would be the very reverse. As this wood contains a stimulating essential oil, it would be disposed to increase the action of the heart and arterial system; so that this medicine, in all probability, will make the woman more liable to abort.

No. 22. *A Tea spoonful of salt of tartar, in spring water. This also cures double tertians, triple quartans, long lasting fevers, and most diseases arising from obstructions, especially if sena be premised twice or thrice.*

There cannot be put together an assemblage of greater absurdities, as this medicine can have no other tendency than to cause the afflicted to trifle with acute diseases. In fact, in this one section is included the greatest part of the diseases incident to the human body, as the celebrated Boerhaave says, that most diseases arise from obstruction. Mr. W's assertion, therefore, that this alkaline salt will cure so great a variety of disorders, must certainly be a matter of very serious consequence, as so great a number of complaints come under his description, in which salt of tartar could produce no good effect; and thus the greatest injury must often be received by those deluded persons, who are prevented, by their ill-placed confidence in this recipe of Mr. Wesley's, from having recourse to such medicines as would effectually relieve them.

No. 25. *Apply to each wrist a plaster of treacle and soot.—Tried.*

As the word *tried* is affixed to this sooty application, it may be presumed the Mr. W. or his chimney-sweeper, have experienced its efficacy.

No. 51. *Fill the mouth with salt.*

Mr. W. here recommends filling the mouth with salt; but the most likely consequence of this would be, *killing the patient*, by the stoppage of all respiration.

No. 73. *Dry and powder a toad, make it into pills, and take one every hour, till the convulsions cease.*

Of all Mr. W's remedies for the convulsive asthma, *powder of toad* is the most curious; but it is suited to the credulity of the frequenters of the Foundry.

No. 135. *Take horse spurs, and dry them by the fire, till they will beat to powder, sift and infuse two drachms in two quarts of ale; drink half a pint every six hours; now milk warm—It has cured many. Tried.*

No. 136. *Apply goose dung and celandine beat well together, and spread on a fine rag. It will both cleanse and heal the sore.*

Mr. W. advises *horse spurs* as an internal medicine, and *goose dung* as an external application; together with many other remedies for the cure of cancer, equally unaccountable. It is a melancholy truth, that ignorant men have always curatives in abundance for incurable complaints. As for the medical virtues of the many prescriptions advised by Mr. W. for cancers, there can be little more objection to them, than to his powder of toad in the convulsive asthma.

No. 169. *Take six grains of laudanum.*

As Mr. W. uses the word *grains*, he must undoubtedly mean *solid opium*. Now opium is one of those *Herculean medicines*, which he so pathetically dissuades his readers from the use of, in his preface; and yet he here prescribes a dose of this powerful narcotic, which would, in all probability, cause ninety-nine persons out of an hundred *to sleep forever*. In disorders in common, the faculty seldom administer above one grain, and scarcely ever exceed two grains.

No. 424. *Drink every hour a spoonful of juice of ground-ivy. It cures in twenty-four hours. Use the decoction when you have not the juice.*

In a rash fever, as it is termed by Mr. W. and other ignorant people, he recommends that the patient should drink ground-ivy juice or decoction. This prescription is equally bold and unsupported; it is entirely inapplicable to the disease, and none but the weak and credulous will expect any relief from it.

No. 433. *Use the cold bath daily, and drink a draught of water from the spring.*

The cold bath is recommended for the cure of a flux, which must be exceedingly improper, as by suddenly contracting the superficies of the body, a load of fluids will be determined to the interior parts, so that the quick and great distention of the interior vessels will have a tendency rather to increase the flux than to cure it.

Mr. Wesley directs that to one poisoned should be given one or two drachms of distilled verdigrease; two drachms are sufficient to poison above forty persons, and that such a direction should have been given in a book intended for general use, and which has passed through many editions, is a most alarming consideration and ought to have given Mr. W. the greatest concern.

If Mr. Wesley had considered the lives of his fellow creatures, as an object of much concern, the least he could have done, it might reasonably be presumed, would have been to have cancelled the leaf wherein this dangerous blunder was, and to have caused another to be printed, and inserted in the unsold books. But he has done nothing like this; he has only advertised the error in one paper; at least I have seen it in no more. Since he has been attacked on this subject, I have caused one to be bought in Paternoster-Row, which had in it this dangerous prescription, not even altered with the pen. I have, indeed, since sent for one to the Foundry, wherein the blunder was slightly corrected with the pen: but was this all that ought to have been done by Mr. W. as a man of humanity, or can his negligence, in this respect, be judged consistent with any due regard to the lives of his fellow creatures? Indeed, it is somewhat extraordinary, that when the unexpected success of the *Primitive Physic*, had caused Mr. Wesley, as he says, *carefully to revise the whole, and to publish it again, with alterations*, so enormous a blunder should have passed through all editions; for this appears to have been in fact the case. But the truth probably was, that Mr. W's ignorance first occasioned this dangerous prescription, and the same ignorance continuing, prevented it from being corrected in any of the editions. This, however, shows how little Mr. W's judgment is to be depended on; and the little concern he expresses for leading his readers into an error, which to some may have proved so fatal, is a strong evidence of his insensibility. And when we consider the very extensive sale of his book, the credulity of his followers, and the extreme ignorance which is manifested in many of his prescriptions, may not we say nearly in his own words, *how many inconveniencies must this have occasioned! how many constitutions may hereby have been ruined! How many valuable lives have been lost!* *

No. 943. *Apply a large onion slit to the pit of the stomach. Tried.*

That a slit onion applied externally should be a good and a *tried* remedy for an internal disease, is somewhat extraordinary: but extraordinary remedies can excite no surprise, to any man who is well read in Mr. W's *Primitive Physic*, and who gives any degree of credit to the marvellous assertions which are contained therein.

