GEORGE LESLY (d. 1701), CHURCH OF ENGLAND CLERGYMAN AND WRITER. There is not much doubt that the Scottish-born Lesly attended Aberdeen University, where he probably took his MA. After completing university, he went to England, where he spent the next thirty-four years, first as a rector (in Northamptonshire, from 1668-1687) and then as a minister (in Buckinghamshire, from 1687-1701). All of his published works were on religious subjects, often focusing on popular biblical narratives and figures. Joseph Revived (1676) and Israel’s Troubles and Triumph (1699), Lesly’s first two works, focus respectively on the story of Joseph and that of Moses and the escape of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. His Divine Dialogues, a commentary on various biblical narratives in verse, appeared in 1678 (reprinted, 1684). In the same year, Lesly also published some of his sermons in The Universal Medicine, and this work was also popular enough to merit a second edition (1684).

DIVINE DIALOGUES (1678)

FROM FIRE AND BRIMSTONE; OR THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM

[…]

SODOMITES. O Heav’ns! I’m choked with smoke, I’m burned with fire,
O Brimstone, brimstone! Where shall we retire?
We die, we die! Oh, may this be the last
Of Heav’n’s dreadful sentence on us passed!
We’re burned and damned, there is no remedy;
We would not hear Lot, when he bid us fly
From wrath to come. Oh, how our limbs crack
With fire! Our conscience is upon the rack
For by-past crimes; our beastly lusts torment
Us, as the precious time that we have spent.
O wretched Nature, whither hast thou brought
Us fools, and made us sell our souls for nought?
Luxurious eyes, why were ye so unkind
To dote on objects, who have made you blind?
And you, tenacious hands, why did you grasp
The poison of the spider? Why from wasp
Did you seek honey? Did not Heav’n bestow,
As upon Lot, so also upon you,
The lawful helps and remedies for lust?
Was not all this enough? But that you must

1 The volume contains verse dialogues based on Biblical sources: the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Dives); the story of Sodom and Gomorrah; and the story of Abraham’s aborted sacrifice of his son, Isaac.
2 The following selection contains the lamentation of the Sodomites.
In spite of Heav’n, lay hold on all that came,  
Although they man his members had or name.  
Could not a lawful wedlock satisfy  
Thy burning flame, proud flesh? No, thou must cry,  
“Bring out thy handsome guests; them we must know,”  
Not knowing that they were not from below;  
Whose just revenge doth make us miserable,  
To bear these scorching flames we are not able.  
And yet alas! our woe doth but begin,  
The vengeance is eternal that’s for sin.  
Oh, that Lot’s God would grant us a reprieve  
But for one hour, that wretched we might live  
To wail our by-past sins, and beg his aid,  
Who never yet to humble sinners said,  
“I scorn your plaints,” but always graciously  
Prepared a bottle for a melting eye,\(^3\)  
And piece-meal prayers made whole with his own merit,  
Sa’ing, “Be comforted, ’tis you must inherit  
My endless joy”; which sentence now doth pierce  
Our souls so much, that we cannot rehearse  
Our woes, though Oh! alas! it is too late,  
We must expect nought but Almighty’s hate.  
See how the devils laugh, whom we have served:  
O cursed sp’rits, is’t this we have deserved  
From you, for all those things that we have done  
At your command?

[...]

\(^3\) *a bottle for a melting eye* perhaps a reference to some kind of eye medicine?