Exhorting or Extorting?: George Whitefield's Financial Controversies

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Exhorting or Extorting? George Whitefield’s Financial Controversies

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A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

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This thesis examines George Whitefield's fundraising techniques and their reception by his audiences in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston between 1738 and 1770. Although historians have assumed that Whitefield's fundraising work was inherently controversial, a close analysis of Whitefield's own writings and the newspapers and pamphlets published in these cities reveals that this was not the case. Instead, questions about his collections began once Whitefield's ministry as a whole became more controversial in 1741 and continued until 1746 when he published an external audit of his financial accounts. During this period, attacks on Whitefield's finances became a potent way to discredit his ministry and the revivals he promoted. While these criticisms appeared throughout the colonies, there were significant thematic and chronological differences in the content of the debates in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston. Arguments over his collections reveal different understandings of how religion, charity, and the economy should relate to one another in the mid-eighteenth century.
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To my friends and family that thought this was the last they would have to hear about colonial religion, well, this is only the beginning.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Benjamin Franklin reluctantly dropping his coppers into George Whitefield’s collection plate is one of the most commonly cited anecdotes in Whitefield historiography. At the time, the itinerant preacher was travelling through the colonies to evangelize and to raise money for his Georgia orphan house known as Bethesda. Although Franklin “did not disapprove of the Design,” he expressed doubts about the prudence of an orphanage in a colony that “was then destitute of Materials & Workmen” and he “thought it would have been better to have built the House” in Philadelphia. After unsuccessfully attempting to dissuade Whitefield from the project, Franklin “refus’d to contribute” to the orphanage. Shortly thereafter, Franklin attended one of Whitefield’s sermons with a friend who was “of my Sentiments respecting the Building in Georgia, and suspecting a Collection might be intended, had by Precaution emptied his Pockets” before he left home. As Whitefield began to preach, Franklin “began to soften” and he tossed some coins into the collection plate. “Another Stroke of his Oratory” made the printer “asham’d of that, and determin’d me to give the Silver; & he finish’d so admirably, that I empty’d my Pocket wholly into the Collector’s Dish, Gold and all.” Franklin’s friend was also touched by Whitefield and begged his neighbor, “perhaps the only Man in the Company who had the firmness not to be affected by the Preacher,” to “borrow some Money for the Purpose.” Franklin
used the anecdote to show how Whitefield’s eloquence gave him “Power over
the Hearts & Purses of his Hearers,” even of a noted skeptic like himself.¹

Franklin’s portrayal in the Autobiography of his relationship to the orphan
house is misleading. Although he painted himself as a reluctant donor, the
printer supported the evangelical institution throughout his life. He collected
money for the house, promoted it in his newspapers, and willingly contributed his
own money even when he was not under the sway of Whitefield’s persuasive
preaching. He may have portrayed the plan of the institution as foolish, but
Franklin respected Whitefield’s charitable acumen enough to seek advice on the
fundraising and planning for his own projects. Regardless of their theological
differences, Franklin and Whitefield’s relationship was built in part on mutual
admiration of one another’s charitable ventures.²

George Whitefield decided to build an orphanage in Georgia in 1738
based on an idea from Charles Wesley. He travelled around England and raised
three hundred pounds sterling for the future orphanage as well as one thousand
pounds sterling for various local charity schools. After a brief four month trip to
Georgia in 1738 to assess the colony, Whitefield returned to London to be

¹ Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography and Other Writings, ed. Ormond Seavey (Oxford: Oxford University
² Whitefield to Mr. F—, Plymouth, 26 Feb. 1750, in THE WORKS OF THE REVEREND GEORGE WHITEFIELD,
M. A. Late of PEMBROKE-COLLEGE, OXFORD, and Chaplain to the Rt. Hon. the Countess of HUNTINGDON
Profits and Pity: The Friendship of Benjamin Franklin and George Whitefield,” The William and Mary
Quarterly, 3d. ser., 50, no. 3 (July 1993): 546-547; Harry S. Stout, “George Whitefield and Benjamin
Franklin: Thoughts on a Peculiar Friendship,” Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 3d. ser.,
Quarterly 29, no. 4 (Dec. 1945): 211-216; Arnold A. Dalimore, George Whitefield: The Life and Times of
the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980),
2:441-454.
ordained as a priest in the Church of England. He continued to raise money for his orphan house and preached outdoors to crowds of up to twenty thousand people. He also published letters, journals, sermons, and press releases that promoted his ministry and his orphanage. Whitefield returned to the colonies in 1739 for a fifteen month preaching tour and was largely well received, although the commotion that was associated with his preaching and his habit of criticizing the established clergy made him a controversial figure. Whitefield returned to Scotland and England in 1741 and remained there until 1744.

While he was gone, the colonists debated his ministry, and particularly his collections, in the press. Beginning in 1741 and continuing into 1746, major opponents such as Charles Chauncy and Edward Wigglesworth in Boston, Alexander Garden and Publicola in Charleston, and the Querists in Philadelphia attacked his fundraising techniques, his accounting methods, and his Bethesda orphanage. When Whitefield returned to the colonies in October of 1744, he passionately defended himself against these charges and worked to clear his name by changing his collection methods and publishing his audited accounts. Despite their disagreements, both his supporters and detractors recognized that the financial slurs were particularly damaging to Whitefield's reputation.

Franklin's story has found its way into almost every account of George Whitefield's ministry. Some historians have used it to illustrate the friendship between the two eighteenth-century giants. Others have echoed Franklin's analysis and used the story to show the oratorical prowess that gave Whitefield fame as a preacher. Still others have looked at the story as a case study of why
Whitefield was a good business investment for ambitious entrepreneurs. Despite its ubiquity in the historical literature, no historian has analyzed this anecdote on its most basic and obvious level: how did Whitefield's contemporaries perceive his financial collections? A closer look at Franklin and his coppers reveals a more complex relationship between Whitefield's audience and his finances than is captured in the historiography on the preacher.

Recent work on Whitefield by Harry Stout and Frank Lambert has emphasized the preacher's innovative use of commercial strategies and language to promote himself and his ministry. However, neither has explored how Whitefield used these strategies to collect money for the wide variety of causes he supported nor have they provided an in-depth examination of the reactions to his collections. Most studies of Whitefield operate under the assumption that his collections were inherently controversial.3 Whitefield's charity work in general has received spotty treatment. The three book length

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studies on Bethesda, his most significant project, provide a helpful narrative of its complex history but include little analysis to connect it to broader issues outside of Georgia. Numerous articles illuminate various issues relating to the orphan house and its relationship with the struggling colony of Georgia. The authors of these articles also debate the place of Bethesda in Whitefield’s larger ministry, with some viewing it as the central anchor of his career and others treating Bethesda’s constant need for funds as a convenient excuse for Whitefield to promote himself. Despite the volume of scholarship on Whitefield, there are no studies that examine his collections and their reception by his American audience.4

Like Franklin and his coppers, a closer examination of the reception of Whitefield’s fundraising work in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston reveals a mixed reaction from his audience. Whitefield’s collections were not controversial during his first colonial tour between October of 1739 and January of 1741, paradoxically the period when the itinerant’s collections were most publicized. Questions about his collections began once Whitefield’s ministry as a whole became more controversial in 1741 and continued until 1746 when he published an external audit of his accounts that abruptly stopped the criticisms. During that

period, attacks on Whitefield’s finances became a potent way to discredit his ministry and the revivals in general. Although his collections were divisive throughout the colonies, there were significant thematic and chronological differences in the debates that occurred in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston. For Whitefield, the controversies and his own struggles with debt led him to change how he funded his ministry. The criticisms of Whitefield’s finances were a brief but intense part of the colonial reaction to his ministry.

The debates over the collection, organization, and application of charitable donations reveal different understandings of how religion, charity, and the economy should relate to one another in the mid-eighteenth century. While both Whitefield and his colonial audience interpreted his message using commercial language, the unifying strand of the debates of his finances was not the commercialization of religion but the nature of accountability. Partisans on either side of the debate had fundamentally different ideas about what accountability meant, let alone how this concept should be applied to an itinerant fundraiser. Was a person raising money answerable to the donors who believed they were supporting a particular cause, or was he responsible for using the money for the general good of society? The different answers to these questions reveal that there were several competing ideas about how a charitable project should be organized circulating in the colonies. Was trusting God an appropriate financial strategy, or did the realities of managing a transatlantic project require a more nuanced funding plan? As they debated this question, Whitefield and his contemporaries grappled with how God acted through a market economy.
Chapter one examines the development of Whitefield’s ideas about fundraising and how this had an impact upon his collection strategies up through 1748. Whitefield’s chronic struggles with debt after 1741 and the subsequent collection controversies changed his philosophy on how to finance a project. He shifted from relying on charity sermons and temporary collections to seeking out a “visible fund” that would provide a financial safety net for his projects. While this chapter does not provide a comprehensive overview of Whitefield’s fundraising techniques, it emphasizes the gap between the collection strategies he was using and the criticisms of his finances.

Chapter two explores the regional and chronological variations in the debates on Whitefield’s financial practices between 1739 and 1748. Each region focused on a different aspect of Whitefield’s collections, revealing that the different cities had different preoccupations when it came to charity work. In Charleston, where the debates began, they centered on the proper structure and accountability of a charitable organization. In Boston, Whitefield’s collections were seen as a symptom of his enthusiasm. Philadelphians produced comparatively few criticisms of his finances, but reprinted articles liberally from the Boston and Charleston debates. Despite these general thematic groupings, there was no consensus among his critics about why Whitefield’s collections should be controversial. Some asserted that he was making himself rich at their expense, others believed that he was a poor vagrant, and still others claimed that he meant no harm and was simply a fool. Both supporters and critics alike agreed, however, that attacking Whitfield’s finances was a particularly potent way
to bring down the evangelist. These heated debates over his finances effectively ended when Whitefield published an external audit of his finances in 1746. The conclusion explores Whitefield’s changing collection strategies and their largely positive reception until his death in 1770.
Chapter 2

Exhorting: Whitefield’s Fundraising Techniques

Whitefield’s unprecedented success preaching London charity sermons propelled him to fame in 1737, but the technique did not remain a steady part of his colonial fundraising repertoire. Instead, the itinerant changed his collection strategies based on the reaction to his fundraising and his shifting attitudes on how to finance his orphanage. During his first tour of America between October of 1739 and January of 1741, Whitefield relied on charity sermons and a publicized network of supporters to help him collect money. While he was in England between his first two colonial tours, Whitefield’s attitudes toward his finances underwent a fundamental shift. The combination of debt and controversy prompted Whitefield to seek out a “visible fund” that would support his orphan house and to shun the publicized collections that had been so successful. Despite these problems, Whitefield continued to be respected for his collections and offered advice to a diverse contingent of fellow charity organizers.\(^5\)

Whitefield’s Georgia orphanage played a central role in his ministry from its inception in 1737 until his death in 1770. He listed his reasons for building an orphanage in the infant colony in his first financial accounts published in 1739. Whitefield had noticed that there were many orphans in Savannah and that it

\(^5\) Whitefield used “raising funds” and “collections” to describe how he gathered money. However, fundraising is used in this paper to vary the monotony of “collecting.” Whitefield used the term “visible fund” to refer to a regularized, external source of funding for the orphanage such as an endowment or salary. See below for a more substantial discussion of the phrase.
would “be an unspeakable Comfort” to current and future colonists if they could be “assured their Children will be provided for after their Decease.” The orphanage would support Georgia by providing a steady Christian workforce and an infirmary to serve the poor of the colony. Most importantly, Whitefield envisioned the orphanage as an evangelical institution that would care for both the body and soul of its residents. He wrote that “the Salvation of Souls is the chief Thing I had in View, when God put it into my Heart to build this House” and he frequently mentioned the conversions that happened at Bethesda in his promotional materials.⁶

Whitefield maneuvered so that the orphanage would be entirely under his control. On May 9, 1739, he refused a salary from the Georgia Trustees for himself and anyone he hired to work in the orphan house. He returned the commission that allowed him to legally collect money for the institution, claiming that he had “not been able to collect a farthing in virtue of it, but rather that it everywhere met with contempt.” Instead, he had promises for annual subscriptions and had collected over seven hundred pounds sterling for the orphanage. Whitefield never explained how the commission was met with “contempt,” but he reasoned that if he built Bethesda with money that he collected independently of the Trustees, he should be solely in charge of “the management and disposal of” the orphanage. If the Trustees refused to grant

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⁶ AN ACCOUNT OF MONEY, Receiv’d and Expended by the Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD, FOR THE Poor of GEORGIA ([London, 1739]), 3-4; George Whitefield, A CONTINUATION OF THE ACCOUNT OF THE ORPHAN-HOUSE in Georgia, From January 1740/1 to June 1742. To which are also subjoin’d, Some EXTRACTS from an Account of a Work of a like Nature, carried on by the late Professor Franck in Glachua near Hall in Saxony (Edinburgh: Printed by T. Lumisden, 1742), 3.
him complete control over the project for the rest of his life, Whitefield thought it would be “the best way to decline erecting the orphan house in Georgia.” This move, which was reported in both English and colonial newspapers, gave him sole authority over the financial future of the institution. Although Whitefield would continue to squabble with the Georgia Trustees over control of the orphanage, the funding for Bethesda was completely in Whitefield’s hands.

Despite the orphanage’s needs for money and supplies, Whitefield was a chronic multitasker when it came to supporting projects. He favored nondenominational projects that were financed by voluntary contributions, a strategy that forced him to constantly be alert to fundraising opportunities. Whitefield raised money for London charity schools and his own preaching venues such as his Moorfields Tabernacle, his Tottenham Court Road Chapel, and his New Building in Philadelphia. He also purchased five thousand acres on the Delaware River for a “Negroe School” that fizzled out early in his career. Outside of these long-term commitments, Whitefield raised money for the College of New Jersey, Eleazer Wheelock’s Indian School, the Philadelphia Academy, the Philadelphia Hospital, and a number of local causes in the cities that he visited. Notwithstanding these other projects, Bethesda was the institution most intimately associated with his name and Georgia was always on his mind.

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8 Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 227. See below for a discussion of these different projects.
The primary goal of Whitefield’s ministry was to convince his audience of the necessity of the dramatic conversion experience that he called the “new birth.” “Christian charity” was a central component of the new birth and Whitefield used the term to describe both an orientation and an action. In his sermon “The great Duty of Charity recommended,” Whitefield defined charity as “LOVE; if there is true love, there will be charity; there will be an endeavor to assist, help, and relieve according to that ability wherewith GOD has blessed us.” In a different sermon, he provided a similar definition of “Christian charity” as “a love of our brethren, proceeding from love towards GOD: loving all men in general, because of their relation to God; and loving good men in particular, for the grace we see in them.” Speaking against his detractors who claimed that Whitefield and his followers “deny all moral actions,” the preacher asserted that “we highly value them; but we say that faith in CHRIST, the love of GOD, and being born again, are of infinite more wealth; but you cannot be true Christians without having charity to your fellow-creatures.”

The motivation behind an act of charity was crucial for Whitefield. If the action was motivated by a love of God, it was a sign of “true Christianity.” If it sprung from a worldly motive, the person was in danger of deceiving themselves about their own righteousness. Whitefield warned his audience that “if you give an alms purely to be observed by man, or as expecting favour from GOD, merely

9 “The great Duty of Charity recommended,” in Works of Whitefield 6:232; “Marks of having received the Holy Ghost,” in Works of Whitefield 6:168; “Exhortation that all are bound by charity,” in Works of Whitefield 6:239; In his journals and newspaper accounts, Whitefield frequently emphasized the amount of mites he collected from the poor. For example, see “A CONTINUATION of the Reverend MR. WHITEFIELD’S JOURNAL From His Arrival at LONDON to His Departure from thence on his way to GEORGIA (9 December, 1738—June, 1739),” in George Whitefield’s Journals: A new edition containing fuller material than any hitherto published (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 234-235.
on the account thereof, you have not the glory of GOD . . . at heart, but merely yourself.” Giving alms to the poor would not help sinners “find rest in the soul” but only hurry them “from duty to duty.” Whitefield illustrated the distinction between charity and religious legalism in his sermon “The Pharisee and the Publican” on Luke 18:14. He described the prayers of the Pharisee who thanked God that “he was not as other men are, extortioner, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican.” The preacher expanded on the scene, describing the Pharisee’s “utmost disdain” and contempt as he spoke, “perhaps he even pointed” at the Publican as he committed “an act of the highest injustice to rob GOD of his prerogative.” In contrast to the Pharisee, the Publican begged God to be merciful to him as a sinner, exhibiting “no confidence in the flesh, no pleas fetched from pasting, paying tithes, or the performance of any other duty.” Without the grace of God, alms and tithes were futile attempts to earn salvation.10

Whitefield believed that “the greatest charity” was “to save a soul from death.” As Catherine Brekus has argued, eighteenth-century evangelicals fused “the humanitarian command to ‘do good’” with the “Christian imperative to ‘preach the gospel’” to create “an explosion of missionary zeal.” Charity should not only focus on ameliorating the temporal circumstances of the poor, but should also aim to evangelize. Whitefield’s own ideas about charity and the projects he supported exemplified this ideal. His Bethesda orphanage hoped to

10“The great Duty of Charity recommended,” in Works of Whitefield, 6:235; “CHRIST the only Rest for the Weary and Heavy-Laden,” in Works of Whitefield, 5:309; “The Pharisee and the Publican,” in Works of Whitefield, 6:40-41, 44; Whitefield used “alms” interchangeably with “acts of charity.” However, he was more likely to use “alms” when warning about the dangers of earning salvation through good works instead of God’s grace.
improve the physical circumstances of the orphans while also urging their salvation. Although he believed that his orphans were a particularly worthy cause, he avoided the language of the deserving or undeserving poor and later the idle or industrious poor that were common among his contemporaries.