*See Wesley's *Preface*, page 28.

London Review Of English And Foreign Literature 3 (May 1776): 412–13.

Highly as we think the public indebted to many of the medical practitioners of the present times, there are few to whom it owes greater obligations than to the worthy author of this publication. The part he has taken in the institution of the society for the recovery of drowned persons, in conjunction with his ingenious colleague, Dr. [Thomas] Cogan does him particular honour. And though his zeal in the case of Dr. Goldsmith may have been misconstrued, as tending to decry a powerful and efficacious medicine; he certainly acted the part of a judicious apothecary, in advising against its indiscriminate and injudicious administration. —In the present case, it is to be lamented that the infamous publication, to which it is intended as an antidote, did not fall sooner into his hands; as it is morally impossible (if what the author of it declares, respecting its sale, be true*) that it must not have been eventually the cause of many *murders!* We can hardly speak of it, indeed, with common patience; as, whatever excuse may be made for the quackery of ignorant old women, we cannot help thinking that a man of Mr. Wesley's education, knowledge of the world, and pretensions to religion, conscious as he must be of his ignorance of medicine, and his influence over others, if possible more ignorant than himself, deserves, for this piece of

physical empiricism, neither more or less than to be *hanged*. For in murder, accessories are principals, and though he might not be guilty of malice afore-thought, he certainly did it at the instigation of the devil, not having the fear of God before his eyes; which in a professed divine is truly diabolical.

The recipes contained in Mr. Wesley's *Primitive Physic* are no fewer than one thousand and twelve; from the remarks on many which, Mr. Hawes sufficiently proves, that no person can "with any degree of safety, rely on a compilation so extremely injudicious; the pretended remedies contained therein, being often of no use, and those which might be of utility, generally unattended with such directions, or regard to times and circumstances, as would be necessary to render them efficacious; and indeed, often calculated only to produce the most dangerous and fatal effects."

We shall content ourselves with quoting only two. —"No. 445. For a *Bloody Flux*, drink cold water as largely as possible till the flux stops." —Well said, Dr. Sangrado; it is plain that if the patient is carried off by the flux before it stops, he will not have drank cold water enough, or as largely as possible. —"No. 683. *To one poisoned*, give one or two drachms of distilled verdigris." A dose that would effectively poison twenty or thirty people, though not poisoned before. But this, *Doctor Wesley* says, is an error of the press that has escaped the corrector in *one* or *more* of the *twenty* or *thirty* editions of the publication. For *drachms* read *grains*. We should be apt, indeed, to make many grains of allowance for errors of the press, by which we are so often made to write nonsense. But Mr. Hawes assures us that this excuse is an artful evasion; for this error is in the fifth, the eighth, and the sixteenth editions; and there is the reason to believe, that it has passed through every edition; for though Mr. W. has been publicly called upon to point out the edition in which there was not this error, he has not been able to point out any one." Mr. Hawes, indeed, sufficiently exposes the effrontery of this reverend quack. His pamphlet, however, is not confined merely to the pointing out such errors as might prove most fatal; his medical remarks and observations serving to set those persons right whom Mr. Wesley may have misled. We earnestly recommend it, therefore, as particularly useful, and even necessary, to all such as pay regard to Mr. Wesley's *Primitive Physic*.

*Having gone through, as Mr. Wesley informs the public, twenty or thirty editions.

***Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal* 54 (May 1776): 419–20.**

The number of editions that Mr. Wesley's *Primitive Physic* hath passed through, replete as it is with ignorance, error, and absurdity, affords such an instance of assurance on the one hand, and credulity on the other, as can scarcely be paralleled.

To point out the gross blunders of that work, and to guard the unwary from the dangers to which an implicit confidence in it would expose them, is the present writer's laudable design.

In the preface to this *Examination* Mr. Hawes tells us, that the "writer, or rather compiler of the *Primitive Physic*, has laboured to give mankind the most favourable ideas of the practitioners in physic and pharmacy"; in proof of which he cites this passage from Mr. Wesley's performance, viz.

Experience shows that one thing will cure most disorders, at least as well as twenty put together. Then why do you add the other nineteen? Only to swell the apothecary's bill: nay, possibly, to prolong the distemper, that the doctor and he may divide the spoil.

"This representation of the gentlemen of the faculty" (says Mr. Hawes) "may possibly not be thought very candid, nor very equitable; and a practitioner in physic, were to be examined with the same degree of candour that he hath exercised towards others, he would certainly not appear in the most advantageous light. At least it would be manifest that he was far enough from *perfection*, though that is a doctrine for which he is well known to be a very zealous advocate. But, perhaps, those who are not thoroughly initiated in Mr. Wesley's peculiar tenets, may not have a proper idea of what those qualities

are which are necessary to constitute a perfect man. It is certain, that if Mr. Wesley be of this character, a regard to truth is not so necessary to it: of which the Rev. Evans of Bristol can afford ample testimony.*”

“But however uncandid, or unjust, Mr. Wesley’s representation of the gentlemen of the faculty may be, it seemed necessary to promote the sale of his *Primitive Physic*. And in this his views appear to have been answered; *sixteen editions* at least having been printed of this compilation; and that this large sale has not arisen from the merit of the performance, will, I am confident, be acknowledged by every man skilled in the treatment of diseases.”

With respect to the mode in which our author has conducted his *Examination*, we observe that he has, upon the whole, acquitted himself, though not in a brilliant, yet in a very decent manner. —If his remarks are not always sagacious, if his distinctions are not always accurate, and if his ridicule is not always poignant, it must be allowed that his animadversions are commonly just; that he has clearly convicted Mr. Wesley of the most disgraceful ignorance; and that he has satisfactorily evinced the dangerous tendency of that Gentleman’s *Primitive Physic*.

* “*Vide* the second edition of Mr. [Caleb] Evans’s letter to Mr. Wesley, in which he has been convicted of premeditated falsehood, upon the clearest and most unexceptional evidence. Mr. Wesley’s attempt towards a defence upon this subject in the newspapers, serves, *if possible*, to render him still more contemptible.”

“The Writer of this meddles not with political disputes, but takes the liberty to observe, that some regard to truth was thought necessary, in old fashioned systems, to constitute the character of an honest man, of whatever party he might be.”

14.

**Public Applause (pseudonym), “To Mr. Hawes,
Author of *An Examination of Mr. Wesley’s Primitive Physic.*”
The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Friday, June 7, 1776), 1–2.**

Sir,

Nothing can prove more fatal, more baneful, or more destructive to the human race, than divinity, physic, and politics, when exhibited by artful and unprincipled bunglers; because the first must tend to the ruin of the soul, the second to the ruin of the body, and the third to the downfall of mighty and powerful empires. To prove which (particularly the last) we need not wander far back to the annals of history, nor travel to remove realms in search of instances. There has, I doubt not, always been impious divines, seditious quacks, and ignorant and profligate politicians, who have each committed horrid mischiefs in their different professions. But I never till this era found all these enormities united in *one* person, who attempted to poison the soul by religious doctrines, the body individual by quackism, and the body politic by a jesuitical and daring attempt to vindicate the violent measures of government to tax three millions of unrepresented free-born Englishmen.

However, I am happy to find that he has not succeeded in any of his dark designs; that his various baneful publications have met with an efficacious antidote. But although his unscriptural doctrines have been sufficiently defeated by some worthy members of the Church of England, and his unconstitutional principles by virtuous patriots; yet, Sir, give me leave to say that none of his adversaries have gained so complete a victory, none of them have been so universally approved of by the public, as your very able and truly learned refutation of his unhermetic **PRIMITIVE PHYSIC**.

It afforded me inexpressible satisfaction to find that the **MEDICAL SOCIETY** had held forth your very human and virtuous endeavours to the public, by giving you their thanks for your industrious and indefatigable efforts to refute the above pamphlet, and *to restore true medical knowledge*.

Sensible that the most salutary consequences must arise to the public at large from that laudable undertaking, permit me, Sir, to render you my hearty thanks for the same in the name of a grateful public.

The restoration of true medical knowledge has indeed been greatly wanted in this country for some time past, but much more so of late years, during which this metropolis in particular has become overflowed with a swarm of quacks from all nations (but chiefly from Germany) to the great prejudice of the credulous part of the community.

But, Sir, since you have made a successful beginning towards this very requisite reformation, I shall take the liberty to furnish you with a plan, which, if put in practice, will at once clear the metropolis of those infectious vermin, quacks, and by which (of course) true medical knowledge will be restored to its ancient lustre and dignity, viz.

1. That the whole respectable medical gentlemen in this great city form themselves into an association, and raise a subscription amongst themselves, for the purpose of prosecuting, according to law, every physical practitioner who has not completed his studies at a British university, and who cannot produce his diploma from the same.

2. To put a stop to the custom of granting royal letters patent to quack medicines, particularly to such (which indeed they all are) as are mercurial or antimonial preparations. The efficacy of mercury and antimony is best known in the medical world, and made use of in certain cases and under certain circumstances; but to make them universal medicines, and to give them the sanction of royal patents, is, in fact, no less than granting patents to destroy mankind in the same manner as they are granted to destroy bugs and rats. —And

3. To treat with the different Irish and Scottish universities, and particularly that of St. Andrew, not to grant a decree to any person but such as is intitled to it by having completely

finished his studies there. I say particularly the University of St. Andrew's because I can point out certain persons within my own knowledge in London who never have been within sight of an university, nor ever had any education, and yet obtained (by what means I know not) a diploma from the above university, and now practise as physicians.

If this plan should be executed, I doubt not but it will answer the salutary purpose of abolishing all manner of quackism, and of restoring true medical knowledge, and you will acquire still more.

PUBLIC APPLAUSE

P.S. By way of hint, I recommend to your vigilance an inspection into the characters and medical abilities of a set of men who have lately opened a MEDICAL ASYLUM.

15.

**John Wesley. "To Mr. Hawes, Apothecary and Critic."
Lloyd's Evening Post. And British Chronicle 39 (19–22 July 1776), 79.**

Sir,

My bookseller informs me, that since you published your remarks on the *Primitive Physic, or A Natural and Easy Method of curing most Diseases*, there has been a greater demand for *it* than ever. If, therefore, you would please to publish a few farther remarks, you would confer a farther favour upon
Your humble Servant.

July 20, 1776

JOHN WESLEY.

16.

William Hawes. "To Mr. John Wesley." (24 July 1776).

The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser (Thursday, July 25, 1776), 1–2).