Whitefield argued that since all souls “from the king that sits upon the throne, to the servant that grindeth at the mill, or the beggar that lieth upon the dunghill” were equal before God, “our intercession must be universal.” He included all of humanity in his charitable sphere, not just those in his local community.11

Whitefield’s idea of charity as care for the body and soul of others motivated by a love of God left room for all people, whether rich or poor, to practice it. While the poor may not be able to financially aid others, they could still “assist them by comforting, and advising them not to be discouraged though they are low in the world.” Trade should be conducted with this end in mind as well. In a letter to a merchant, Whitefield noted that as he was “called to trade, I to travel for GOD. Whilst trading, you are in effect travelling and preaching to thousands; for you greatly strengthen my hands in the LORD.” In another letter to a New England merchant, Whitefield thanked God for making his

correspondent "a Christian merchant, and teaching you the holy art of trafficking for the LORD. You trade upon a safe bottom. Your all is insured, and you shall receive your own with good usury at the great day. Go on, my dear man, spend and be spent for CHRIST's people." Whitefield believed that trade, like charity, was Christian when it was properly directed to God. It was also necessary, as the soul required "a care of society, a care of our bodies, and of our temporal concerns; but then all is to be regulated, directed, and animated by proper regards to GOD, CHRIST, and immortality. Our food and our rest, our trades and labours, are to be attended to, and all the offices of humanity performed in obedience to the will of GOD." Christians were not to "turn hermit" and "go out of the world, shut up our shops, and leave our children to be provided for by miracles," but to "follow trades and merchandize, and to be serviceable to the commonwealth; yet if we are really Christians, we shall be loose to the world." Instead of arguing that wealth needed to be purified through almsgiving, Whitefield believed that trade was a Christian act if properly dedicated and oriented toward God.  

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12 "The great Duty of Charity recommended," in Works of Whitefield 6:232; Whitefield to Mr. S-----, 10 October 1753, in Works of Whitefield, 3:34; Whitefield to Mr. S-----, 6 October 1747, in Works of Whitefield, 2:134; "The Care of the Soul urged as the one thing needful," in Works of Whitefield, 5:461; "Marks of a True Conversion," in Works of Whitefield, 5:343. Christine Leigh Heyrman has argued that Boston minister urged wealthy merchants in their congregations to donate money as a way to "purify" their wealth. Whitefield never advances this argument. See Heyrman, "The Fashion Among More Superior People: Charity and Social Change in Provincial New England, 1700-1740," American Quarterly 34, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 114-115. Whitefield emphasized in his sermons that he did not want his followers to neglect their worldly business as critics alleged. See "The Folly and Danger of being not righteous enough," in Works of Whitefield, 5:132-133 and Chapter 2 for a discussion of these criticisms. For a discussion of these criticisms, see below. For a discussion of Whitefield interpreting his ministry through a commercial lens, see Lambert, Pedlar in Divinity, 46-51.
Katherine Carté Engel has noted that “saving souls was expensive work” in the eighteenth century and Whitefield’s extensive fundraising network speaks to the truth of this claim. An important cog in this network during his first tour was William Seward, a former stock jobber for the South Sea Company who helped manage Whitefield’s finances and publicity. Seward was independently wealthy from his previous career and provided a financial safety net for the preacher. After his conversion in 1738, Seward used the talents that had made him a successful stockbroker to write “advertisements” that promoted Whitefield’s ministry. Written as third party news reports, the advertisements typically included his preaching schedule, locations where collections would be held, crowd size, amount of money raised, and audience reactions. These brief paragraphs also designated a local person who was collecting money and goods for the orphanage. Those who were “disposed to send Provisions or Money for the Orphan House” in Philadelphia, for example, were instructed to send them to “Mr. Stephen Benezet, Merchant, in Second Street.” In her analysis of colonial newspapers, Lisa Smith has argued that 64% of the articles on Whitefield during his first tour were “news” items like these advertisements. Since Whitefield and Seward likely wrote the majority of these, the newspaper coverage of his collections was positive and relatively homogenous. Although Whitefield continued to use these pieces throughout his ministry to promote himself and his projects, they were most prevalent on his first tour.13

In addition to these advertisements, Seward helped with collections and was in charge of Whitefield’s “Negroe School” in Philadelphia. On April 22, 1740, Seward purchased five thousand acres along the Delaware River for the sum of £2,200 sterling. In addition to housing an orphanage and school, Whitefield hoped “to settle our English Friends, where they might worship GOD in their own Way, without being thought Enthusiasts for so doing” on the land. Whitefield sent Seward to England in June of 1740 to begin raising funds and collecting subscriptions to pay for the tract. Once Seward reached London, he published his journal for the benefit of the project and included several of the letters he had written to important donors. In one letter, Seward said that he had “mention’d the Largeness of our Collections in America, which I told him I did to provoke him... not that I desired a Gift,” but instead that “I desired Fruit that might be bound to his Account.” Seward died suddenly in October of 1740 at the hands of an English mob while he was on a preaching and collecting tour with Howell Harris. His death also killed the ambitious “Negroe School” which was soon sold to the Moravians. The loss of his friend was personally devastating for Whitefield and catastrophic for his finances. The independently wealthy Seward had been the itinerant’s financial safety net and his death ushered in the first period of debt that Whitefield termed his “embarrassment.”

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Story (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 102, 102-111. Smith refers to the press coverage of Whitefield on his first tour as “iconic” and “one-dimensional.” However, she does take into account that Whitefield was the author of many of these pieces. See Whitefield to G— L —, Reedy Island, 22 May 1740, in Works of Whitefield 1:179-180. For a discussion of Whitefield and Seward’s printing strategies, see Lambert, Pedlar in Divinity, 52-69, 103-110.

14 William Seward, JOURNAL OF A VOYAGE FROM SAVNNAH to PHILADELPHIA, AND FROM PHILADELPHIA to ENGLAND, M,DCC.XL (London, 1740), 10-11, 2, 52, 72. Seward and Whitefield attempted to use this land as a bargaining chip with the Georgia Trustees, arguing that if the Trustees did not grant them
Other than Seward, Whitefield had a network of supporters who managed his financial affairs in each city that he visited. On his first tour, he printed advertisements that instructed "those who are disposed to send Money, Provisions, Clothing, Braisiery Ware, or any thing else" for the orphan house to leave these goods with one of his associates. Some of these men, such as Josiah Smith of Charleston, Gilbert Tennent of New Brunswick, and Benjamin Colman of Boston, were ministers. In addition to serving as collection hubs, ministers publicized Whitefield's charitable successes to their congregations to elicit further contributions. For example, Tennent wrote in an early letter to Whitefield that he "cease[d] not to make mention of you by Name in my public and private Prayer," and considered it his "duty" to mention the intended orphan house so "that God would prosper them, and encline his People to support them." Colman also raised money for Whitefield and read letters to his congregation updating them on Bethesda’s progress. Many of Whitefield’s letters to Colman contained similar themes to the promotional materials that he published for the orphanage. Indeed, Whitefield made some of his most successful collections at Colman’s Brattle Street Church, and it is likely that many of the congregants listening to Whitefield’s letters had contributed to Bethesda.15

"absolute freedom" over the land for the orphanage, Whitfield "should be obliged to persuade" persecuted English methodists "not to think of Georgia but to settle in Pensilvanea, unless the tenure be altered as proposed." See Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont. Diary of the First Early of Egmont (Viscount Percival), ed. Historical Manuscripts Commission, vol. 3, 1739-1747 (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1923), 151; For Whitefield’s reaction to Seward’s death, see Whitefield to Mr. J—— H——, London, 25 March 1741, in Three Letters to the Reverend Mr. George

15 See for example “BOSTON,” New England Weekly Journal, no. 702, Sept. 30, 1740, [2]; Gilbert Tennent to George Whitefield, New-Brunswick, 1 December 1739 in THREE LETTERS TO THE Reverend Mr. George
While ministers played an important role collecting and publicizing Whitefield's fundraising work, the majority of those in his financial network were merchants, publishers, and booksellers. Sharing religious beliefs or publishing pro-Whitefield articles were not requirements for accepting donations on the itinerant's behalf and this potentially enabled Whitefield to collect from individuals who may not have donated otherwise. In Philadelphia, Whitefield relied on the then Quaker merchant John Stephen Benezet to serve as a collection hub despite Whitefield's ambivalent relationship with Quakers in general. Benjamin Franklin, despite his professed hesitance in the *Autobiography* to support Bethesda, also accepted donations on Whitefield's behalf in Philadelphia. Franklin's rival Philadelphia printer Andrew Bradford, who printed a number of anti-Whitefield pieces in his *American Weekly Mercury*, was also advertised as a collection hub. In addition to collecting money and goods, the printers also published a number of works sold for the benefit of Whitefield's charity projects.

An advertisement in Boston alerted readers that Nathaniel Henchman was selling William Seward's journal "to be disposed of for the Benefit of the Negro School in the Province of Pennsylvania, with His Allowance to Him of reprinting the same in case there is a Demand for more than are now transmitted him." While Whitefield's fundraising network played a less public role on his later tours, he continued to rely on locals to help him manage his collections.16

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Whitefield’s reliance on newspaper advertisements and individuals from different backgrounds to handle his money was not unusual for collections in the colonies. Newspapers frequently instructed people to leave their donations with the publisher or bookseller. Colonists were also asked by their neighbors to give money to various local causes. For example, Gilbert Tennant asked for Benjamin Franklin’s help “in procuring a Subscription” for a new catholic meetinghouse in Philadelphia. Franklin was reluctant to make himself “disagreeable to my fellow Citizens, by too frequently soliciting their Contributions” and “absolutely refus’d” to publicly support the project or to give Tennant his “List of the Names of the Persons I knew by Experience to be generous and public-spirited.” Instead, Franklin advised him “to apply to all those whom you know will give something; next to those whom you are uncertain whether they will give any thing or not; and show them the List of those who have given: and lastly, do not neglect those who you are sure will give nothing; for in some of them you may be mistaken.” Tennant laughed but took his advice and “obtain’d a much larger Sum than he expected.” In addition to being pestered in person by their neighbors, newspapers printed advertisements for transatlantic projects such as the

Protestant working schools in Ireland and for missionary work done by the Scottish Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.17

The efforts to raise money for the “Great Fire” of 1740 in Charleston, South Carolina, reveal both the similarities and the differences between Whitefield’s financial network and contemporary colonial practices. The fire broke out in a hat shop on the night of November 18 and the disorganized efforts of the city’s residents failed to squelch the flames. By the time British troops were able to stop the fire, over three hundred buildings in the central part of the city had been destroyed and damages were estimated at £250,000 sterling. This calamity happened at an inopportune moment in Charleston’s history, as the city had struggled with years of legislative squabbles, a Small Pox outbreak in 1738, a Yellow Fever outbreak in 1739, the Stono Rebellion in 1739, and chronic fears of an impending Spanish invasion. The fire made headlines across the Atlantic world and Parliament issued an unprecedented £20,000 grant to help rebuild the city. South Carolina’s Lieutenant Governor William Bull published fundraising letters in various newspapers and wrote individually to wealthy Englishmen and colonists to solicit aid. In Boston, Governor Belcher printed an advertisement “hoping that notwithstanding the present impoverished State of this Province, we shall put on Bowels of Mercy, and cheerfully deny our selves to contribute freely for their relief which we trust will be a Sacrifice highly acceptable to GOD” and

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reflect well upon the province. The successful fundraising campaign brought in donations from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, England, and Barbados. Alexander Garden’s St. Philip’s Church in Charleston organized both the collections and their distribution.18

The collection efforts for Whitefield’s orphanage and for the Charleston fire had several key similarities. First, both projects asked people to send their money out of the local community to a colony hundreds of miles away. Second, no group had a monopoly on handling the community’s collections in either project. Ministers worked in tandem with merchants and lawyers to collect money for the fire. Governor Belcher’s brief in Boston papers asked ministers to “read and publish” the announcement “to stir up their People to a cheerful and liberal Contribution” for the victims. In addition to clerical collections, those who wanted to give a private donation were instructed to give the money to lawyers Francis Foxcroft, Jacob Wendell, and Anthony Stoddard. Third, the fundraising network balanced intercolonial organization with local efforts. Despite being prompted by the South Carolina governor, local individuals with an established reputation collected and distributed the money. Finally, the collections for both

the fire and the orphanage were incredibly successful. When properly informed about the charity, the colonists enthusiastically supported a distant cause.\textsuperscript{19}

However, Whitefield's collections also differed significantly from colonial precedents. Unlike the Charleston fire relief effort, Whitefield's fundraising network was organized by an individual and not by a colonial government. Whitefield was raising money for his own project, which he operated independently from institutional authority. He also made frequent collections for both the orphanage and the other projects he supported, as opposed to the onetime nature of the fire relief. Finally, the success of both Whitefield's collections and those for the Charleston fire were aberrations in the colonial fundraising landscape. While newspapers frequently published advertisements for transatlantic charity projects, it is unclear if these actually raised any money. These advertisements were often reprints from English papers and were not updated for colonial audiences; one even asked people to send their contributions to "Mr. Drommand Banker at Charing-Cross" in London.\textsuperscript{20}

Despite his public struggles with debt, many of Whitefield's contemporaries admired his collections and sought his guidance on their own projects. Benjamin Franklin, for example, asked for Whitefield's opinion on his plan for the Philadelphia Academy. Whitefield was uneasy that the proposed

\textsuperscript{19} "By His Excellency the GOVERNOUR, A BRIEF," The Boston Evening-Post, no. 300, May 4, 1741, [4]. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the Charleston fire and debates over Whitefield's fundraising work. For a discussion of charity briefs, see Wyndham Anstis Bewes, Church Briefs, or Royal Warrants for Collections for Charitable Objects (London, Adam and Charles Black, 1896); Peter Walne, "The Collections for Henrico College, 1616-1618" The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 80, no. 3 (Jul. 1972): 259-266.

\textsuperscript{20} "From the Gentleman's Magazine for May 1739. A List of the Number of Protestants and Papists in Ireland, as computed in the Years 1732 and 1733," THE Boston Weekly Post-Boy, no. 247, Sept. 10, 1739, [2]; Wright, The Transformation of Charity in Postrevolutionary New England, 35, 284n98.
curriculum mentioned Christianity “too late” and was “too soon passed over.” He specifically advised Franklin to hire a “well-approved Christian Orator” who should “visit and take pains with every class, and teach them early how to speak, and read, and pronounce well.” Whitefield also suggested that the Academy should raise a fund “for the free education of the poorer sort” which would “greatly answer the design proposed.” He believed that if “these ends are answered, a free-school erected, the debts paid, and a place preserved for public preaching, I do not see what reason there is for any one to complain.”