Sir,

Your short letter addressed to me, and published in *Lloyd's Evening Post* of the 22d instant,* is a most astonishing proof of your effrontery and insensibility. I believe it impossible for any man of common probity, or of common humanity, under such circumstances, to have answered the charge which I have brought against you, in the manner that you have done; and I have little doubt but the generality of the public will now join with me in opinion, that notwithstanding your pretensions to sanctity, you are a consummate hypocrite.

I have openly charged you with publishing a book *replete with ignorance*, and calculated to *injure the health*, and in some cases *destroy the lives* of all who depend on it; and in the opinion of most impartial readers, and of many of the ablest medical practitioners, I have proved this charge. In answer to which you say, that my Examination of your *Primitive Physic* has [p. 2] promoted the sale of it; and in this consideration you exult. Is it possible that any man, influenced by the common feelings of humanity, could have published such an answer to such a charge? Would the most mercenary quack, that ever disgraced a stage in Moorfields, have satisfied himself with no better a vindication of his character? The ignorance with which your book abounds, and its pernicious tendency, I may venture to assert, have been demonstrated; and if your mean and avaricious spirit can find satisfaction in reflecting on the *profits* of your book, you have no right to rank with any but the most base and unworthy of mankind.

Strand, July 24.

W. HAWES.

* "To Mr. Hawes, Apothecary and Critic."

Sir,

My bookseller informs me, that since you published your remarks on the *Primitive Physic*, or "*A Natural and Easy Method of curing most Diseases*, there has been a greater demand for it than ever. If, therefore, you would please to publish a few farther remarks, you would confer a farther favour upon

Your humble Servant.

July 20, 1776

JOHN WESLEY.

Lloyd's Evening Post. And British Chronicle. 39 (24–26 July 1776), 95.

Sir,

Your short letter, addressed to me, in this paper on Monday last, is a most astonishing proof of your effrontery and insensibility. I believe it impossible for any man of common probity, or of common humanity, under such circumstances, to have answered the charge which I have brought against you, in the manner that you have done.

I have openly charged you with publishing a book *replete with ignorance*, and calculated to *injure the health*, and in some cases, to *destroy the lives* of all who depend on it; and in the opinion of most impartial readers, and of many of the ablest practitioners, I have proved this charge. In answer to which you say, that my Examination of your *Primitive Physic* has promoted the sale of it; and in this consideration you exult.

Is it possible that any man, influenced by the common feelings of humanity, could have published such an answer to such a charge? Would the most mercenary quack, that ever disgraced a stage in Moorfields, have satisfied himself with no better a vindication of his character? The ignorance with which your book abounds, and its pernicious tendency, I may venture to assert, have been demonstrated; and if you can find satisfaction in reflecting on the *profits* of your book, you have no right to rank with any but the most base and unworthy of mankind.

Strand, July 24.

W. HAWES.

**Hawes's advertisement of his *Examination in Lloyd's Evening Post*
Lloyd's Evening Post. And British Chronicle 39 (29–31 July 1776), 107.**

This Day was published, Price 1s. 6d.

AN EXAMINATION of the Rev. Mr. JOHN WESLEY's PRIMITIVE PHYSIC. Showing that a great number of the prescriptions therein contained are founded on ignorance of the medical art, and of the power and operation of medicines; and that it is a publication calculated to do essential injury to the health of these persons who may place confidence in it. Interspersed with medical remarks and practical observations. By W. Hawes, Apothecary.

Printed for the Author, and sold by J. Dodsley, Pall-Mall; T. Cadell, Strand; J. Johnson, St. Paul's Churchyard; and W. Fox, Holborn.

Critical Review.—Had Mr. Wesley prudently restricted himself within the limits of his profession, by elucidating the principles of primitive religion, he might have edified his readers much more, without either endangering their temporal welfare, or exposing his own opinions to the imputation of medical ignorance, of which he is so clearly convicted in this Examination.

Monthly Review.—The number of editions that Mr. Wesley's *Primitive Physic* has passed through, replete as it is with ignorance, error, and absurdity, affords such an instance of assurance on the one hand, and credulity on the other, as can scarcely be paralleled. To point out the gross blunders of that work, and to guard the unwary from the dangers to which an implicit confidence would expose them, is the present writer's laudable design. Mr. Hawes has conducted himself in a very decent manner, his animadversions are commonly just, and he has clearly convicted Mr. Wesley of the most disgraceful ignorance, as well as satisfactorily evinced the dangerous tendency of that gentleman's *Primitive Physic*.

London Review.—Highly as we think the public indebted to many of the medical practitioners of the present times, there are few to whom it owes greater obligations than to the worth examiner of the *Primitive Physic*. It is to be lamented, that the infamous publication did not fall sooner into his hands, as it must have been eventually the cause of many murders. Mr. Hawes, indeed, sufficiently exposes the effrontery of this Reverend Quack. His pamphlet, however, is not confined merely to the pointing out such errors as might prove most fatal; his medical remarks and observations serving to set those right whom Mr. Wesley may have misled. We earnestly recommend it, therefore, as particularly useful, and even necessary to all such as possess and pay any regard to Mr. Wesley's *Primitive Physic*.

Medical Magazine.—In this manner Mr. Hawes pursues the Divine Physician through the whole of his very extraordinary performance, and, while he is exposing the folly, rashness, and wickedness of his author, displays great knowledge in the medical art. To those, therefore, who have the misfortune to be possessed of Mr. Wesley's *Primitive Physic*, we prescribe the perusal of Mr. Hawes's *Examination*.

N.B. Mr. Hawes answered Mr. Wesley's address to him (of July 20th) in our paper, on Friday, the 26th instant.

John Wesley. [Reply to Hawes] (27 July 1776)

A. “To the Printer of the *London Chronicle*.” *London Chronicle* 40 (1–3 Aug. 1776), 117

[Identical in *Gazetteer* (2 Aug. 1776), 2.]

Sir,

July 27.

1. It is easy to discern what were the motives that induced Mr. Hawes to make so violent an attack upon the *Primitive Physic*. The chief, doubtless, was that kind of zeal, which usually swallows up both justice and mercy. Had the *Calm Address*¹⁹ never appeared, the *Primitive Physic* might have slept in peace. His consciousness of this made him endeavour to cover the sore place. “I have not (says he) been induced to this by any consideration of the part of Mr. Wesley has taken in the *political world*,” p. 83. Believe it who can. He cannot contain himself, even to the end of his preface! See, says he, “The second edition of Mr. Evans’s letter to Mr. Wesley, in which he as been convicted of premeditated falsehood.” Not so. Both Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Olivers have answered that charge effectually.²⁰ But be it as it may, he must recommend Mr. Evans’s letter: There the secret lies. Yet I will not say he had not a farther motive; resentment for my betraying the common practice of apothecaries. Whether the cap fits him or no, I cannot tell; I fear it does, or he would not be so angry.

2. Hence it is that he is so liberal of sarcasm and general recollections both on me and my tract. “Mr. Wesley’s character, both as a divine, a *politician*, and a practitioner in physic, is far enough from perfection,” (poor perfection, brought in by head and shoulders!) “though he is a zealous advocate for it. An injudicious collection of pretended remedies; a publication calculated to do essential injury to mankind. He gives, at his first setting out, a satisfactory evidence of his total want of medical knowledge. He says, neither the knowledge of astronomy, natural philosophy, nor even anatomy itself, is absolutely *necessary* to the cure of most diseases.” I do say so still. And yet I may possibly know a little anatomy and natural philosophy. Neither is the “evidence of my total want of medical knowledge” quite satisfactory. I have read a few medical books (more I perceive than Mr. Hawes ever saw). I have conversed with many physicians, and I have attended sick beds for more than fifty years. By this time, therefore, I may be fairly supposed to have gained a little even of medical knowledge.

3. His regard for the Rev. Mr. Toplady (a gentleman that uses no ceremony with friend or foe; from whom he borrows a large quotation, plentifully abusive, and whose whole spirit he had drank in) I conceive is a third, and no small motive to his publication. May I sum up all his motives in the words of an author whom I found many years ago in the Bodleian library? “I write this book, 1. To please my friends; 2. To vex my enemies; 3. To get money; and 4. reputation.”

4. I have only leisure to add a few cursory remarks: — p. 24. “Where did Mrs. Bates live?” Consult Sir John Floyer, and you may learn both the place, and other circumstances of the story. P. 31. “You call the chicken broth an insignificant remedy for the cholera morbus, prescribed by Mr. Wesley.” Nay, it was prescribed by Dr. Sydenham to all his patients, when that disease was epidemic in London. P. 33. If Mr. H. had ever read Sir John Floyer’s works, he would have spared these pointless witticisms.

¹⁹Wesley’s *Calm Address to Our American Colonies* (1775).

²⁰John William Fletcher, *A Vindication of the Rev. Mr. Wesley’s “Calm Address to our American Colonies”* (London: R. Hawes, 1776); and Thomas Olivers, *A Full Defense of the Rev. John Wesley, in answer to the several personal reflections cast on that gentleman by the Rev. Caleb Evans in his observations on Mr. Wesley’s late reply prefixed to his Calm Address* (London: s.n., 1776).

The account of Mrs. Watts, as well as Mrs. Bates, rests on his authority, not mine. P. 35. "In all the various cholics, Mr. Wesley has not advised one purgative or laxative remedy." I do not say, Mr. Hawes is now convicted of premeditated falsehood. But I say his memory fails him. Let him refresh it, by looking at No. 195. If that is not a laxative remedy, I am ignorant indeed. P. 46. He is witty upon the assertion, that "plunging into cold water has cured an high fever, attended with delirium." Strange! Is Mr. Hawes as little acquainted with Dr. Wills's [Willis's] works, as with those of Dr. Sydenham? There he may read at large, the account of the young woman in those circumstances whom the doctor cured, restored to perfect health, by plunging her in the Thames. Ibid. "Mr. Wesley prescribes *forty* remedies for an ague! And yet, he says, experience shows that *one* thing will cure most disorders, at least as well as *twenty* put together in one medicine." True, as twenty *put together* in one medicine. But do I prescribe twenty of these *so put together*? No, never. Yet, even here, I do not charge Mr. Hawes with *premeditated falsehood*, but forgetfulness. P. 47. He seems not to know that an ague and an intermitting fever are the same disease. I know the contrary: Every ague is an intermitting fever; but every intermitting fever is not an ague. P. 48. "Mr. Wesley classes fevers under the following heads." No: it never was my design to *class fevers*; but merely to speak of a few, one after another. P. 50. "Whoever prescribes thus, whether Mr. Wesley, or any other quack (civil enough), will be in danger of violating the eighth commandment, commonly called the sixth. Ibid. "Mr. Wesley does not once advise an emetic or purgative at the beginning of fevers." No! Look at P. 31. Yet still I will not accuse you of *premeditated* falsehood. Rather, I say, this is the third time you have accused me falsely, out of *forgetfulness*. P. 55. That Dr. T.²¹ died at Bath, I do not deny; and, perhaps, of the gout in the stomach. But that the *beef-steak* repelled him from his feet, I do deny, for it does not *repel* at all. I have tried it myself more than once; or I should hardly have been alive now.