Whitefield also offered advice on navigating the London charity circuit to the supporters of the College of New Jersey and Wheelock’s Indian School. In a letter likely written to Ebenezer Pemberton, Whitefield stated that he had been “endeavouring in Scotland to do all the service I could to the Indian school and the New-Jersey college.” However, he warned his correspondent that nothing substantial would be accomplished “unless you or some other popular minister come over, and make an application in person.” Whitefield knew from experience how important it was to be physically present when soliciting funds. Not only was it a logistical nightmare “to determine anything four thousand miles off,” but he recognized that “popular” ministers were the most successful fundraisers. Colonial ministers focused on one project would generate more excitement in London than Whitefield, who was already begging for a large

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21 Whitefield to F[ranklin], Plymouth, 26 Feb. 1750, in *Works of Whitefield*, 2:336-337; Whitefield also offered his “new building,” originally built to be his preaching place in Philadelphia, to Franklin. For his relationship with the Academy, see Edward Potts Cheyney, *History of the University of Pennsylvania: 1740-1940* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), 17-40. Whitefield’s collections were admired despite his well-publicized indebtedness. See below for a discussion.
number of causes. He also advised Pemberton that if a minister could bring an Indian to advertise the project, “it would certainly be of service.” The novelty and publicity that would surround an Indian in London would prompt large collections. The itinerant passed along letters about the projects to his patroness Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon. The Countess had become an important part of Whitefield’s fundraising network after 1747 when she named him one of her chaplains. In addition to providing Whitefield with the financial safety net that he had lacked since William Seward’s death, she also gave the preacher access to her circle of wealthy and influential friends.22

Whitefield’s financial accounts were some of his most important fundraising and promotional pieces. Although these reports included more than just updates on his collections, it was the financial information they contained that separated them from the other materials Whitefield published in support of the orphanage. He published six such accounts, with all except his 1739 account focusing exclusively on the orphan house. His accounts in 1739, 1741, and 1742, were itemized and prepared by Whitefield and James Habersham, then manager of temporal affairs at the orphan house. His accounts in 1746, 1765, and 1770 printed the total income and expenditures of the orphanage and were

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audited by an external firm. The sale of these published accounts likely produced negligible profits because Whitefield was committed to cheap print and because he sent out large numbers of these pieces gratis to current and future donors. His accounts therefore served several purposes. First, they showed him as being accountable to the donating public and (at least initially) staved off questions about where the money was going. Second, they updated his widely dispersed audience on the progress of the orphanage and assured his donors that their money was well spent. Third, the promotional materials included in the accounts justified the appropriateness of Bethesda by situating the project in Christian history and in the British Empire. Finally, the accounts worked to establish a connection between the orphan house and an audience that was far removed from Georgia.23

The accounts demonstrated his financial accountability and updated his audience on the progress of the orphanage. Whitefield began both his 1739 account and the newspaper edition of his 1746 account with a version of the phrase "it being the Apostle's Advice to provide Things honest in the Sight of all Men, that the Benefactors may be satisfied how their several Contributions have

23 AN ACCOUNT OF MONEY, Receiv'd and Expended by the Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD, FOR THE Poor of GEORGIA ([London, 1739]); George Whitefield, AN ACCOUNT OF Money Received and Disbursed FOR THE ORPHAN-HOUSE IN GEORGIA. To which is prefixed A PLAN OF THE BUILDING (London: Printed by W. Strahan for T. Cooper, 1741); George Whitefield, A CONTINUATION OF THE ACCOUNT OF THE ORPHAN-HOUSE in Georgia, From January 1740/1 to June 1742. To which are also subjoin'd, Some EXTRACTS from an Account of a Work of a like Nature, carried on by the late Professor Franck in Glachua near Hall in Saxony [Edinburgh: Printed by T. Lumisden, 1742]; A FURTHER ACCOUNT Of GOD's dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, From the Time of his ORDINATION to his EMBARKING for GEORGIA. TO WHICH IS ANNEX'D A brief ACCOUNT of the RISE, PROGRESS, and PRESENT SITUATION OF THE Orphan-House in Georgia. In a LETTER to a FRIEND [Philadelphia: W. Bradford, 1746]; "General Account of MONIES expended and received for the Use of the ORPHAN-HOUSE in Georgia, from the 7th of January 1738-9, to the 9th of February 1765," The BOSTON Evening-Post, no. 1545, April 15, 1765, [1]; For the 1770 audit, see Works of Whitefield, 3:492-494. See Chapter 2 for an analysis of the controversies surrounding Whitefield's accounting practices.
been expended, I thought proper to publish the following.” Each of his accounts also updated his audience on the progress of the institution. His 1741 account, for example, provided detailed descriptions of the construction of the orphanage and included architectural drawings of its campus. Whitefield’s descriptions of the “now weather-boarded and shingled” main building were so widely circulated that his friends and critics used them as the basis of “eyewitness” reports of Bethesda in the newspapers.24

His accounts also established a personal connection between benefactors and orphans. In her analysis of Protestant missionary literature, Laura M. Stevens has argued that these texts sold a transatlantic emotional connection between distant donors and the groups that they supported with their prayers and financial contributions. The hymns in Whitefield’s 1741 accounts provide an excellent example of how he peddled this connection. The children sang one such thanksgiving hymn to their benefactors that included the lyrics “For those who kindly this Support / A better House prepare; / And when remov’d to thy bless’d Courts, / Oh let us meet them there.” Although Whitefield’s collections for the orphans happened only sporadically in a given town, his constant

24 AN ACCOUNT OF MONEY, Reciev’d and Expended by the Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD, (1739), 3-4. The wording in the newspaper edition of his 1746 accounts is slightly different: “As it is a Minister’s Duty to provide Things honest in the Sight of all Men, I thought it my Duty, when lately at Georgia, to have the whole Orphan House Accounts audited.” See “Mr. FRANKLIN,” The Pennsylvania Gazette, no. 910, May 22, 1746, [1]; Whitefield, A CONTINUATION OF THE ACCOUNT OF THE ORPHAN-HOUSE in Georgia (1742), 3; Whitefield, AN ACCOUNT OF Money Received and Disbursed for the ORPHAN-HOUSE in GEORGIA, (1741), 3. James Hutchinson was accused of using the dimensions provided in the accounts to give his fake eyewitness more credibility; “BOSTON,” The Boston Evening-Post, no. 407, May 23, 1743, [2]. See below for a discussion.
advertisement of their plight established a more significant connection between a
distant audience and the children they supported.25

Whitefield also used his accounts to associate the orphanage with widely
admired projects throughout Christian history. In particular, he connected
Bethesda to the Halle orphanage created by the German pietist August
Hermman Francke in 1685. That institution was more than just an orphan house
and contained a university, an orphan school, a print shop, and an infirmary that
produced medicines sold across Europe and the colonies. Halle was almost
universally admired among Protestants and it housed roughly three thousand
people by the time of Francke’s death in 1727. Whitefield frequently connected
Bethesda to Halle in his writings, such as in 1739 when he noted that it was “so
exactly parallel to my present undertaking for the poor of Georgia, that I trust the
Orphan House about to be erected there, will be carried on and ended with the
like faith and success.” Whitefield took the comparison a step further when he
attached over sixty pages of the Pietas Hallensis, the major promotional tract of
the Halle orphanage, to his 1742 financial accounts. To help guide his readers
through the long excerpt, he included pointed fingers in the margins that directed
their attention to key paragraphs. One finger pointed to a sentence noting that
many had been excited “by the Report of this Work, more industriously to provide
for the Poor and afflicted” which gave him hope that “this full narrative . . . will

25 Stevens, The Poor Indians, 7-22; Whitefield, AN ACCOUNT OF Money Received and Disbursed FOR THE
ORPHAN-HOUSE IN GEORGIA (1741), 6; “Extract of a Letter from Charlestown in South Carolina, Dated
March 20th. 1742-3,” The Boston Evening-Post, no. 405, May 9, 1743, [4]. The curiosity in the orphans is
also seen in the number of reports published by those who had visited (or claimed to have visited) the
orphanage. See below for a discussion of these reports.
produce still a happier Effect, and revive in many Souls a true sense of Christian Charity.” While including a large excerpt from the Pietas Hallensis to a financial account provoked ridicule from his critics, Whitefield was attempting to situate Bethesda, and his donors’ dollars, within a well-respected precedent.26

Whitefield initially based the funding of his orphanage on Halle’s model. Francke wrote that his institution was not based “on any settled Fund gathered in before-hand for this Purpose” but instead was “entirely grounded upon the Providence of our great God.” Francke’s success at financing an institution through faith alone added to its fame. Cotton Mather, for example, wrote in 1715 that Francke showed it was better to “depend upon God than upon our Friends. And God countenances him in it, with such Displayes of his Providence, as no Age since that of Man’s eating the Food of Angels has ever Parallel’d.” Whitefield proclaimed that his orphanage was a similar example of faith that relied on God instead of a “visible fund,” a phrase he used to describe any steady source of funding not coming from the orphanage itself such as a salary, endowment, or later, his South Carolina plantation. The phrase also echoed Francke’s own discussions about his finances. In one of the excerpts from the

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Pietas Hallensis that Whitefield included in his 1742 accounts, Francke explained the desperate financial situation that his institution had found itself in. Francke was preparing to pray for God’s help when he received a letter from a merchant "intimating that he was ordered to pay 1000 Crowns to me for the Relief of the Hospital." Francke concluded that “the Providence of God would actually teach me, not to put too great a Confidence in a visible Stock or present Support of Men.” Whitefield included a pointed finger in the margin of the line that contained the phrase “visible Stock” to draw his readers’ attention to the similarities between Francke’s reliance on God for funding and his own rejection of a “visible fund.” Especially during the early years of his ministry, the concept was significant for Whitefield because it showed his complete dependence on God for his success.27

Whitefield therefore explicitly designed his financial strategy as an act of faith. He wrote that he would “rather live by faith, and depend on GOD for the support of my great, and yet increasing family, than to have the largest visible fund in the universe.” Whitefield believed that the best way to put the project in God’s hands was by making occasional collections until the orphanage could become self-supporting. Each time he successfully raised money for Bethesda, he portrayed it as a sign of God’s blessing of the institution. While this method added to the orphan house’s fame, it also increased the significance of Whitefield’s own financial reputation. When his opponents began criticizing his

27 Whitefield, A CONTINUATION OF THE ACCOUNT OF THE ORPHAN-HOUSE in Georgia (1742), 37, 47-48; Mather, Nuncia Bona e Terra Longinqua, 3.
fundraising, they were not only calling his own integrity into doubt but questioning whether God had indeed blessed his ministry.²⁸

Instead of a “visible fund,” Whitefield initially relied on the collections he made at charity sermons to finance the orphanage. The charity sermon was a well-established genre on both sides of the Atlantic by the time Whitefield’s collections became famous in the late 1730s. These sermons were promoted by advertisements in newspapers and included follow-up reports that informed readers on the biblical text, the amount raised, and the festivities, such as dinners and concerts, which accompanied the sermon. The sermon was often composed specifically for that purpose and was tailored to both the cause and to an audience of wealthy benefactors. It stressed the good work done by the organization, how the money was being spent, and the spiritual and social benefits for the donors. Whitefield’s charity sermons on his first colonial tour, however, followed a different format. Instead of focusing on the specific cause he was collecting for, his sermons emphasized the necessity of the new birth. His sermons were also not aimed at wealthy benefactors but at the diverse audience that came to hear him preach. Finally, Whitefield’s charity sermons were unique among his contemporaries in that he “consistently fused his gospel message with unceasing nondenominational plans of charity and good works.”

²⁸ Whitefield to Mr. M--, New Brunswick, 28 April 1740, in Works of Whitefield, 1:167; “A FURTHER ACCOUNT OF GOD’S DEALINGS With the Reverend Mr. GEORGE WHITEFIELD, FROM The Time of His Ordination to His Embarking for Georgia. (June, 1736—December, 1737),” in Journals, 86.
His early charity sermons were distinct from his other sermons because he collected money at them, not because of a specifically tailored message.29

Whitefield rarely recorded which biblical text he preached on so it is difficult to know if there were any sermons that he used explicitly or more frequently for collections. However, William Seward noted in his journal that Whitefield’s sermon on the conversion of Zaccheus was particularly successful and raised a combined £115 Sterling on two occasions. Zaccheus was also one of Whitefield’s favorite biblical characters to cite when preaching about money or counseling those in debt. The conversion of Zaccheus also stands out as an exemplary case of Whitefield selecting scriptural text based on its narrative structure that he expanded upon for dramatic effect.30

Whitefield’s sermon on Luke 19:9-10 told the story of Zaccheus, a Roman tax collector who was “in all probability a notorious sinner . . . and being chief among the Publicans” he was consequently “chief among sinners.” These credentials made him an ideal example of God’s free grace “because there is nothing to be found in man, that can any way induce GOD to be merciful to him.” Immediately following his conversion, Zaccheus gave half his goods to the poor.


Whitefield exclaimed that “Every word calls for our notice. Not some small, not the tenth part, but the half. Of what? My goods; things that were valuable. My goods, his own, not another’s. I give: not, I will give when I die, when I can keep them no longer; but, I give now, even now. Zaccheus would be his own executor. For whilst we have time we should do good.” These “Noble fruits of a true living faith” served as evidence of his conversion. An earlier edition of a sermon preached on the same text explicitly connected this evidence to his audience’s donations. Whitefield exhorted his audience to “shew their faith, by their works” and “offer every one his Mite, this Day, for the Relief of poor Orphans in Georgia. . . . Lay up then for yourselves, Treasures in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Rust can corrupt, nor Thieves break thro’ and steal. You will have a Treasure that will never forsake you.”31

Colonial newspapers had been reporting Whitefield’s large collections and his connection to Georgia for over a year by the time the preacher reached Lewis Town on October 30, 1739. Despite the fanfare surrounding his arrival, he refrained from collecting any money at sermons on the first leg of his tour. He wrote in his journal that although “little presents have been sent for the Orphan House, and a large collection, I believe, might be made for it,” he chose “to defer that till my return hither again.” Instead, Whitefield went south to begin work on

the orphanage and arrived in Savannah in January of 1740. After several relatively uneventful months at his orphan house, Whitefield preached his first charity sermon in the colonies on Sunday, March 16, 1740. The timing of this sermon provides an example of how Whitefield exploited controversies for his own benefit. On Friday, March 14, Whitefield had visited Alexander Garden, the Anglican commissary in Charleston, South Carolina who was becoming one of the itinerant’s fiercest critics. According to Whitefield’s journal, Garden charged him with “enthusiasm and pride,” accused him of breaking his ordination vows, and forbade him from preaching in any “public church” in the province. Whitefield replied that he took this warning as seriously as “a Pope’s bull” and if Garden refused to denounce Charleston’s balls and assemblies, Whitefield would publicly denounce the commissary. Garden shouted “in a very great rage, ‘Get you out of my house,’” and Whitefield and his party duly left. That Sunday, Whitefield went to service at St. Philip’s church and sat in the pews as Garden denounced him as a Pharisee. The next day, after preaching in the morning more “explicit[ly] than ever in exclaiming against balls and assemblies,” Whitefield made his first collection in the American colonies. He spoke “on behalf of my poor orphans” and collected upwards of seventy pounds sterling, his largest collection up to that point which confirmed that “we shall yet see greater things in America, and that God will carry on and finish the work, begun in His Name at Georgia.” Whitefield’s collection was reprinted in newspapers throughout the colonies and the money he collected began to feature prominently in his sermon reports.32

32“A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal From His Embarking after the Embargo, to his
Whitefield left little evidence of how he decided when to make collections. Sometimes, as was the case with his first collection in Charleston, he timed it for dramatic effect. On his second trip through Philadelphia in April of 1740, Whitefield went to hear the Church of England minister preach on James 2:18 on “Justification by Works.” That evening, Whitefield preached on the same text to about fifteen thousand people and “confuted the false doctrines and many fundamental errors contained in the Commissary’s discourse.” After the sermon, Whitefield collected eighty pounds in local currency “for my children in Georgia. Little do my enemies think what service they do me.” Other times, Whitefield worked in tandem with local ministers. He asked for advice on when to collect and would ask them to tell their congregation a collection was coming. Whitefield printed an advertisement in October of 1740 that listed the next eleven stops he was going to make on his preaching tour. He requested that “if the Ministers of the respective Congregations are desirous he should collect for the Orphan House, they are desired to give their People previous Notice the next Lord’s Day.” This would not only further prepare them for a collection, but made sure that they came with money to contribute.33

Following the triumphant collections of his first colonial tour, Whitefield experienced a series of crises that dramatically changed his attitudes toward his fundraising and collection techniques. In one of his most melancholy letters,
Whitefield explained in 1742 the factors that had caused him to sink into debt. As previously mentioned, Seward’s untimely death disrupted his already precarious financial situation. Seward had died “without making any provision for me, and I was at the same time much indebted for the Orphan-house.” The Spanish had captured a ship bound for Bethesda that carried construction supplies and provisions, a setback that halted construction on the orphan house and required Whitefield to repurchase the expensive supplies. He also worried that the fear of a looming Spanish invasion would “strike a damp upon the collection at this time.” Perhaps most significantly, infighting and defections among the English methodists damaged Whitefield’s reputation and the support for the preacher was shrinking. Whitefield explained to James Habersham that his audience of twenty thousand had “dwindled down to two or three hundred. It has been a trying time for me. A large orphan family, consisting so near a hundred, to be maintained, about four thousand miles off, without the least fund. . . above a thousand pounds in debt for them, and not worth twenty pounds in the world of my own, and threatened to be arrested for three hundred and fifty pounds, drawn for in favour of the Orphan-house” by his former friend and publisher John Syms, who had converted to Moravianism. To cap things off, Whitefield was subpoenaed by Parliament to “give an account” of the temporal affairs of colonial Georgia, despite his not knowing “an oak from a hickory, or one kind of land from another.”

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Whitefield struggled with cycles of debt that he termed "embarrassments" for the rest of his life. Beginning in 1742, his debt prompted him to do an almost complete reversal on his previous ideas about fundraising. While he had previously boasted of having no regularized source of funding for the orphanage, he now assured others that it was a necessity for any project. In one letter, Whitefield warned his correspondent to "'sit down, and count the cost, before you begin to build.' Do not lay out more than you can pay. Go the cheapest way to work; and if you cannot build, rather keep a stock to pay the schoolmaster" and rent a cheap house on a yearly basis. Whitefield justified his advice by saying "You well know what I have suffered running too far into debt for others." 35

Whitefield also reversed his previous stance and sought his own "visible fund" to provide a safety net for Bethesda. He purchased a plantation that he named Providence in South Carolina and that he hoped would be "a visible fund for the Orphan-house . . . so that my poor heart may no more be oppressed as it had been for many years by my outward difficulties." 36 To provide additional financial security for Bethesda, Whitefield also began to rely heavily on more dependable private subscriptions to fund the orphanage as opposed to sporadic collections. Although he had accepted subscriptions from the beginning of his

prejudicing his former friends against him. See ibid., 1:256. The timing of Whitefield's first "embarrassment" coincides roughly with the early colonial criticisms of his finances, although none of the published attacks of this period mention his debt problems. See below for a discussion.