5. P. 64. "If the lancet be not freely used in the pleurisy, it will terminate in an abscess." I know the contrary. I know it may be perfectly cured without using the lancet at all; although I thought it strange when Dr. Cockburn, of St. James's, told me, "Sir, I never bleed in a pleurisy, I know no end it answers; which I cannot answer by other means, without wasting the strength of the patient;" and he accordingly cured my brother of a very high pleurisy, in about nine hours time. P. 66. "He has insinuated, with a jesuitism truly characteristic of himself." Polite indeed! Set this also to the account of the *Address*. P. 67. "Astonishing effrontery!" Is this the voice of a gentle apothecary, or a friend Mr. T[oplady]? P. 72. "We have Mr. Wesley's authority for it, that a poultis of powdered coal has cured even a carious bone." Pity Mr. Hawes should thus betray his ignorance! Does he not know that the account of this eminent cure, wrought by a surgeon at Montpelier, was published in several magazines not many years ago? P. 78. "This is given as an *infallible* medicine." No. I believe no medicine is infallible. The letter "I" means only (as I observe in the preface) that many *account* it so.

6. However, I again thank Mr. Hawes for his publication; I am glad to learn of him, or any man. I have accordingly read it over with care, in consequence whereof, in the edition of the *Primitive Physic* which I am now preparing for the press, I have omitted forty or fifty remedies. I have endeavoured to guard others. I have adopted several of his practical observations; so that I have reason to hope, the present edition will be more useful than any of the former.
JOHN WESLEY.

P.S. From Mr. Hawes's letter of the 25th instant, I learn that he has lost all patience as well as good manners. Hence he splutters out abundance of Billingsgate language, without either fear or wit. As the weather is hot, I would humbly advise him to take a cooling potion; neither could any one at all object, in so melancholy a tale, to a "free use of the lancet."

²¹Edward Townshend, dean of Norwich cathedral.

B. "To the Editor of *Lloyd's Evening Post*." *Lloyd's Evening Post, and British Chronicle* 39 (31 July–2 Aug. 1776), 113.

Sir,

July 29, 1776.

1. It is easy to discern what were the motives that induced Mr. Hawes to make so violent an attack upon the *Primitive Physic*. The chief, doubtless, was that kind of zeal, which swallows up both justice and mercy. Had the *Calm Address* never appeared, the *Primitive Physic* might have slept in peace. His consciousness of this made him endeavour to cover the sore place. "I have not (says he,) been induced to this by any consideration of the part of Mr. W. has taken in the political world," p 83. Believe it who can! He cannot contain himself, even to the end of his preface! See, (says he,) "The second edition of Mr. Evans's letter to Mr. W. in which he as been convicted of premeditated falsehood." Not so; both Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Olivers have answered the charge effectually. But be it as it may, he must recommend Mr. Evans's letter. There the secret lies. Yet I will not say he had not a farther motive: resentment for my betraying the common practice of apothecaries. Whether that cap fits, or not, I cannot tell. I fear it does, or he would not be so angry.

2. Hence it is, that he is so liberal of sarcasm and general recollections both on me and my tract.—"Mr. W.'s character, both as a divine, a *politician*, and a practitioner in physick, is far enough from perfection, (poor perfection! brought in by head and shoulders!) though he is a zealous advocate for it." —"An injudicious collection of pretended remedies." —"A publication calculated to do essential injury to mankind." —"He gives, at his first setting out, a satisfactory evidence of his total want of medical knowledge." —He says, "Neither the knowledge of astronomy, natural philosophy, nor even anatomy itself, are *absolutely necessary* to the cure of most diseases." —I do say so still; and yet I may possibly know a little of anatomy and natural philosophy. Neither is the "evidence of my total want of medical knowledge quite satisfactory." I have read a few medical books (more I perceive than Mr. Hawes ever saw). I have conversed with many Physicians, and I have attended sick beds for more than fifty years. By this time, therefore, I may be fairly supposed to have gained a little more, even of medical knowledge.

3. His regard for Rev. Mr. T[oplady] (a gentleman that uses no ceremony with friend or foe, from whom he borrows large quotations, plentifully abusive, and whose whole spirit he was drunk in), I conceive is a third, and no small motive to his publication. May I sum up all his motives in the words of an author, which I found many years ago in the Bodleian library? "I write this book, 1. To please my friends; 2. To vex my enemies; 3. To get money; and 4. reputation."

4. I have only leisure to add a few cursory remarks. P. 24. "Where did Mrs. Bates live?" —"Consult Sir John Floyer, and you may learn both the place, and other circumstances of the story." —P. 31. "You call the chicken broth an insignificant remedy for the cholera morbus, prescribed by Mr. W." —"Nay, it was prescribed by Dr. Sydenham to all his patients, when that disease was epidemic in London." —"P. 33. If Mr. H. had ever read Sir John Floyer's works, he would have spared these pointless witticisms. The account of Mrs. Watts, as well as Mrs. Bates, rests on his authority, not mine. P. 35. "In all the various cholicks, Mr. W. has not advised one purgative or laxative remedy." —I do not say Mr. H. is not convicted of premeditated falsehood, but I say his memory fails him. Let him refresh it, by looking at No. 195: If that is not a laxative remedy, I am ignorant indeed. —P. 46. He is witty upon the assertion, that plunging into cold water has cured an high fever, attended with delirium. Strange!

Is Mr. H. as little acquainted with Dr. Willis's works as with those of Dr. Sydenham? There he may read at large the account of the young woman in those circumstances, whom the Doctor cured, restored to perfect health, by plunging her in the Thames. *Ibid*. "Mr. Wesley prescribes *forty* remedies for an ague, and yet, he says, experience shows that one thing will cure most disorders, at least as well as *twenty* put together in one medicine." True, as *twenty put together* in one medicine. But do I prescribe twenty of these to be so put together? No, never. Yet, even here, I do not charge Mr. H. with premeditated falsehood, but forgetfulness. P. 47. "He seems not to know that an ague and an intermitting fever are the

same disease.” —“I know the contrary; every ague is an intermitting fever, but every intermitting fever is not an ague. P. 48. “Mr. W. classes fevers under the following heads.” —No; it never was my design to *class fevers*; but merely to speak of a few, one after another. —P. 50. “Whoever prescribes this, whether Mr. W. or any other quack (civil enough) will be in danger of violating the eighth commandment,” —(commonly called the sixth.) Ibid. “Mr. W. does not once advise an emetic, or purgative, at the beginning of Fevers.” —No! Look at p. 31. Yet still I will not accuse you of premeditated falsehood. —Rather, I say, this is the third time you have accused me falsely, out of forgetfulness. P. 55. That Dr. T²² died at Bath, I do not deny; and, perhaps, of the gout in the stomach. But that the beef-steak repelled it from his feet, I do deny; for it does not repel at all. I have tried it myself more than once; or I should hardly have been alive now.

5. P. 64. “If the lancet be not freely used in the pleurisy, it will terminate in an abscess.” —I know the contrary. I know it may be perfectly cured without the lancet at all; although I thought it strange when Dr. Cockburn, of St. James’s, told me, “Sir, I never bleed in a pleurisy, I know no end it answers; which I cannot answer by other means, without wasting the strength of the patient;” and he accordingly cured my brother of a very high pleurisy, in about nine hours time. P. 66. “He has insinuated, with a jesuitism truly characteristic of himself.” —Polite indeed! Set this also to the account of the *Address*. P. 67. “Astonishing effrontery!” Is this the voice of a genteel apothecary, or a friend Mr. T[oplady]? P. 72. “We have Mr. W.’s authority for it that a poultis of powdered coal has cured even a carious bone.” —Pity Mr. H. should betray his ignorance! Does he not know that the account of the eminent cure, wrought by a surgeon at Montpelier, was published in several magazines not many years ago? P. 78. “This is given as an *infallible* medicine.” No; I believe no medicine is infallible. The letter “I” means only (as I observed in the preface) that many *account* it so.

6. However, I again thank Mr. Hawes for his publication. I am glad to learn of him, or any man. I have accordingly read it over with care. In consequence whereof, in the edition of the *Primitive Physic* which I am now preparing for the press, I have omitted forty or fifty remedies. I have endeavoured to guard others. I have adopted several of his practical observations. So that I have reason to hope the present edition will be more useful than any of the former.

I am, Sir, your humble Servant,
JOHN WESLEY.

P.S. From Mr. Hawes’s letter of the 25th instant, I learn that he has lost all patience, as well as good manners. Hence he splutters out abundance of Billingsgate language without either fear or wit. As the weather is hot, I would humbly advise him to take a cooling potion; neither could any one at all object, in so melancholy a tale, to a “free use of the lancet.”

²²Edward Townshend, dean of Norwich cathedral.

**Talus [pseud.]. "To the Rev. Mr. John Wesley."
London Chronicle (3–6 Aug. 1776), 127.**

Rev. Sir,

Destitute as you are of the feelings of humanity, I do not wonder at your affected air of sovereign contempt for Mr. Hawes, in a late scandalous letter, dated July 20th, the whole of which is a downright grimace; that you only wanted to screen for your malice; and that the pretence of a greater demand for your *now reprobated* pamphlet is no other than an indecent cover for putting this last weak effort of your rage in print. But, perhaps, Rev. Sir, in your list of virtues, this *pretended unconcern* is reckoned not the *lest* among them; and yet others may think, and some I doubt not will dare to call it, a *mere brutish obstinacy*, *ψιλή παρατ* [? 2nd /3rd words unclear], or the more filthy obstinacy of a priest.

TALUS.

William Hawes. [Reply to Wesley's letter of July 27.] (6 Aug. 1776)

A. "To the Printer." *Lloyd's Evening Post, And British Chronicle* 39 (7–9 Aug. 1776), 140.

Sir,

Mr. Wesley at length appears to be sensible that an answer was necessary to my *Examination* of his *Primitive Physic*, of a different kind from that which he thought proper to publish in your *Evening Paper* of the 20th of July. I rejoice to find that he has not yet lost all his feelings, which, I confess, I before began to be apprehensive was the case. But my letter addressed to him in the same paper of the 26th ult. seems to have had a considerable effect upon him, notwithstanding the affected contempt with which he appears to treat it. With his usual art, indeed, he has drawn up his last letter, as if he intended to publish another answer, before he saw my last; but no impartial person can suppose this. It must have been very ridiculous in him, to have exposed himself by such a letter as that which was published in your paper of the 20th of July ult. if he had then intended to have published another, containing the least appearance of argument.