35 Whitefield to Mr. L—, Bristol, 4 August 1749, in Works of Whitefield, 2:270;
36 Whitefield to "My very dear, dear Brother," New York, 29 Jan. 1747, in Works of Whitefield, 2:110. Whitefield purchased the plantation in South Carolina as Georgia at the time still did not allow slavery. When slavery was legalized in 1751, Whitefield began trying to sell Providence, writing in 1753 that he would "rather it should be sold for somewhat less than its real value, than to keep it any longer in my hands. I do not choose to keep two families longer than needs must." Whitefield to H— B—, London, 7 Jan. 1753, in Works of Whitefield, 2:471.
ministry, Whitefield and a group of supporters began a campaign in 1745 to make them a more significant part of Bethesda's future. Whitefield also decided to keep this subscription campaign private. In a letter thanking Benjamin Franklin for composing the preamble of the subscription plan, Whitefield noted that "I only object against its being made publick" as "I think a private subscription among my Friends here and elsewhere would raise as much as I want."37

There were several reasons why Whitefield kept his subscription plan private. First, as he mentioned to Franklin, his financial problems were "brought within a narrow compass" in 1746 and a general call was likely to bring in more money than he needed. The subscription plan also came at the height of Whitefield's financial controversies in the colonies which led him to largely stop making public (and to stop publicizing) his collections. In a letter to Josiah Smith in Charleston, Whitefield hesitated at his suggestion that he should ask for a "public contribution," deciding that "undoubtedly the Orphan-house accompt... ought to be published first." Perhaps most importantly, Whitefield was wary that

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37 This network overlapped with the network he used to collect money on his first tour but also included some new names. John W. Christie has identified the following names: Mr. Branson, iron merchant, Philadelphia; Josiah Smith, minister, Charleston; John Smith, merchant, Boston; Rev. William Shurtleff, Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Rev. Ebenezer Pemberton, New York; James Habersham, merchant, Savannah; Gabriel Harries, Esq., Gloucester; James Smith of St. Philip's Plain, Bristol; Mr. John Kennedy, Exeter; Jonathan Houliere in Queen Street, Upper Moorfields, and William Strahan, Printer in Wine Office Court, Fleet Street. Benjamin Franklin wrote the "preamble" to the subscription form. See John W. Christie, ed., "Newly Discovered Letters of George Whitefield 1745-1746, Part III," Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society (1943-1961) 32, no. 4 (Dec. 1954): 242; Whitefield to Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, 23 June 1747, http://franklinpapers.org/franklin/framedVolumes.jsp?vol=3&page=143a. The only time Whitefield published the names of those collecting subscriptions was on the back page of his 1746 audited accounts. He wrote "upon reading the foregoing Account, shall be stirred up to contribute any Thing towards the defraying of the Arrears, or further cloathing and educating the Children, or furnishing the House, they are desired to send their Contributions" to the above names. See A FURTHER ACCOUNT Of GOD'S Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, (1746), back page. For earlier uses of subscriptions, see Seward, Journal of a Voyage from Savannah to Philadelphia, 2; Whitefield to Mr. H----, London, 27 Jan. 1739, in Works of Whitefield, 1:46.
his critics would misrepresent his desire for a visible fund as a crisis of faith. In his letter to Franklin asking that the plan be kept private, Whitefield explained that “I think such a procedure would betray somewhat of meanness of Spirit and of a confidence in Him who hitherto has never left me in extremity.” On the contrary, Whitefield’s periods of embarrassment did not cause his faith in God’s blessing of Bethesda to waver. In a letter written in August of 1742 about the orphanage, Whitefield explained to a friend that “the LORD loves to encourage faith; and since his honour is so much concerned, I am sure he will vindicate it, and never suffer his enemies to say thus of us, ‘there, there, so would we have it.’”

The combination of seeking a more stable financial future for Bethesda and the hostility toward Whitefield’s collections on his second colonial tour from October of 1744 through February of 1748 caused him to stop preaching the charity sermons that had been so successful in the past. Although he continued to print advertisements and itineraries, Whitefield did not make any public (or publicized) collections during his second tour. His new fundraising strategies likely stemmed from his changing ideas about how best to support Bethesda. The period between the end of 1741 and 1746 when his fundraising work was most controversial were the years when Whitefield was not publically making collections in the colonies.

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Chapter 3

Extorting?: Whitefield’s Financial Controversies

Whitefield’s colonial critics were almost completely silent about his finances in print during his first tour despite his ubiquitous collection reports in the newspapers. The first major debate over his collections occurred in Charleston in 1741 after a disastrous fire. A series of rumors and events in 1742 and 1743 focused more attention on Whitefield’s finances in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston and the number of articles and pamphlets questioning his collections increased. At the end of 1743, Publicola in Charleston published the first of four letters demanding his accounts and initiated the accounting controversies that defined the debates over his finances. The controversies abruptly stopped in 1746 when Whitefield published an independent audit of his accounts. Although all three cities reprinted Publicola’s letters, there were distinct regional variations in the debates. In Charleston, they focused on the organization and accountability of a charitable project. In Boston, the debates were largely theological and interpreted Whitefield’s erratic collections and accounting practices as evidence of his enthusiasm. Philadelphia produced comparatively few criticisms but reprinted liberally from both Boston and Charleston. Despite these thematic groupings, many of his critics reacted with ambivalence and there was little consensus about what aspect of his finances was controversial. However, both supporters and detractors agreed that the attacks of his finances were a particularly potent way to discredit the itinerant. An examination of the timing and nature of these debates reveals that Whitefield’s finances were not
inherently controversial, but instead that the uproar was a relatively brief but intense part of the larger reaction to his ministry.

The colonists’ early silence on the topic of Whitefield’s finances is particularly striking when contrasted with the reaction of his English audience. By 1739, both the itinerant and his supporters were frequently ridiculed for their respective roles in his collections. One newspaper reported that Whitefield’s admirers were “giddy-brain’d Workfolkes,” who followed him around the country until they could no longer afford to eat. Their donations allowed him to ship goods to America that were “purchas’d with the Fools Pence he has talk’d out of the Pockets of his Lunnatick Audience.” A more elaborate critique of his collections appeared in a satirical pamphlet entitled the “Mock-Preacher.” In the pamphlet, the preacher begged his audience to make donations for “the pretty little Orphans in Georgia.” The poor should give “all that you have in the World, and starve your Children, be not afflicted; for your Little-ones, by having no Victuals, will the sooner go to Heaven: And won’t that be very meritorious of you, to send them to such a happy place?” While some colonists were likely aware of these criticisms, they neither reprinted them nor referenced them in their published writing. When colonial papers did reprint articles on Whitefield’s collections, they were the generic sermon reports that would soon appear in their
own papers. Whitefield’s audience was not silent in the press due to ignorance about his fundraising.\textsuperscript{39}

While the presses wasted little ink on direct criticisms of Whitefield’s finances, there were fears that his ministry caused general economic chaos. After the itinerant’s second visit to Philadelphia in June of 1740, one man penned a letter to Boston that complained that “\textit{Field Preaching prevails with the Vulgar here so much, that Industry, Honest Labour, and Care for their Families with many seems to be held as sinful}.” Hearing that Boston was anxiously awaiting Whitefield’s arrival, the writer wished that his ministry would not “be attended with the same bad Effects as here, by diverting and distracting the Labouring People, who are generally too much inclined to Novelties, especially in point of Religion.” Worry that Whitefield kept people from their honest labor continued to be an important theme in the criticisms against him throughout his career, but his contemporaries did not connect this idea to his collections during his first tour.\textsuperscript{40}

The first criticism of Whitefield’s fundraising, and the only one to be reprinted during his first tour, was a satiric poem that was published in \textit{The South-Carolina Gazette} three months after Whitefield preached his first charity sermon. In “\textit{The CONGRATULATION},” Misanaides applauded Whitefield’s “68 Preachments in Forty Days, with the great and visible Effects of Meat and Money that ensured therefrom.” The poem began:

\textsuperscript{39} “London” \textit{Daily Post} (London), June 5, 1739; \textit{The Mock-Preacher: A Satyrigo-Comical-Allegorical FARCE. As it was Acted to a Crowded Audience At KENNINGTON-COMMON, And many other Theatres. WITH THE Humours of the MOB.} (London, C. Corbett, 1739), 9-11; Lambert, \textit{Pedlar in Divinity}, 103-105.

\textsuperscript{40} “Paragraph of a Letter from \textit{Philadelphia, June 5, 1740},” \textit{THE BOSTON Weekly Post-Boy}, no. 323, [3], June 23, 1740.
Great miracle of modesty and sense,
Recount thy pray'rs, & reckon up they pence,
Secure, whilst these you tell, & those you show
To meet with great Reward—at least below.
But waving letter points for solid Thing,
We find from whom thy cash & credit springs.

Despite the “Symphony of Fools” that followed Whitefield around, Misanaides noted that his “Sceptics no more contest thy pious Arts” and did not question his collections. Although the poem contained some harsh accusations, it lacked the anger and fear that mark later criticisms of Whitefield’s collections.41

The poem was reprinted in both Boston and Philadelphia and became the first criticism of Whitefield’s finances to become part of an intercolonial conversation. In both cities, local poets took up the challenge and responded with dramatic defenses of the itinerant. In Boston, Eusebius described “a vast Throng of Hellish Volunteers” who came to crush “the godlike Youth.” Fortunately for Whitefield, “Angels of Light in Armies quick descend, / The pious Youth from Satan’s Rage defend.” For Eusebius, the “Congratulation” was part of the larger criticisms against Whitefield and he made no mention of its unique financial slurs. The anonymous poet who defended Whitefield in Philadelphia, on the other hand, addressed his piece “To the Meat and Money Gods of South-Carolina.” Echoing Misanaides words, the author wrote “Secure whilst those you

show, and these you tell, / If not, below you'll have Reward in Hell, / By waving
greater Points for trifling things: / It's eas'ly Judg'd from whence such Folly
springs." Unlike Eusebius, the Philadelphian had first-hand experience with both
Whitefield and his collections, as the itinerant had collected in Philadelphia three
months before. Although "The CONGRATULATION" prompted the first
intercolonial discussion over Whitefield's finances, it is more noteworthy for the
quick defenses of Whitefield that it prompted than for the criticisms that it raised.
Whitefield's defenders also paid uneven attention to its financial slur, showing
how comparatively little importance this seemed to have on his first tour.  

The only printed criticism of Whitefield's collections in Boston during his
first colonial tour appeared in November of 1740. The editor of the anti-
Whitefieldian The Boston Evening-Post published two letters that questioned his
motives in coming to the colony and the prudence of the Bethesda orphanage.
The first author prefaced his letter by writing that "instead of following the
Multitude, in contributing for an Orphan-House at Georgia, when we have much
more Need of one among our selves, I choose rather to send my Mite to" the
paper to print the letter. The author claimed that he had paid attention to the
"Circumstances of the Collection" and wondered whether Whitefield "has not
been too pressing in asking, and his Companions in Travels, too officious in
collecting, and the People too lavish in giving their Money upon such

42 Eusebius, "To the Author of the POST-BOY," THE BOSTON Weekly Post-Boy, no. 333, [3], September 1,
1740; "Mr. BRADFORD," THE AMERICAN Weekly Mercury, no. 1078, [4], August 21 to August 28, 1740.
This reaction is remarkably different to that prompted by similar poem published in 1764. See the
Conclusion and "It was far from our Intention to give any Cause for Disputation" THE Massachusetts
GAZETTE. And BOSTON NEWS-LETTER, no. 3147, June 14, 1764, [3]; "Messrs. FLEET," The BOSTON
Evening-Post, no. 1502, June 18, 1764, [3].
Uncertainties” when there were “so many Objects of Charity among our selves.” The author also questioned Whitefield’s motivations for confining “his Labours to populous Towns” as opposed to preaching “in those Places where there is but little of the Gospel, and but little Money to be got.” Printed below this letter were six queries “by another Hand” that echoed similar concerns about the orphanage. The author asked whether Georgia was “a proper Place to erect and endow an Orphan-House,” if the orphanage could be considered “a proper Objet of Charity here,” and whether such large amounts of money were necessary to fund it “if honestly and prudently managed.” Moving away from issues of management, the author questioned if New England could “bear another large Tax (perhaps superior to that of the Expedition) at this critical Juncture, under our present Load of Debts, and other distressing Circumstances,” particularly if their “own Poor” were not “effectually provided for?” Both letters ended with a request that any answer to the queries “may be of great Advantage to the Publick.”

These letters were not answered or reprinted in any other papers throughout the colonies. In addition to being among the earliest criticisms of Whitefield’s finances, these letters raise different issues than those that came to dominate the Boston debates three years later. Although Whitefield’s management and the value of the orphanage were common topics of discussion, almost no later commentaries connected the issues to the debates over debt and currency occurring in Massachusetts at the time. While Boston had struggled with currency debates and shortages since 1690, the Land Bank controversy of 1739-1741 was particularly “shrill” in the words of one historian. Faced with

43 “Mr. Fleet,” The Boston Evening-Post, no. 275, [1], November 10, 1740.
increased royal control over bills of credit that would drastically reduce the amount of circulating currency, John Colman submitted a proposal for a private land bank. Using land as security, the bank would issue £150,000 in paper bills that would circulate like currency among anyone who accepted them. Opponents to this bank, including a number of wealthy merchants and Governor Jonathan Belcher, submitted a proposal for a Silver Bank that would back paper currency by specie. The debates in the Massachusetts General Court stalled, and the Land Bank began issuing paper currency in September of 1740, the same month that Whitefield arrived in the colony, without legislative approval.  

Numerous historians have connected the currency controversies to the revivals. Some, such as Rosalind Remer, have studied church records to find that “Land Bankers worshipped preponderantly at New Light Congregational churches or at Congregational churches that had both Old Light and New Light elements. Silver Bankers worshiped mostly at Anglican and Old Light Congregational church, as well as those that were divided over the revivals.” Frank Lambert asserted that even if Land Bankers and Silver Bankers did not split into New and Old Light factions, each party still interpreted Whitefield’s message to suit their position. T. H. Breen and Timothy Hall argued that it is likely futile to search for a causal connection between the two debates, but that historians should approach them as a “parallel efforts to gain interpretive control over a larger social and economic reality.”  

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Still, the two letters connected Whitefield’s collections to larger issues of debt and taxes in a way that later critics did not. Thomas Fleet, the publisher of *The Boston Evening-Post*, creatively edited his front page to highlight this connection. Fleet had printed a number of anti-Whitefield and anti-methodist articles before the itinerant’s arrival and continued to oppose him in print until his death in 1758. The month before, John Draper, the editor of *The Boston Weekly News-Letter*, had accused Fleet of deceptively combining an article on Whitefield’s departure with one on rowdy soldiers. Draper complained that Fleet had “purposely left out the Word [And] which was the first and most material Word in the whole Article” and had therefore given the impression that Whitefield was causing trouble instead of the soldiers. In *The Boston Evening-Post* on November 10, Fleet ran two announcements from Governor Belcher condemning the Land Bank parallel to the letters questioning Whitefield’s orphanage. The Proclamations forbade militia officers and “any such Persons as hold any Commission under me” from giving “any Countenance or Encouragement” to the Land Bank notes as they tended “to Defraud Men of their Substance, and to disturb the Peace and good Order of the People, and to give it great Interruption and bring much Confusion into their Business.” Fleet’s parallel Land Bank and Whitefield columns not only emphasized the rhetorical similarities between the

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two debates, but also connected Whitefield's collections to Boston's “present Load of Debts, and other distressing Circumstances.”

Despite Fleet's creative editing, the debates over Whitefield's collections were almost completely divorced from the contemporaneous currency debates. While his Scottish detractors were concerned that Whitefield was removing too much specie from Scotland, it never became a prominent part of the colonial debates. Contemporaries found the issues so different that Andrew Croswell claimed Thomas Foxcroft's answer in their argument over grace was "no more a proper Answer to mine, than it is to one of the Land Bank papers that came out last Year." While the debates over Whitefield's collections were undoubtedly influenced by the larger social world that they took place in, they focused almost exclusively on the itinerant preacher himself. In the subsequent years when Whitefield's collections became more controversial, the criticisms would continue to focus on his shortcomings as a both a minister and a manager.

The questioning letters in *The Boston Evening Post* reveal the uncertainty that surrounded Whitefield's collections and his orphanage. Even Alexander Garden, one of Whitefield's most vocal opponents, initially seemed unsure of how to react to Bethesda. Garden's early comments on the orphanage were in

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46 Find in the Weekly New Letter," *The Boston Evening-Post*, no. 270, [2], October 6, 1740; “By His Excellency JONTHAN BELCHER" *The Boston Evening-Post*, no. 10, [1], November 10, 1740; Breen and Hall, "Structuring the Provincial Imagination"; “Mr. Fleet,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, no. 275, [1], November 10, 1740.

47 A. Crosswell, “Groton, May 7, 1742,” *THE BOSTON Weekly POST-BOY*, no. 391, [1], June 14, 1742; A LETTER FROM A Gentleman in Scotland, to His Friend in New-England. CONTAINING An Account of Mr. Whitefield’s Reception and Conduct in Scotland, the two Visits he made there; and also of the Work at Cambuslang, and other Parts. Wherein many Mistakes, relating to these Things, that have been formerly and lately transmitted to this Country, are recited, and the whole Affair set in a true and impartial Light (Boston: Printed and Sold by T. Fleet, 1743), 13-14. See below for a more substantial discussion of Scottish criticisms of Whitefield's finances.
response to Whitefield’s letter criticizing southern slave owners. Whitefield informed them that “God has a Quarrel with you for your Abuse and Cruelty to the poor Negroes.” Garden took offense and argued that Whitefield had insufficient evidence to make such an audacious claim about God’s judgment. He asked Whitefield if it would be “a fair and honest proceeding” to publish an attack of the orphanage based on “Hearsay or Report.” After all, he had heard “by Report, of your Abuse and Cruelty to the poor Orphans under your Care.” Aping Whitefield’s language, Garden suggested that “God had a Quarrel with you; for your Cruelty to the poor Orphans;—and that perhaps they had better be hurried out of Life, than be made so miserable as they are in it;—and that I wondered, that they did not either put an End to their Own Lives or Yours.”