Mr. Wesley has discovered that I was induced to make "so violent an attack upon the *Primitive Physic*," by the displeasure which I had conceived against him on account of his writing the *Calm Address to the Colonies*. In this he is totally mistaken. I meddle too little with politics, to have been led to write against him by any such motives. He says, "Believe it who can." Those who know me will easily believe it; and I flatter myself that my general conduct in life has been such as to entitle me to some credit with the public. Nor was I induced to write against him by my attachment to Mr. Evans, or Mr. Toplady. The one of those gentlemen I never saw, and the other I have not the pleasure of being much acquainted with.

My reason for mentioning Mr. Evans's charge against Mr. Wesley was that it affected not his political sentiments but his veracity as a man. And I believe it is not the opinion of any impartial person, that a *satisfactory* answer to this charge has been published, either by Mr. Fletcher or Mr. Olivers.

My motives for writing *An Examination of Mr. Wesley's Primitive Physic* were truly assigned in that publication: I thought his book calculated to do essential injury to my fellow-creatures, and that I acted the part of a good member of society, in pointing out its pernicious tendency. I am still of the same opinion, and have the satisfaction to have good reason to believe that the impartial public concur with me in sentiment.

I have charged Mr. Wesley, in the 66th page of my *Examination*, with an artful insinuation in one of his letters, calculated for no other purpose but to deceive. Instead of answering this charge, he intimates that I am deficient in politeness towards him. I believe that throughout the whole affair I have written with full as much politeness as *such* a man deserved. Had I supposed it possible for a *good man* to have written such an answer, to such charges against him as those brought in the *Examination*, as was published by him in your paper of July the 20th ult. I should have answered him in a different style. But I thought it impossible for any well-intentioned man, in such circumstances, to have written in such a manner. I am still of the same opinion; and on this subject I have not met with a single person who has differed from me.

Mr. Wesley is displeased that I knew not readily where to find the cases to which he refers in two or three places in his *Primitive Physic*, though he quotes no authorities: And indeed, it is not generally his method, in his publications, to acknowledge from whence he borrows his materials; for his character as a *plagiary*, is well established. But Mr. Wesley has such a knack at misrepresenting the cases which he may happen to derive from a good author, or states the facts in so awkward a manner, that it may well be

doubted, whether the original writers themselves, from whom he has borrowed them, would know them again in his book. At least it can hardly be considered as a mark of *ignorance* in another man not to know them again, however well he may be acquainted with the original authors; and, indeed, there is no man of extensive reading who does not forget many things that he has read. Nor is there, perhaps, any man in Europe, besides Mr. Wesley, who would charge another with *ignorance*, merely for not remembering every case that may have published in *magazines*. To obtain the reputation of knowledge with Mr. Wesley, it is necessary that a man should be a very diligent, exact, and retentive reader of those learned monthly publications.

As to Sydenham, he is an author entitled to the highest regard from every professor of the medical art; and I was no stranger to his having recommended *chicken-broth* in the *cholera morbus*, but it was only as a watery fluid to correct and dilute the bile, and not as a remedy for the disease, as Mr. Wesley ridiculously does. Dr. Sydenham advises as a medicine sixteen drops of *liquid laudanum*; whereas Mr. Wesley, as *another remedy*, prescribes *six grains of laudanum*, by which he must mean *solid opium*; a prescription which would be fatal to ninety-nine persons out of a hundred.

The last edition of *Primitive Physic* contains prescriptions that would kill those who should make use of them. With this Mr. Wesley has been some months publicly acquainted; and yet these pernicious books are now, to my knowledge, sold in London, not altered even with the pen. Had he been possessed of the least humanity, he would have taken care that this should not be the case; he would have reprinted those leaves, and called in those books that were in the hands of the booksellers, which contained the dangerous prescriptions. But no *gain* was to be made of this; though somewhat may possibly be got by the *new edition*, which we are now informed is in the press. And however pernicious the tendency of the book may be, the *disinterested* compiler will be abundantly gratified if it can be made to sell *more and more*. The honest frequenters of the Foundry will be carefully informed by Mr. Wesley, or his learned deputies, if he should not be present himself, that when service is over, *it may be had at the door*.

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It therefore affords me some satisfaction to find that if what I have written should not wholly prevent injudicious people *from attending to Mr. Wesley's Primitive Physic*, which as a medical compilation is unworthy of the least regard, yet *I shall at least have been the means* of rendering it less pernicious.

Strand, Aug. 6.

W. HAWES.

N.B. As Mr. Wesley has been kind enough to prescribe for me, in a Postscript to his last, I will repay the civility, by prescribing for him also in my turn, as I should be extremely sorry to have *less benevolence* than himself. I will take the liberty of recommending the following prescription, as what would be of unquestionable service to him. — Take one ounce of *veracity*, half an ounce of *modesty*, one ounce of *religion* (unmixed with *hypocrisy*), and two ounces of *honesty*; the whole to be mixed up with a sufficient quantity of *medical skill*, somewhat superior to that of a *Moorfields quack*, and to be taken once in twenty-four hours, with a large draught of *warm water*, *cold water*, *tar-water*, or *red-hot flint-water*. (See the *Primitive Physic*, 180, 181, 182, 183) whichsoever may be most agreeable to the patient.

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B. “To the Printer.” *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (8 Aug. 1776), 2.

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