Garden’s main argument, however, was not about Whitefield’s rumored orphan abuse but instead focused on his shaky evidence of the slaveholders’ cruelty. He explained that “I know there must be a due Discipline, or Rod of Correction exercis’d among Children” and that this was often “misrepresented for Cruelty and bad Usage. I know also, that like Discipline and Correction must be observed among every Parcel of Slaves; which, in like Manner, may be, and often is misrepresented in the same Light: And therefore, not such Reports, in either Case, can justify a direct Accusation.”

48*THREE LETTERS FROM THE REVEREND Mr. G. WHITEFIELD: VIZ. LETTER I. To a Friend in London, concerning Archbishop Tillotson. LETTER II: To the same, on the same Subject. LETTER III. To the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina, concerning their Negroes (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1740), 13; Alexander Garden, SIX LETTERS TO The Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1740), 52-53. Garden’s quotes of Whitefield appear in THREE LETTERS FROM THE REVEREND G. WHITEFIELD, 13-14.*
Garden’s comments highlight the ambivalent reactions from Whitefield’s critics about his finances during his first colonial tour. While far from a ringing endorsement of the institution, Garden used the gossip about Bethesda to make a larger point about the lack of evidence supporting Whitefield’s accusations. He dismissed the rumors circling around Whitefield’s orphanage as based on “Hearsay or Report” and not substantial enough to warrant a direct accusation. Garden and other critics lacked the evidence, either through eyewitness accounts of Bethesda or through their own assessment of the itinerant’s character, to support substantial attacks on the orphan house. The few criticisms of Whitefield’s finances and charity work during his first colonial tour were either humorous or questioning in nature, and made no definitive claims that Whitefield’s fundraising was problematic.49

The first major debate over Whitefield’s collections was prompted by Charleston’s “Great Fire” of November 1740, the same time when the itinerant was finishing his New England tour. The controversy, which lasted from June through October of 1741 and was not reprinted in any other colonial newspapers, began with four New England letters in The South Carolina Gazette. The authors protested that the “enthusiastick Extracts of private Letters” had not adequately described Whitefield’s reception in the northern colonies and were designed “for trumpeting abroad his Fame, and magnifying his Person.” The first letter from Rhode Island complained about their cold winter but noted that this “vanishes in Comparison with that of your Provinces. For a terrible and devouring Fire lay

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49 For the role of evidence and reason in debates over Whitefield, see Lambert “Pedlar in Divinity”, 189-197.
waste” to Charleston, a city already facing “inconceivable Difficulties.” The author hoped that “the good Mr. Whitefield, will convince the World of the Truth of his Pretensions” by donating “at least some part of a profuse Contribution of about 3000 l.” that the “more judicious thought very ill bestowed.” Following the letter, an editorial aside begged for “the greatest Zealot among the Whitefieldians” to answer why the preacher had not contributed “one Farthing towards the Relief of the distressed and unhappy” from his New England collections, or why he did not “restore” any of the money he collected in Charleston. A second letter from Boston also complained about Whitefield’s collections, noting that “you justly question, Sir, whether we are the better by all this Stir. We are not. Mr. Whitefield has got much good from us, and we none from him. For above 3000 l. he has sowed Discord and Madness and Fury.”

The debate initially focused on the appropriate recipients of Whitefield’s collections but quickly spiraled into an argument over almost every aspect of his ministry. While his detractors in the newspaper war never arrived at a consensus over what Whitefield was doing incorrectly, they agreed that questions about his collections raised dangerous implications for his ministry. Whitefield’s supporters Philalethes and Zealot the Second, and his critics Philanthropos, Philaretes, and

50 “Mr. Timothy,” POSTSCRIPT TO THE South-Carolina Gazette, no. 382, [1], June 18, 1741; “Extract of a Letter, dated Rhode-Island, March 23, 1740-1, to a Gentleman in Charlestown,” POSTSCRIPT TO THE South-Carolina Gazette, no. 382, [1], June 18, 1741; “Extract of a Letter dated Boston, April 27, 1741, to the same Gentleman,” POSTSCRIPT TO THE South-Carolina Gazette, no. 382, [1], June 18, 1741. While historians have noted the intersections between the Charleston fire and Whitefield’s revivals, they have generally focused on Josiah Smith’s sermon, The Burning of Sodom and on Hugh Bryan’s claim that corrupt clergy brought about the fire. See Thomas Kidd, The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 76-82; Kidd, “A Faithful Watchman on the Walls of Charlestown’: Josiah Smith and Moderate revivalism in Colonial South Carolina,” The South Carolina Historical Magazine 105, no. 2 (April, 2004): 82-106; and Harvey H. Jackson, “Hugh Bryan and the Evangelical Movement in Colonial South Carolina,” The William and Mary Quarterly 43, no. 4 (Oct., 1986), 601-607. See Chapter 1 for details on the fire.
one anonymous author, moved seamlessly from a discussion of his collections to
debating the merits of his ministry as a whole. Between June and October of
1741, the paper war focused on three key issues: who could decide where his
collections went, how could his audience know where his collections went, and
whether his methods could be classified as “plunder.”

The New England letters prompted a debate over who could determine
where Whitefield’s donations went and how this impacted his relationship with his
donors. Was Whitefield solely in charge of his collections, or was he obligated to
donate the money to the cause it was ostensibly raised for? Was Whitefield
given the money under the assumption that he would act as a steward and funnel
the money to the most pressing cause? His supporters argued that since it was
Whitefield’s project, he was the one who should determine where the resources
went. Philalethes claimed the assumption that Whitefield should donate the
money he collected for the orphans, “who had no other Purse or Fund,” to the
poor of Charleston was “to the last Degree absurd!” Not only had the “immediate
Necessities” of the victims been supplied by the time Whitefield could have heard
about the fire, but giving away money raised for the orphanage to Charleston
would betray the donors’ trust. Zealot the Second agreed and asserted that
Whitefield “has as much Right to determine upon the Objects” of his charity “as
any other Man.” Zealot also dismissed the notion that Whitefield should give back

51 The last major response in the debate is unfortunately missing the last page and thus the author’s
name. See “To ZEALOTS the first and second, however dignified or disguised,” POSTSCRIPT [THE South-
Carolina Gazette], no. 397, [September 26 to October 3, 1741].
the money he collected in Charleston, saying that “a more stupid Question never came out of the Mouth of Balam’s. . . . Must the good Man vomit up Money?”\(^{52}\)

Philanthropos countered these arguments and maintained that Whitefield never claimed his collections were “given purely for the Use of the poor Orphans.” He questioned “where would have been the Villainy in distributing part of a Donation which was lodged in his Hands, to be employed in charitable uses, without being confin’d to any one particular charity, to the Relief of some real Object of Commiseration in this Town?” Furthermore, true Christian charity should extend beyond the “immediate Necessities,” a principle that the “wandring Apostle” had based his orphanage on. The anonymous author partially agreed with Philanthropos and wrote that if Whitefield “had a Right to determine upon the Object of his Charity, which admitting he had, yet this did not give him a Right to dispense with the Laws of Gratitude, and, which he, in not restoring some part of that Money hath grossly violated.” For Philanthropos, Whitefield had collected his money for the common good and was thus responsible for making sure that it went to the most worthy cause. For the anonymous critic, it was ultimately Whitefield’s decision where the money went, but he was now bound to repay his donors by the “Laws of Gratitude.” His collections established a lasting relationship with the community and he was now obliged to support them as they had supported him.\(^{53}\)

\(^{52}\) Philalethes, “Mr. Timothy,” POSTSCRIPT TO THE South-Carolina Gazette, no. 383, [1], June 25, 1741; Zealot the Second, “Mad with Revenge he gather’d all his Wind, And bounc’d like Fifty Bladders from behind,” POSTSCRIPT TO THE South-Carolina Gazette, no. 287 [1]-[2], July 23, 1741.

\(^{53}\) Philanthropos, “Mr. Timothy,” POSTSCRIPT TO THE South-Carolina Gazette, no. 383, [2], June 25, 1741. The letter from Philanthropos is a response to that of Philalethes, although they were printed in the same
The Charleston newspaper war also debated how Whitefield's contributors could determine if he was applying his collections honestly. The anonymous critic provided the testimony of two "creditable Witnesses" who heard Whitefield ask donors if they were giving money to him or to the orphans. He wrote that the orphanage was thus not only a "Pretence to raise money for himself," but that Whitefield was also "prostituting the solemn Duty of Prayer, thus to invoke the awful Name of God to give Success to a Collection, for the immediate Relief and Support of the Orphans, and when the Collection is made and the Money brought to him, to ask, whether it was for his own Use or that of the Orphans." The author calculated that £653 that Whitefield had collected were unaccounted for and therefore could have been donated to the fire victims without defrauding those who had given to support the orphanage. If Whitefield could not produce this sum, it was the logical conclusion that he had spent it on himself. The author reasoned that "Either the Money collected here by thy Apostle was for the Use of the Orphans, or it was not. If it was, then what an honest Man hast thou made of him to eat, or swallow . . . what was collected for the Use of poor Helpless Orphans; if it was not, then the Quere still remains unanswered, and I suppose for ever will do so."\(^54\)

Although the main part of this argument focused on the proper application of his collections, the combatants also debated whether Whitefield's techniques classified as "plunder." Zealot the Second was appalled by the suggestion. He

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\(^54\) Philanthropos, "Mr. Timothy," POSTSCRIPT TO THE South-Carolina Gazette, no. 383, [2], June 25, 1741; To ZEALOTS the first and second, however dignified or disguised," POSTSCRIPT [THE South-Carolina Gazette], no. 397, [September 26 to October 3, 1741], [4], [3].
claimed that if Whitefield “receiv’d a Gift from the cheerful Giver, doth it deserve no milder an Epithet that plundering? Or where is the Lawyer to be found, who would scruple to receive” a salary?” Zealot the Second defended Whitefield’s collections on the ground that they were made in lieu of a salary, and were therefore not just acceptable but expected.55

Philaretes, on the opposing side, argued that Whitefield’s collections were plunder. He called Whitefield “the great MOCK-PREACHER,” a reference to a London pamphlet by the same name, and claimed that regardless of whether it was called “Theft” or a “Gift,” his readers all knew “what Punishments are allotted by law for such Vagrants as extort Money from well-meaning People by false Tokens and unjust Pretences.” He compared Whitefield to the nightjar, a type of bird that was believed to “suck Goats in the Night” to “rob them of their Milk, and dry their Udders, but bring also a perfect Blindness, which they fall into immediately after they have been sucked.” Philaretes reported that “these cheerful Givers must have been first blinded and then sucked, for who, with their Eyes open, would give largely or cheerfully to an Orphan-House built in a desolate Part of a ruined and depopulated Colony.” While accusations that Whitefield’s preaching extorted his audience were later echoed in Boston and Philadelphia, the comparison to a goatsucker was unique to Charleston. Another critic stated that they should “let the World judge” if Whitefield was plundering the colony, and argued that “if Money is continued to be drain’d from the Pockets” of the fire victims, it should count as plunder. Even though the money was “not

55 Zealot the Second, “Mad with Revenge he gather’d all his Wind, And bounc’d like Fifty Bladders from behind,” POSTSCRIPT TO THE South-Carolina Gazette, no. 287 (2), July 23, 1741. See below for debates on Whitefield’s salary.
demanded with the Terrors of a Pistol at the Breast,” the threat of hellfire and
damnation was “as officious a Power to these Purposes as ever was made use
of.56

The Charleston paper war of 1741 tapered off at the end of October.
Although the controversy was initially prompted by four New England letters, the
debates were not mentioned in print anywhere outside of Charleston. While
accusations that Whitefield extorted his audience and questions about his
accountability became common complaints in Boston and Philadelphia, the focus
on the proper application of his collections was unique to Charleston. The
participants expressed a wide variety of opinions about the itinerant’s collections
and there was little consensus about his finances among either his supporters or
detractors.

Meanwhile, the reaction to Whitefield’s collections remained tepid in
Boston and Philadelphia. A group of “Church-Members of the Presbyterian
Persuasion” writing as the Querists in Philadelphia published one of the few
critiques of his finances through 1741. In their 1740 pamphlet, they had included
one paragraph on the preacher’s charity work that asked how the Oxford
methodists, “a Company of Young Students in College,” had the money to
support their work “unless they had a large publick Fund?” In Whitefield’s
response, he ignored the question in order to focus on their other accusations.

56 Philaretes, “--- ---- Nam quis ineptit,” POSTSCRIPT [THE South-Carolina Gazette], no. 395, [September
12 to September 19, 1741], [1], [4]; THE Mock-Preacher: A Satyrico-Camical-Allegorical FARCE. As it was
Acted to a Crowded Audience At KENNINGTON-COMMON, And many other THEATRES. WITH THE
Humours of the MOB (London: Printed and Sold by C. Corbett, 1739); Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, s.v.
"nightjar," accessed August 19, 2013,
Samuel Blair, a leading New Light Presbyterian, responded that the Querists were implying that this fund was “at Rome” and the authors were less interested in having a theological discussion than in accusing Whitefield of being a Catholic emissary.57

The Querists’ 1741 response directly interrogated Whitefield’s orphanage and reveals how closely associated the criticisms of Whitefield’s finances were to his ministry’s reputation. The authors claimed that if Whitefield’s “one Design was to bring Souls to Christ,” they “might let it pass. But it is a Matter of Fact, that you are driving a great Stroke in gathering great Sums of Money; and if well managed, that may be a good substantial Design too.” However many of the great errors in Christian history occurred when it was “taken for granted, that such a one is a good Man, therefore it is inferred, that his Words and Actions, tho’ inconsistent with the Rule of God’s Word, are good and right still.” Thus it was “the Action only we are to judge, and leave the Design to God,” otherwise it would be “downright Deceit and Palliation to insinuate Men’s good Designs to justify the Matter.” Whitefield’s orphanage could be a success if they assumed that Whitefield was a “good Man,” which only God could determine. They could only assess the orphanage by the visible results of his ministry, which so far were to “wound the Truth, promote Error, disturb Order, raise Factions and animosities.

57 Some Church-Members of the Presbyterian Persuasion, THE QUERISTS, OR, An Extract of Sundry Passages taken out of Mr. Whitefield’s printed Sermons, Journals and Letters: Together with, Some Scruples propos’d in proper QUERIES raised on each Remark (Boston: Thomas Fleet, 1740), 29; Samuel Blair, A PARTICULAR CONSIDERATION OF A PIECE, Entitled, The QUERISTS, Wherein sundry Passages extracted from the Printed Sermons, Letters and Journals of the Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD are vindicated from the false Glosses and erroneous Senses put upon them in said Querists; Mr. WHITEFIELD’s Soundness in the true Scheme of Christian Doctrine maintained; and the Author’s disingenuous Dealing with him exposed. (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1741), 60.
to the great Discomfort of the Lovers of Purity, Order and Peace.” As with the later criticisms, it was not Whitefield’s collections that upset the Querists, but the divisive effects of his ministry that cloaked his other activities in suspicion.58

While his critics remained relatively quiet about his collections in 1741, they still interpreted his ministry in commercial language. For example, Whitefield’s comments that discipline at Harvard was at a “low Ebb” prompted a wave of backlash over his description of the college. A strand of the debates focused on the meaning of “partiality” and how this had an impact upon the veracity of Whitefield’s account. One of his defenders took offense to this term, claiming that “PARTIALITY is accounted by all Men an odious Character. And yet, the Remarker does not give a single Instance of Mr. Whitefield’s Partiality.” Another author replied that the term was not intended as a slur, but to describe “an imperfect Account of things or Persons . . . when any Particulars that enter into a Man’s Character are omitted and that with Design, the Account is partial. Again, if a Man owes another l. 100 Pounds, pays him out l. 50 Pounds, that is called a Partial Payment.” In 1741, Whitefield’s critics made no attempt to connect this commercial language to his collections. Three years later, a different debate emanating from Harvard used the same language of “partial accounts” to critique Whitefield’s financial accounts. While contemporaries used similar terminology to describe itinerant preachers that they used to describe peddlers and other merchants of cheap wares, they initially made no attempt to

58 Querists, A SHORT REPLY TO Mr. Whitefield’s Letter Which he wrote in answer to the Querists; WHEREIN The Said Querists testify their Satisfaction with some of the Amendments Mr. Whitefield proposes to make of some of the exceptionable Expressions in his Writings. TOGETHER WITH SOME FARTHER REMARKS Upon what seems exceptionable to the present Letter; which seem to occur to The Querists. (Philadelphia: Printed for the Querists, 1741), 46-47, 61.
connect these accusations to Whitefield’s own collections. The itinerant may have been a deluder, deceiver, and one of the “Burglars in Divinity,” but he was not yet accused of financial theft.59

This began to change in 1742 and 1743 as Whitefield’s ministry became increasingly controversial. Antirevivalists in this period began to match the coordination of the revival’s promoters and published more pieces denouncing the itinerant. In print, 1742 was the first year that colonial newspapers printed more negative articles than positive ones about Whitefield and in 1743, more antirevival publications were printed than prorevival publications. As the debates grew more heated, both his supporters and detractors began to focus more on his fundraising work.60

Several events occurred that made Whitefield’s collections appear more suspicious. First, Whitefield’s fellow itinerant preachers, some of whom were also making collections, caused concerns that they were upsetting the economic life of the colonies. Antirevivalists attempted to discredit these preachers by connecting them to famous cheats and thieves in English history. Second, the

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59 “To the Publisher of the WEEKLY JOURNAL,” THE New England Weekly Journal, no. 734, [1], May 12, 1741; “To the Author of the Vindication of Mr Whitefield’s Journal, touching his Remarks upon the College in Cambridge,” THE Boston Gazette, no. 1008, [1], June 15 to June 22, 1741; “To the Publisher of the BOSTON EVENING-POST,” The Boston Evening-Post, no. 340, [2], February 8, 1742. The full quote is: “AS Cheats and Imposters in any Profession are justly esteem’d pernicious in a Common-Wealth; so the Mischief and Danger of such, must rise in Proportion to the Importance of the Profession they assume. Thus, if we commit the Care of our Lives and Health to Quacks and empericks in the Practice of Physick, we shall doubtless run the greatest Hazard, and incur the just Imputation of Folly: But how will our Folly rise into Madness, if we commit our spiritual Concerns and the Care of our Souls to Burglars in Divinity.” Although the author uses commercial metaphors, he does not appear to be criticizing Whitefield’s collections. In this analysis, Whitefield was threatening because he was mistreating souls as a quack doctor mistreated a patient, not because he was stealing money. For a discussion of commercial metaphors, see Lambert, Pedlar in Divinity, 167-168.

60 Lambert, Inventing the “Great Awakening,” 186-221, esp. 214; Smith, The First Great Awakening in Colonial American Newspapers, 149; Timothy Hall does discuss Whitefield’s or Davenport’s collections in relation to their itinerancy. See Hall, Contested Boundaries, esp. 41-70.
publication of Thomas Prince’s *The Christian History* prompted debates over whether the revivals were a moneymaking scheme for its promoters. Third, Whitefield’s own struggles with debt became public knowledge and caused increased scrutiny of his collections. His “external embarrassments” and some unsettling reports about his orphanage caused his critics to doubt his integrity and managerial skills. Finally, colonial papers began to reprint the Scottish complaints about Whitefield’s collections. By the end of 1743, his collections were one of the most controversial aspects of his ministry.

A series of itinerants began to rove the colonies, prompting controversy, schism, and amplifying fears that they caused economic chaos. James Davenport, the most infamous itinerant, also made his own collections for the Shepherd’s Tent, a revivalist school that briefly existed in New London, Connecticut in 1742 and 1743. Although both Davenport and the school were controversial, his fundraising work provoked little comment in print. One of the few published commentaries on his collections appeared in *The Boston Evening-Post*. The author noted that Davenport had collected at Dorchester and in the Boston Common, a frequent collection spot of Whitefield’s. Although he was unsure how much Davenport had collected in total, the author believed it was “no great sum” and noted contemptuously that Davenport had only “pick’d up Four Pounds and half a Crown” at his collection. He did not doubt that some “credulous folk” would donate to the cause, but he was sure that the “wiser and better sort of people” would “scarce be wheedled a second Time into Collections for building Castles or Colleges in the Air.” Charles Chauncy was less
concerned, declaring that Davenport's proposal to "raise monies" was "meer fancy: And this, no doubt, will generally be the tho't of the town upon it." Despite the dismissal, Davenport had raised enough money by the end of February 1743 to begin construction but had no workmen. A few days later on March 6 and 7, Davenport partook in his infamous bonfire of books and vanities. The event was denounced by New and Old Lights alike, and the school closed promptly thereafter.\footnote{61 "A LETTER from a Gentleman in Boston, to a Minister in the Country containing a brief Account of Mr. D--t's later preaching in Boston and Dorchester, with some Remarks, &c.," The Boston Evening-Post, no. 365, August 8, 1742, [1]; Charles Chauncy, ENTHUSIASM described and caution'd against. A SERMON Preach'd at the Old Brick Meeting-House in Boston, the LORD's DAY after the COMMENCEMENT, 1742. With a Letter to the Reverend Mr. JAMES DAVENPORT (Boston: J. Draper and S. Eliot, 1742), vi; Richard Warch, "The Shepherd's Tent: Education and Enthusiasm in the Great Awakening" American Quarterly 30, no. 2 (Summer 1978): 177-198, esp. 190-192.}

Regardless of whether itinerants were collecting money like Whitefield and Davenport, all were described as causing economic chaos and critics connected them to famous "Cheats and Imposters" throughout English history. One commentator printed an excerpt by Cotton Mather in The Boston Evening-Post that told the story of "that very scandalous" Dick Swayne. After committing "a thousand Rogueries" while working as a servant to a Boston ship captain, "the Monster set up for a Preacher of the Gospel" and bounced around the region "putting on a Mighty show of Religion." Unfortunately for Swayne, he forgot to change his name at one stop and was confronted by the wife of his previous boss. She pointed to his former and current "Knaveries" and discredited him, "So, without any more Disturbance, but only the cheating of some credulous Folks of considerable Sums of Money, he marched off." Another Boston writer
flipped the itinerants’ claims that they were combatting religious decline and printed an excerpt from Richard Allestree’s *The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety*, originally published in 1667. The excerpt in *The Boston Evening-Post* claimed Christian principles were corrupted when people “either desert, or neglect their secular callings.” If only “Men conscientiously employ themselves in their honest Occupations, their Minds would be sufficiently diverted” and they would not fall victim to religious “Novelties.” They adopted religious fads because they were “an easier supplementary Trade” than their own and brought “themselves and Families to Want and Beggary.” While these articles rarely mentioned Whitefield by name, he was the symbolic head of the revivals and readers would have likely connected these famous cheats to the famous itinerant. These articles placed Whitefield’s ministry, and thus his collections, within a long tradition of imposters and thieves.\(^{62}\)

The publication of the *Christian History* also prompted the possibility that the revivalists cared more for profits than for God. Thomas Prince Jr.’s evangelical magazine, first published in Boston in 1743, printed revival news and conversion accounts from the colonies and Great Britain. The magazine provoked the wrath of antirevivalists, particularly Thomas Fleet, the editor of the *Boston Evening-Post*. Some argued that the paper was a partisan outlet that promoted schism and disorder throughout New England. Other critics asserted that the profits from the *Christian History* and the money Whitefield collected

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were being used to fund further revivals and disorders. One sarcastic writer applauded Prince’s business acumen, for there was “no danger” of the *Christian History* “falling through, for I am informed, there are two or three persons who are so fond of it, that they themselves would take off 3 or 400 per Week, rather than it should stick on Hand.” If the subscribers would be willing to “send their first Quarter’s pay with their Subscription, it would be of great Encouragement to go on with the Work, and enable ME to it.” Another sarcastic account noted that Prince was “a very learned Man” who would be willing to assist someone “allowing him one fifth Part in the Profits.” The critics also turned on evangelical publishing as a whole, arguing that “the Story of the orphan House” has begun “to grow Stale, and of Consequence fewer Contributions being expected from that *Bubble*, the great Promoters of it are in pursuit of a new Method to carry on their Designs.” A new shipment of books and pamphlets sold at “prime Cost” would be the ideal way to fund their revivals.\(^{63}\)

Rumors about the declining temporal and spiritual state of the orphanage also brought attention to how Whitefield spent his collections. Previously, Whitefield had presented Bethesda’s success in an isolated location as a sign of God’s blessing. In a letter to a friend, he noted that “the orphan-house goes on bravely . . . . the great housholder of the world does, and will I am persuaded richly provide for us all. The colony itself is in a very declining way. But our

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extremity is God's opportunity." Whitefield presented Bethesda as a symbol of faith so filled with "manifest proofs of a divine presence," that conversions frequently happened among guests. Whitefield reported three conversions from visitors in the fall of 1740 and that "several others" who came to visit "were really brought home to God" by 1742.64

A series of letters printed in Boston and Philadelphia cast this interpretation of Bethesda into doubt. The first was originally printed in The Virginia Gazette and reprinted in Boston in April of 1742. Whitefield had written to a "Gentleman of Honour" asking if he had reported that "there has been no such thing as the Orphan-House in Georgia." The gentleman responded that he had never denied Bethesda's existence, but that he had questioned "what Use can an Hospital be in a desart and abandon'd Colony? Or how can such a House be maintain'd or supported in that Situation, exposed to Spaniards, Indians, and Runaway Negroes?" The author based his claims on the Georgia colony on "an authentick History of Georgia," most likely A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia in America written by three prominent Georgian malcontents. The malcontents bemoaned what they considered the sinking state of Georgia caused by General Oglethorpe's despotism and the Trustee's refusal to allow slaves or rum in the colony. These rumors about Georgia may have provided Alexander Garden in 1743 the evidence he had lacked in 1740 to condemn the orphanage. Garden wrote in a letter published in both Boston and Philadelphia

64Whitefield to Rev. Mr. B— I—, Savannah, 28 March 1740, in Works of Whitefield, 1:158; Whitefield, A Continuation of the Account of the Orphan-House in Georgia, From January 1740 to June 1742, To which are also subjoin'd, Some EXTRACTS from an Account of a Work of a like Nature, carried on by the late Professor Franck in Glaucha near Hall in Saxony (Edinburgh: Printed by T. Lumisden, 1742), 4.
that “Rome and the Devil have contrived to crucify” South Carolina “between two Thieves, Infidelity and Enthusiasm.” The orphanage was in disrepair and was “A scandalous Bubble! Many of the poor Orphans (as the Cant runs)” were not orphans at all, but “idle Fellows and Hussies.” While the few who remained at the house were “in a starving condition,” Whitefield “has been reaping a double Harvest, for them in Scotland.” Even Whitefield’s supporter Benjamin Colman had doubts that the orphanage could succeed in Georgia, wondering in 1742 “how it can subsist, and flourish, and answer the Founder’s End” and that it would “be a Marvel in the Providence of GOD, if it do so.”

Supporters in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston rallied against a similar letter by Captain James Hutchinson. Hutchinson claimed to have visited the house and reported that the orphanage was “very poorly built and finished, and the Doors hanging open, the Cattle having free Liberty to go into many of the Rooms, which I perceived by the Dung on the Floors, and not one Person living in the House that was called an Orphan.” The neighbors of the orphanage considered Whitefield “a vile Man” and “called him as bad as a Murderer, for

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enticing poor Orphans to that Place to Starve." Hutchinson closed his letter by saying "The above Account I am willing to attest to on Oath, whenever called to it." Three published responses criticized Hutchinson's account, two of which raised similar points. Both a letter in *The Boston Weekly News-Letter* and a New York letter that Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette* reprinted noted that Hutchinson's description of his trip to the orphanage and the dimensions of the buildings did not match up with reality. One author said that being wrong on such basic features showed that Hutchinson had either never been to the orphanage or that he used "loose, undeterminate Language" that "does not redound much to to [sic] his Credit." Both letters also took exception to Hutchinson's willingness to make his commentary under oath. One questioned if "the whole of Capt. Hutchinson's Declaration be justly suspected to be bad, from his Willingness 'to attest it upon Oath,' when a Part of it is notoriously wrong?" The other argued that Hutchinson had inserted that comment which "was no doubt design'd to render it more credible, but the Publick will lay little Weight upon this" when they heard that "he had put off to Sea that Morning before his Declaration was published."66

His critics used the alleged decline of the orphanage as proof that the minister was a dishonest man. John Caldwell in 1743 explicitly argued this point, claiming that "the Asserters have long since proved many of the Charges, the

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Disposal of the new Catholick-House at Philadelphia, the Orphan House at Georgia, without Orphans, or when compared to the Money collected for that End, with few; prove what is laid to Mr. W—d’s Charge.” These accusations brought questions of Whitefield’s collections and integrity to the fore of the conversation on his ministry. If Bethesda, which Whitefield and his supporters had so highly touted, was deteriorating despite his famous collections, what did it say about Whitefield? His opponents argued that the disastrous effects of his ministry were not only seen at home but at the institution that they had initially been loath to condemn.67

Rumors about Whitefield’s dire financial circumstances were also well merited. By the end of 1741, Whitefield was deeply in debt and never attempted to conceal this from his audience. In his published financial accounts of 1742, he wrote that he could not produce a full statement without having details “of what Mr. Habersham has expended or borrowed since I have been from Georgia.” However, he figured that “it will not appear unreasonable that I should still be upwards of 600 L. on Arrears.” Whitefield also frequently mentioned his problems with debt to his correspondents. In one letter from June of 1741, he thanked a benefactor for a donation as “my arrears upon the Orphan-house are yet large.” Rumors of debt, however, were not enough to discredit the itinerant.

Whitefield struggled publicly with his financial situation for the rest of his life, but criticisms of his fundraising did not necessarily correspond with his periods of debt. Furthermore, relatively few articles explicitly referenced his issues with debt.\footnote{Whitefield, \textit{A CONTINUATION OF THE ACCOUNT OF THE ORPHAN-HOUSE in Georgia} [1742], 18-19. James Habersham was the manager of the orphan house from 1737 to 1744. See Frank Lambert, \textit{James Habersham: Loyalty, Politics, and Commerce in Colonial Georgia} (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2005). Whitefield to Rev. Mr. S—, London, 13 June 1741, in \textit{Works of Whitefield} 1:275.}

In addition to rumors about the decline of the orphanage, colonial papers reprinted Scottish complaints about Whitefield’s collections throughout 1742 and 1743. In his study of the connections between New England and British awakenings, Michael J. Crawford argued that the Scottish revivals lacked the ecclesiastical disputes that characterized their New England counterparts. Therefore, critics attempted to show how “the Scottish revivals shared in the enthusiasm” of their American cousins in an attempt to discredit the colonial awakenings. One of the ways they did this was by emphasizing the connection between Whitefield’s enthusiasm and his collections. For example, an excerpt from the Scottish postscript to the second edition of \textit{The State of Religion in New-England} was reprinted in both Boston and South Carolina. The selection printed in the newspapers focused exclusively on his collections and the orphan house, complaining about the “filthy Lucre by his shameful begging for himself . . . and other Tools of his creeping into Houses, and deluding silly Women, and Men of like Wisdom.” The author grumbled about the ministers who “will answer it to GOD, their own Consciences, and their Country, for encouraging this, vain empty, conceited Stroller, in sponging” under the guise of religion for “both
himself and his fantastic Project, no better than one of the Bubbles, in the South-Sea times." The excerpt closed with a story of an earnest convert who visited Whitefield’s tent after the sermon to inquire about the state of her soul. Whitefield brushed her off "roughly" and answered in "an angry-like Manner" that he was "BUSY: Indeed, he was so; for the Words, GIVE,—GIVE,—GIVE . . . Make Way for those that are to GIVE" were constantly on his tongue.69

An earlier Scottish reprint in Philadelphia also complained about Whitefield’s enthusiastic collections. The author was distressed that he "publickly advertised, that he was ready to receive the charities of the well disposed." His desire for money was so great that only "ladies of fashion" were admitted to his sermon the next day. The author asserted that many people "would readily protest against his carrying so much specie, &c. out of Britain, at a time when we have so little left." Whitefield’s "method of collection" was distressing and would "tend to the beggaring of the nation to encourage one thus, at these hard times" to encourage his "persuasive eloquence" that gave him "equally the command of the purses and passions of his audience." The author closed with the argument that charity was most useful at home, and that they should "keep our awn fish guts to our awn sea maws." Another letter from Scotland printed in 1743 was even more explicit in connecting the dangers of Whitefield’s collections to enthusiasm. The author noted that Whitefield made "sure the main Chance where-ever he went" was to "levy considerable Contributions for his Family in

Georgia.” Although his main success in his first Scottish tour was to gather “a
gaping Crowd about him” in order to “make them part with their Money,” the
author noted that nonetheless “a Seed was sown by him which afterwards ripen’d
into a pretty large Harvest of Enthusiasm in the western Parts of the Country.”
The Scottish reprints emphasized the connection between Whitefield’s role as a
“bold and importunate beggar” who was as “insatiable as the Grave” and the
traumatic effects this caused on Scottish society.70

These criticisms laid the foundation for the peak years of Whitefield’s
financial controversies that began at the end of 1743 and continued through
1746. The most important part of these controversies was the debate over
Whitefield’s accounting practices. Between July of 1743 and February of 1746,
Publicola published four letters in The South Carolina Gazette that called for a
public printing and an independent audit of Whitefield’s collections for the
Bethesda orphanage. The letters were addressed to Whitefield and to the
managers of the orphanage and were reprinted in multiple newspapers in
Philadelphia and Boston. While little printed commentary accompanied the calls
for accounts in either Charleston or Philadelphia, Boston presses fiercely
debated the merits of Whitefield’s accounting practices. Despite these regional
differences, Publicola’s letters provided the framework for the arguments over

70 “Mr. Bradford,” THE AMERICAN Weekly Mercury, no. 1161, March 25 to April 1, 1742, [3]; [A. M.], THE
STATE OF RELIGION IN NEW-ENGLAND, since the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield’s Arrival there, In a
LETTER from a Gentleman in New England to his Friend in Glasgow, 2nd ed. (Glasgow: R. Foulis, 1742), 2.
Crawford identifies A. M. as Alexander Malcolm, a minister in the Church of England at Marblehead,
Massachusetts. Crawford, Seasons of Grace, 171; A LETTER FROM A Gentleman in Scotland, to His Friend
in New-England. CONTAINING An Account of Mr. Whitefield’s Reception and Conduct in Scotland, the two
Visits he made there; and also of the Work at Cambuslang, and other Parts. Wherein many Mistakes,
relating to these Things, that have been formerly and lately transmitted to this Country, are recited, and
the whole Affair set in a true and impartial Light (Boston: Printed and Sold by T. Fleet, 1743), 4. The
phrase “bold and importunate beggar” became popular and was used by many of Whitefield’s critics.
Whitefield’s finances in the colonies during this period. The arguments over accounting soon led to debates about the legitimacy of an evangelical institution and prompted questions about the relationship between clerical salaries and accountability. Throughout the period, Whitefield’s detractors used conflicting language to interpret the controversies, variably referring to the itinerant as a poor vagrant, a bad businessman, an imposter, or a rich criminal.

Published accounts of charities were frequently printed as promotional pieces that both assured donors their money was well spent and elicited further donations. For example, the annual anniversary sermons of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the missionary organization associated with the Church of England, were among the most important fundraising pieces produced by the society. The sermons were published in packets with financial accounts, membership lists, forms, and abstracts. Yearly audits were present from the beginning of the SPG and were not mandated by the crown, showing that the Society believed they were an effective way to manage their finances. Colonial institutions often published their accounts in the newspapers, such as in 1744 when Alexander Garden published the audited accounts for his slave school in the South Carolina Gazette. Garden’s accounts were printed in the midst of

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71 Accounting historians have viewed formal accounting practices in religious groups as an intrusion of the secular into churches. In their study of SPG accounting, for example, G. A. Swanson and John C. Gardner argue that the SPG’s audits were a way to ensure that the organization ran smoothly and were also an extension of business culture into a charitable organization. However, asking whether the audits were prompted internally or by the crown does not take into account the importance that benefactors played in demanding audits. See Swanson and Gardner, “Not-for-Profit Accounting and Auditing in the Early Eighteenth Century: Some Archival Evidence,” The Accounting Review 63, no. 3 (July 1988), 436-447; Salvador Carmona and Mahmoud Ezzamel, “Accounting and Religion: A Historical Perspective,” Accounting History 11, no. 2 (2006), 117-127; Kerry Jacobs, “The Sacred and the Secular: Examining the Role of Accounting in the Religious Context,” Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal 18, no. 2 (2005), 189-210; Both Travis Glasson and Laura M. Stevens view the published SPG accounts as promotional materials. See Stevens, The Poor Indians, 86-94, and Glasson, Mastering Christianity, 22-25.
Publicola's demands for Whitefield's audit and Garden likely viewed this as yet another way to discredit the itinerant. The Philadelphia hospital also published detailed annual accounts in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* that included financial transactions and patient information.\(^\text{72}\)

Whitefield's published accounts seem to mimic those of the SPG. Addressed to both current and future benefactors, Whitefield packaged his financial accounts as a full report with letters, pamphlets, songs, eyewitness accounts, and drawings of life at the institution that were designed to assure his contributors that their money was well spent as well as to encourage further donations. He published six accounts of his finances, with all except his 1739 account focusing almost exclusively on the orphan house. His accounts in 1739, 1741, and 1742 were itemized and prepared by either Whitefield or James Habersham. His accounts in 1746, 1765, and 1770 were audited lump sums and were his response to the increasing amount of criticism hurled at the orphanage.

Publicola's first letter was published as a four page supplement to *The South Carolina Gazette* on July 4, 1743 and was addressed to the managers of the orphanage instead of Whitefield. Whitefield was in England at the time and Publicola addressed the letter to those who were more likely to be able to comment on the temporal affairs at the orphanage. This also emphasized that

\(^{72}\) "Negro School-House at Charles-Town Accompt," *THE SOUTH-CAROLINA GAZETTE*, no. 523, April 2, 1744, [2]. Garden's school was the darling of the SPG in the 1740s. See Glasson, *Mastering Christianity*, 123-129. "STATE of the PENNSYLVANIA HOSPITAL for the Year, ending the 4th of the Fifth Month, May 1761, with an ABSTRACT of the ACCOUNTS, for the first Institution, agreeable to the Report of the MANAGERS to the General Meeting of the CONTRIBUTORS, held, according to Law, on that Day," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, no. 1702, August 6, 1761, [1].
although the project was intimately associated with Whitefield's name, the day-to-
day affairs at the orphanage were managed by allegedly anonymous men. As
Whitefield had "publicly ranged for several Years . . . all over his Majesty's
Kingdoms and Colonies, Begging and Receiving Money from his Majesty's
Subjects," the people had "a natural indisputable Right, to demand and receive
full and faithful Accounts" either "Quarterly or Half-yearly." The lack of audited
accounts had caused "various Surmises and Reports concerning it, greatly to its
Damage and Diligence." Publicola echoed Alexander Garden's language from
earlier that year stating that critics called the house a "Nest or Receptacle of idle
vagabond Fellows and Hussies . . . under Pretence of Religion" and that the
concept was "a mere Engine or Bubble; devised by the Wesleys, Whitefield, and
their Associates, for filling their own Pockets." Those spreading such rumors
cited his inadequate accounts as "Evidence" for all the aspersions cast on both
the house and Whitefield. Publicola listed four key questions he wanted
answered about the house: the number of "real Orphans" housed at Bethesda
along any pertinent biographical information and what assets they brought with
them, how many "other Persons (not Orphans)" were living there along with their
biographical information, how many servants lived there and at what cost, and
the what were the house's income and expenses and how these were affected
by Whitefield's collections.73

Publicola included a detailed template of what a satisfactory account
would look like. Sections included separated accounts of orphans, other

73 "To the MANAGERS of the ORPHAN-HOUSE in Georgia, in the Absence of Mr. Whitefield," SUPPLEMENT TO THE SOUTH-CAROLINA GAZETTE, no. 484, July 4, 1743, [1]; "QUERIES concerning the ORPHAN-HOUSE in GEORGIA" ibid., [1].
persons, and servants including their name, date of entry, age of entry, his or her assets, who placed them in the house, how they were employed, and when they would be discharged. He also included separated sections for financial benefactions received, goods and services received, and how these gifts were spent. Finally, the account should include a note from auditors that the accounts had been examined and “attested upon Oath before them; and then published with their Certificate of their being so examined and attested.” Publicola assured Whitefield that this template was just the basics and that the more detailed his accounts were, “the more satisfactory must they be to the Publick; and the more satisfactory they are to the Publick,” the more money he would receive for the orphanage and the more likely they would be to “wipe off all Aspersions already cast upon it.” However, if Whitefield produced a vague account, “the more Ground you’ll give to suspect fraudulent Dealing, and thereby discourage the Benefactions of the People, and speedily sink them, and consequently the House to nothing.” Publicola alleged that “his dear Lambs, have not all one, but two Purses; and tho’ in his Course of Beggary he pretends to beg and receive in publick only for Theirs; yet in private he presumes to beg and receive also for His own.” As the orphans’ fund “must more or less interfere with the Interest of the Former,” Whitefield “should let the World know” through public accounts.\footnote{“A SPECIMAN of the Orphan-House Accompt, as it ought to be published from the Beginning to this Time, and afterwards continued Half Yearly,” \textit{ibid.}, [1]-[2]. Charles Chauncy used similar language about Whitefield’s purse. See Chauncy, \textit{Seasonable Thoughts ON THE State of Religion In NEW-ENGLAND. A TREATISE in five Parts.} (Boston: Printed by Rogers and Fowle, for Samuel Eliot, 1743), 36.}

Over a year later, Publicola wrote a second letter to the managers of the orphanage. He assured them he was “a hearty Friend to the Publick; to all
honest Methods of publick Charity," and of the orphanage, "(if an honest one it be) in particular." He reiterated the "Publick's reasonable Expectation and Demand of your ACCOMPTS, your full faithful, sufficiently vouched, sworn to, authentickly audited, and attested ACCOMPTS." Publicola again warned them that their own reputation was intimately associated with Whitefield's and the orphanage's, drawing attention to "the various Scandals and Reproaches cast on it, or rather on you."75

To support his argument, he appealed to the managers as Christians, supporters of Whitefield, men of compassion, businessmen, and as men concerned with their reputations. By not publishing the accounts, Publicola claimed that the men were allowing "the ungodly thus to Triumph!" This issue was also a "Matter of Grief and Confusion" to fellow supporters of Whitefield, as they "must hear the many Revilings uttered against you, and without being able to reply one Word in your Behalf!" As managers of a charity institution, Publicola warned them of the "great Danger, if not moral Certainty, that the Continuance of this suspicious Conduct, will soon put a Stop to all charitable Contributions, and bring the House to a speedy and dishonourable End." Bethesda's financial future rested on its good reputation, and the questions surrounding Whitefield's accounts placed the house in a precarious condition. Publicola also appealed to the managers as men of compassion, as he begged them to "Consider the Case of the poor suffering Orphans, half starved already, and the Evil daily increasing!"

At the end of his letter, he warned the managers that they must consider their

75 "A Second Letter to the Managers of the Orphan-House in GEORGIA, in the Absence of Mr. Whitefield." POSTSCRIPT to THE SOUTH-CAROLINA Gazette, Containing the freshest Advices, Foreign and Domestick. No. 544, August 27, 1744, [1].
personal reputations because “your Names must stink in the Nosthrils of the present Generation, and down to latest Posterity.” “In a Word, Gentleman,” Publicola closed, “consider Yourselves!” If Whitefield’s audience had not been aware of Bethesda’s delicate financial situation, Publicola’s second letter made sure that they would be.\footnote{76 “A Second Letter to the Managers of the Orphan-House in GEORGIA, in the Absence of Mr. Whitefield.” POSTSCRIPT to THE SOUTH-CAROLINA Gazette, Containing the freshest Advices, Foreign and Domestick. No. 544, August 27, 1744, [1]-[2].}

James Habersham, the manager of temporal affairs at the orphan house, responded to Publicola’s second letter. After passing over the “uncharitable and unjust Reflections contained in the said Letter,” Habersham wrote that “the Publick expects, we are told, fair and attested Accompts” of both collections and disbursements for the orphanage. Habersham claimed that it was impossible for either him or Whitefield to publish a full account as each only had access to transactions on one side of the Atlantic. Whitefield, however, had written “in publick Print in England and by private Letter to me” that he would publish his accounts when he returned to America and that the delay in his return to America was because “GOD, for wise ends, hath detained Mr. Whitefield longer in Europe, than he expected.” Habersham also suggested that the lack of public accounts that was not the main problem for Whitefield’s detractors, but the itinerant preacher himself. His accounts would “give due Satisfaction to all, except those, who are determined NOT to be satisfied.”\footnote{77 Ibid., [2]; “GEORGIA, Oct. 1, 1744-;” THE SOUTH-CAROLINA Gazette, no. 551, Oct. 15, 1744, [3]. Habersham’s reference to “publick print in England” is likely a reference to Whitefield’s 1742 accounts. These were only published in England and Scotland that included a disclaimer that “having had no particular Account of what Mr. Habersham has expended and borrowed since I have been from Georgia, I cannot possibly give an exact Account of the whole; but shall do it, God willing, immediately after my}
Publicola promptly took exception to almost every line in Habersham’s response, denouncing Whitefield’s and Habersham’s integrity and management skills. He mocked Habersham’s claim that they had been told about the public’s expectations and questioned “did not the Gentlemen know this before they were told it? The more Shame for them, that they are now to be told it, and not have prevented any such telling.” He asked if “Whitefield and his Substitutes had no Correspondence all this while? Or has it been wholly employed ‘bout the SPIRITUALS, Convictions and Conversions of the poor Orphans, and People at Cambulsang, &c. without any Notice of the TEMPORALS, the Sums of Money, &c. collected, and Disbursements of the same, &c? No mutual Communications, or Correspondence of this latter Kind?”

Publicola addressed his final letter to Whitefield, who had returned to the orphanage, on February 6, 1746. In addition to reiterating that the orphanage would have a “speedy and dishonourable End” if Whitefield failed to produce his accounts, Publicola added new rumors about the state of the institution. Some said “you have squander’d away, the Orphans Money on a Parcel of idle Creatures, who strolled about with you from Place to Place.” Others asserted that “you are no such fool; but that the Money is very safe, and which you can lay Hands on when you please.” Still others argued that the numbers that travelled with Whitefield inflated “Travelling Charges, and damage the poor House: But all are agreed in this, that a fair and honest Accompt of the motley Sea of Creatures, under the Name of Orphans,


78 “PUBLICOLA’s third Letter to the Managers of the ORPHAN HOUSE in Georgia,” THE SOUTH-CAROLINA Gazette, no. 556, Nov. 19, 1744, [1]-[2].
maintained in the said House, can never bear the Light, but must appear quite absurd and ridiculous.” The disparate rumors circulating about the orphan house show that Whitefield’s critics had not reached a specific conclusion about what the itinerant was doing wrong but were concerned about his general lack of accountability. According to Publicola, an audited account was the only way to clear the itinerant’s name.79

When placed in the context of eighteenth-century ideas about credibility, Whitefield’s failure to produce his accounts was an egregious error. In Toby L. Ditz’s analysis of Philadelphia merchant letters, she concluded that “sloppy books indicated a level of moral laxness or slovenliness, as well as technical incompetence, while hesitation about their display hinted at fraudulent concealment.” Freely displaying accounts was also an important litmus test of honesty in bankruptcy cases. While Whitefield was no merchant, he and his associates were managing large amounts of money for a project in a colony far from the eyes of his donors. Furthermore, Whitefield’s orphanage operated independently from institutional authority and thus relied solely on the itinerant’s reputation for its funding. Whitefield may have been a minister in the Church of England but that did not protect him from criticisms when he failed to abide by contemporary bookkeeping standards.80

79 Publicola, “To the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield at the Orphan-house in Georgia.” THE SOUTH-CAROLINA Gazette, no. 621, Feb. 17, 1746, [1].
Both Whitefield’s supporters and detractors recognized that these criticisms were particularly damning. One supporter noted that the itinerant’s successful collections “so greatly stir’d the Spleen of his Enemies” and Whitefield himself wrote that his collections had “given them the greatest Offence, and caused the loudest Outcry.” Charles Chauncy, one of Whitefield’s most strident Boston critics, also noted that the accusations of financial mismanagement stung the preacher. Although he only briefly criticized Whitefield’s collections in 1743’s *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England*, the accusations took up a disproportionate amount of space in his pamphlet war with Whitefield. He noted that the itinerant had expressed “a very contemptuous Thought of NON-RESIDENTS and PLURALISTS,” the terms used for ministers who did not reside in their parish or who cared for multiple parishes simultaneously. Chauncy, however, saw little difference between Whitefield’s itinerancy and the lifestyle of those preachers he condemned. After all, most agreed that “NON-RESIDENTS and PLURALISTS have their worldly Encouragements” that supported their lifestyle. Chauncy then suggested that it had not “been to Mr. WHITEFIELD’s Disadvantage, on temporal Accounts, that he has travelled about the World in Quality of an *Itinerant Preacher.*” He had made “LARGE COLLECTIONS” and if “he had a Fellow-Feeling with the Orphans, ‘tis no more than might be expected. No one, I believe, besides himself, can tell the Amount of the *Presents,* he received in this Town, as well as in other Places, for his own proper *Use.*” The phrase “fellow-feeling” became popular among the itinerant’s critics. One anonymous poet, for example, wrote as Whitefield and sarcastically
defended himself against Chauncy's accusations, claiming "Let who will call it Fellow feeling, I For my Part, I don't think it stealing." 81

Responding to Chauncy's tract, Whitefield devoted significant text to the statement and its implied accusations. Whitefield called the insinuations "one of the most Ungentleman-like as well as uncharitable Things you are pleas'd to mention concerning me." Although Chauncy wrote in the third person, Whitefield believed "'tis your opinion also" and that "he think me to be no better than a consummate Villain." Reading between the lines of Chauncy's statement, Whitefield angrily declared that when he was in Georgia, "it was not to fleece my Flock, and then go and spend it upon my Lusts, or lay it up for a Fortune for my self and my Relations. No: freely as I have received, freely I gave." Chauncy gleefully responded that "these Words, I find, have given you great Offence." He explained how he had "been all along inclined to think charitably," despite how "suspicious some have been, whether you have employ'd the Money you collected for the sole Use intended." Chauncy claimed that he had not meant the phrase "a Fellow-sharing with them in a knavish Manner, as you suggest: Nor do I see how my words could be construed in such a Sense." Instead, he meant that while Whitefield was "collecting for the Orphans, the People who gave their Bounty to them might give to you also" and that "together with the Presents I had

81 "To the Publisher of the Thursday's News-Letter," The BOSTON Weekly New-Letter, no. 2043, May 26, 1743, [2]; Whitefield, A CONTINUATION OF THE ACCOUNT OF THE ORPHAN HOUSE IN Georgia [1742], 3; Charles Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts ON THE State of Religion In NEW-ENGLAND. A TREATISE in five Parts. (Boston: Printed by Rogers and Fowle, for Samuel Eliot, 1743), 36; Anonymous, Mr. Whi——d's Soliloquy (Boston, [1745]). Chauncy may have been mimicking Whitefield's language in his letter "To the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina." Whitefield wrote "I was sensible touched with a Fellow-feeling of the Miseries of the poor Negroes" as he passed through the southern colonies. See Three letters from the Reverend Mr. G. Whitefield, 13.
heard of your receiving for your own proper Use,“ his travels were “not to your Disadvantage, on temporal Accounts. I believe, you will find my Words capable of this Sense, without the Help of any great Degree of Candour.”

Chauncy may have claimed that he had good intentions, but he probably recognized the inflammatory potential of his comments. Whitefield was a free agent when it came to his collections and his lack of accountability to any institutional authority made Chauncy nervous. He was concerned that Whitefield shared a purse with the orphans and thus anyone who gave “to them might give to you also.” Chauncy sidestepped asserting a definitive judgment call on the collections, but seemed certain that his audience, after reading several hundred pages denouncing the revivals, would be able to reach the correct conclusion. Since Whitefield and his orphanage were indistinguishable from one another, neither one could be trusted.

Chauncy’s Seasonable Thoughts was published at roughly the same time that Publicola’s first letter was being reprinted throughout the colonies. Although James Habersham’s letter was the only direct reply to Publicola, similar arguments began to play a prominent role in Philadelphia and Boston. The Boston Evening-Post in particular fixated on Whitefield’s accounts and turned the issues containing Publicola’s letters into special editions that focused on Whitefield’s collections. For example, on November 19, 1744, it included the

82 George Whitefield, A LETTER To the Reverend Dr. Chauncy, On Account of some Passages relating to the Revd. Mr. WHITEFIELD, in his Book intitled Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England. (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1745), 6-7; Charles Chauncy, A LETTER To the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, Vindicating certain Passages he has excepted against, in a late Book entitled, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England; and shewing that he has neither sufficiently defended himself, nor retracted his past Misconduct (Boston: Printed by Rogers and Fowle, for S. Eliot, 1745), 15-16.
entirety of Publicola’s lengthy second letter alongside a letter from a separate author listing the steps Whitefield needed to take to be forgiven. The author called the rumors that Whitefield was returning to Boston in a new spirit of meekness “a specious Pretence to deceive unwary People, and more securely and effectually to promote and carry on the Confusions formerly begun by him. In short the plain Design of all this seems to be, that People might more readily consent that their Ministers should admit him into their Pulpits.” This author was not fooled by what he considered an elaborate public relations campaign, and insisted that the itinerant apologize for his arrogance, his attacks on Harvard, Archbishop Tillotson, and Boston’s ministers, and for the divisions he caused in New England. “Finally,” the author demanded, Whitefield should “render a fair and just Account of the great Sums of Money, and Quantities of Goods collected by him, under Pretence of supporting his Orphan House at Georgia.”

Harvard’s testimony approached Whitefield’s accounts from a different angle than Publicola’s demands. For Publicola, the public deserved to see accounts by virtue of being contributors to Whitefield’s orphanage. Without such accounts, the people would no longer give money and the institution would fail. Harvard, on the other hand, included Whitefield’s fundraising and accounting practices under the heading of enthusiasm. The tutors and professors defined an enthusiast as “one that acts, either according to Dreams, or some sudden Impulses and Impressions upon his Mind, which he fondly imagines to be the Spirit of God, perswading and inclining him thereby to such and such Actions,

83 “A LETTER from the COUNTRY, &C.,” The Boston Evening-Post, no. 485, Nov. 19, 1744, [1].
tho' he hath no Proof that such Perswasions or Impressions are from the holy Spirit.” The authors cited his habit of attributing all occurrences to God, his “uncharitable, censorious and slanderous” character, and his actions as a “Deluder of the People” as evidence of his enthusiasm. They specifically applied the final phrase to Whitefield’s collections which “he almost extorted from the People” by means of his “extraordinary mendicant Faculty.” Whitefield deluded the people on two counts. First, he made his audiences believe that the orphans “were to be under the immediate Tuition and Instruction of himself.” If his listeners had not thought this, “they would never have been perswaded to any considerable Contribution upon that Head.” Second, his published accounts were “by no means satisfactory,” especially as “we have so much Reason to be dissatisfied with the Man.” The Harvard testimony saw Whitefield’s collection methods and shoddy accounting as dangerous evidence of his enthusiasm.84

Harvard’s framework shaped Boston’s debates over Whitefield’s collections. Benjamin Prescott, a pastor in Salem, reiterated the relationship between collections and enthusiasm in 1745. He noted that it was not Whitefield’s fundraising that was the issue, but instead was “how freely you ascribe all your Receipts to God.” By doing this, Whitefield removed all responsibility from himself and his associates “as if there were no Means used” to collect the money. “Even a common Beggar,” Prescott argued, could “justly ascribe to the special Hand of God, the Success he experiences, in obtaining those Alms, the obtaining whereof is wholly owing to his own Artifice and

84 The TESTIMONY Of the President, Professors, Tutors, and Hebrew Instructor of HARVARD COLLEGE in Cambridge, Against the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, And his Conduct (Boston: T. Fleet, 1744), 4, 11-12; Lovejoy, Religious Enthusiasm in the New World: Heresy to Revolution, 178-214.
Importunity.” As a result of his enthusiasm, “the meer Force of your own Phantasie,” Whitefield made his collections an example of “special Indications of the divine Will” to justify his ministry.85

Whitefield and Edward Wigglesworth, the Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard, continued to debate Whitefield’s fundraising as a symptom of enthusiasm in the press. Whitefield understandably took exception to the phrase “extorted” and questioned how “could that be when it was a public Contribution? I never heard the People themselves make any such Objection.—Nor did I ever see People in all Appearance offer more willingly.” He asserted that since his collections had happened in a public arena, they could not be classified as extortion. Furthermore, Whitefield claimed that he had told his audience at the time of collection that Jonathan Barber, “one of their own Countrymen, and one bred up in their own Colleges,” would be in charge of the spiritual upbringing of the orphans. As for his summary accounts, Whitefield was “well persuaded most of the Contributors depended on my Veracity, & would have been satisfied as to themselves, tho’ I had given no Account of the Disbursements at all.” To further legitimize his accounts, Whitefield argued that his practices were similar to those of Harvard and the SPG. Whitefield’s orphanage may not have had an

85 Benjamin Prescott, A LETTER To the REVEREND Mr. George Whitefield, An Itinerant Preacher, Within the Dominions of his most excellent MAJESTY GEORGE, II. KING of Great-Britain, France, and Ireland, &c. (Boston: D. Gookin, 1745), 7. Although not all of the testimonies against Whitefield mentioned his collections, many said that they had a “full and hearty Concurrence” with Harvard’s Testimony, and thus presumably with the idea that Whitefield’s collections were symptoms of his enthusiasm. See for example THE Sentiments and Resolution OF AN Association of Ministers (Convened at Weymouth, Jan. 15th, 1744,5). Concerning the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield. To which is added, The like Opinion and Determination of the venerable Mr. NEHEMIAH WALTER of Roxbury, and others. As also, The solemn Advice of the venerable Mr. NATHANAEL STONE of Harwich, to the above Gentleman, after certain Questions put to his Conscience (Boston: T. Fleet, 1745), 11.
institutional backing, but investors were protected by the itinerant’s own “Veracity” and his emulation of standard accounting practices.86

Wigglesworth clarified Harvard’s argument about how his collections and accounting practices were enthusiastic. He brushed off Whitefield’s assertion that his collections were legitimate because they were carried out in public. Wigglesworth explained that “By the word extorted, we only meant that you raised the Passions of the People so high, that they were governed by them, than directed by their Reason, in their Contributions. And of this we need no other Evidence” than the misguided plan of the orphanage. Besides the “warmth excited in their Passions,” the people donated to the orphanage by “the high Opinion they had conceived of your Piety, Zeal and Faithfulness; and because they apprehended it would be an uncommon Blessing to the poor Children, to have their Bodies and Souls both under the personal Care of such a Man as Mr. Whitefield.” Despite Whitefield’s assurances that Barber was a staunch Calvinist and a good New England man, Wigglesworth believed he was a “Gentleman of no Name or Character in these Parts” and was not “known by Name” by the “Multitudes of your Contributors.” Unlike Publicola, Wigglesworth was not concerned with rumors that Whitefield was embezzling money, but was more concerned that he had lied about the plan of the institution. Wigglesworth questioned how Whitefield could convince himself that “you have acted fairly and

86 George Whitefield, A LETTER To the Rev. The PRESIDENT, and PROFESSORS, TUTORS, and HEBREW INSTRUCTOR, of Harvard-College in Cambridge; In answer to A TESTIMONY Publish’d by them against the Reverend Mr. GEORGE WHITEFIELD, And his Conduct. (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1745), 13-14.
honestly, when you have so deceived the Expectations of such great Numbers of charitable and well disposed Persons?\textsuperscript{87}

Wigglesworth explained that Whitefield needed further accounts to protect his benefactors, his orphanage, and himself. According to those “best acquainted with Accounts of that Nature,” Whitefield’s were “spoken of as a great defect.” The “entire Confidence the Contributors put in” Whitefield as sole proprietor of the orphanage meant that the itinerant should be vigilant so “that they might have no Reason to repent of their Confidence.” If he did not “demand an Account of particulars, with proper Vouchers” from those managing his money, “it is manifest, that however upright you may be yourself yet you was liable to be greatly imposed upon and defrauded by them.” While Whitefield argued that his accounts were similar to the SPG’s, Wigglesworth asserted that there was “no Need” for such an organization to produce the detailed accounts expected of the itinerant. Whereas the success or failure of the orphanage rested solely on Whitefield’s shoulders, the SPG had levels of safeguards to assure that the money donated to them was correctly accounted for. According to Wigglesworth, the charter of the SPG stipulated that the Society was “to give an annual Account to the Lord Chancellour, the Lord chief Justice of the King’s Bench, and the Lord chief Justice of the Common Pleas, or any two of them, of the several Sums of Money by them received and laid out, and of the Management and Disposition of the Revenues of the Corporation.” Therefore,

\textsuperscript{87} Edward Wigglesworth, A LETTER to the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, By Way of REPLY To his Answer to the College Testimony against him and his Conduct. To which is added, The Reverend President’s ANSWER To the Things charg’d upon Him by the said Mr. Whitefield, as Inconsistencies (Boston: T. Fleet, 1745), 39-40.
when someone donated to the SPG, he or she did not need to have faith in the financial management of an individual but in the Society as a whole. Even if Whitefield himself was honest, that was no guarantee that the donations would be well spent.\textsuperscript{88}

Other Boston ministers were not as generous about Whitefield's character. Nathanael Henchman's eighth and final reason for refusing Whitefield his pulpit was that he had come to Boston "To make a Purse for himself, by begging with great Solemnity" for an orphanage that was "the most ill projected Scheme since Darkness was on the face of the Deep" that "answered well his Mendicant Intention." Henchman then listed the three reasons why he believed that Whitefield had come to steal their money: his failure to publish detailed enough accounts, his preaching in larger towns as opposed to the "lesser Parishes, where souls are as precious, but ready Money not so plenty," and for the infrequency with which he now mentioned the orphans. Whitefield, however, had recently published an account and the Henchman added a hasty postscript to his pamphlet explaining that he was still not satisfied. The summary nature of the account was "an Abuse of Mankind" and Whitefield expected the world to "receive all he asserts for Truth, upon the Credit and Faith of" the itinerant himself.\textsuperscript{89}

While they may have generally agreed that his fundraising was a symptom of his enthusiasm, Whitefield's Boston critics agreed on little else. One such

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{REASONS OFFERED By Mr. Nathanael Henchman, Pastor of the first Church of Christ in Lynn, For declining to admit Mr. Whitefield into his Pulpit} (Boston: T. Fleet, 1745), 8-9. Henchman asserted that the second reason that Whitefield had come to preach to them was to "change the Religion of New England, which have long been our Beauty and Glory."
example of infighting was over who to blame for the preacher's collections. For some, it was the "credulous Folks" who encouraged Whitefield by giving him money. In an editorial bemoaning James Davenport's collections, one author grumbled that many of the men in town "not only caress and adore the Itinerants, but continually pamper their Bellies, cloath their Backs, and fill their Pockets."

Another writer complained that "such Numbers of People among us, who have sat all their Days under the preaching of able, faithful and learned Ministers, cannot now endure sound Doctrine," and instead have "itching Ears" that led them to follow "blind Guides." Especially in the early complaints about Whitefield's collections, the blame fell more on his audience than on the itinerant himself.90

Those who claimed to speak on behalf of the laity blamed the ministers for supporting Whitefield and allowing him to plunder their towns. One anonymous letter to the clergy found it surprising that "Gentleman of your Sagacity and Penetration" would continue to support the itinerant. Whitefield was "kindly treated among us, and got out of us as much Money as he could, as he pretended for his Orphans at Georgia." After he left Boston, however, "he ungratefully tells the World," that the ministers were unconverted and that their colleges had gone dark. A testimony of laymen also blamed the clergy who "endeavoured to facilitate and bring about all his Designs; yea, even his ultimate View and End of coming into this Province, (viz. the draining of the Purses of the

90 "A LETTER from a Gentleman in Boston, to a Minister in the Country containing a brief Account of Mr. D- t's later preaching in Boston and Dorchester, with some Remarks, &c.," The Boston Evening-Post, no. 365, August 8, 1742, [1]; "To the Publisher of the BOSTON EVENING-POST" The Boston Evening-Post, no. 340, Feb. 8, 1742, [2].
People) they promoted and push'd forward to the utmost of their power.” These men “publicly pray'd to GOD” that the orphanage would succeed, advertised where and when collections would occur, and represented Bethesda as “a glorious and charitable Undertaking, and try'd by all Ways and Means to work upon the Passions of the People.” They helped Whitefield carry away more money than even he had expected to and “in return for the good Services these leading Pastors had done him,” he sent them James Davenport. The laymen also complained about the clergies’ testimonies that denounced the laity for following Whitefield. These had a “Tendency to set the Laity of this Province in a very disadvantageous Light in distant Parts, whereby Foreigners will be apt to entertain a contemptible Opinion of them.” Whitefield’s collections may have been vexing, but in some cases the clerical support he received was more viewed as more threatening to Boston as a whole. Debates between Whitefield’s detractors reveal that there was little consensus on what was most dangerous about his collections.91

The controversy over Whitefield’s collections and accounting was not limited to Boston. One key intercolonial debate focused on the legitimacy of an evangelical institution such as Bethesda. For those who supported Whitefield’s brand of evangelical Christianity, the orphanage would be a success if it brought people to Christ. He explained that “The Salvation of Souls is the chief Thing I had in View when God put into my Heart to build this House” and he frequently

91 "To the Reverend Gentlemen in Boston, who set the grand Itinerant a strolling and propagating his Errors in this Land," The Boston Evening-Post, no. 495, Feb. 4, 1745, [2]. [J. F.] THE TESTIMONY and ADVICE of a Number of LAYMEN respecting Religion, and the Teachers of it. Address’d to the Pastors of NEW-ENGLAND. (Boston: 1743), 4, 1.
mentioned the conversions at the orphanage to his donors. In February and March of 1742, for example, he wrote to several benefactors with the good news that “twelve negroes, belonging to a planter, converted at the Orphan-house, are savingly brought home to JESUS CHRIST” to prove that their money was invested in a worthy cause. Josiah Smith of Charleston claimed that Whitefield’s detractors “unwarily done him Honour” by mocking his collections, “for who can be too importunate in begging for an House of Mercy? Such this has been to the Souls of Bodies of many already.” Smith was so sure of the orphanage’s value that he thought it “my Duty to turn Beggar too, and upon this Occasion to recommend it to every Christian of every Denomination.”

But critics doubted the validity of an institution that tried to combine heart religion with discipline. Publicola, in response to the above letter from Josiah Smith, questioned how the rigid discipline Whitefield imposed on the orphanage was in keeping with an evangelical Protestant institution. He asked why Smith claimed that he had never seen a place with “more of the Face of Religion.” The phrase itself, Publicola argued, was pharisaical and Smith was aware of “their Doom. Abundantly more also the Face of Religion, Order, Decorum, &c. in Popish Convents, than the Orphan House in Georgia; yet what Protestant knows not Popery to be a System of Priest craft! pious Fraud! Spiritual Tyranny and Oppression!” Whitefield’s plan for Bethesda was thus “a gallimaufry Sort of Protestant Popish Convent.” The rigid schedule that the orphans followed and

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that Whitefield publicized blurred the lines between Protestantism and Catholic superstitions in the eyes of some detractors.93

Whitefield’s collections also raised questions in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston about clerical salaries. While these criticisms were more sporadic than other debates over Whitefield’s finances, they nonetheless show that the reaction to his collections was far from standard. Whitefield’s salary was first debated in the aftermath of the Charleston fire in 1741. Both Philalethes and Zealot the Second argued that Whitefield’s dedication to the orphan house was impressive because he did it “without any establish’d Salary.” Zealot the Second reasoned that Whitefield’s collections were the equivalence of salary and that those who questioned his methods wanted free labor. Zealot asked “is not the Labourer worthy of his Hire? If he has sown to us spiritual things," was it not appropriate that the minister should “reap our carnal Things?” As others in learned professions received a salary without “Fear he should be tho’t to plunder,” a minister who came to town for charitable purposes should be immune from these slurs. An anonymous author agreed that if Whitefield “does his Work faithfully,” it would be admirable for him to work for free. However, some laborers “are such wretched Bunglers, that instead of Money they deserve payment in some other sort of Coin" because “they seem to be as wholly unacquainted with the Laws" of Christianity “as with the true Interests" of society. Why should Charleston pay for a service, he wondered, that they did not want?94

93 “P. S.,” SUPPLEMENT TO THE SOUTH-CAROLINA GAZETTE, no. 484, July 4, 1743, [3].
94 Philalethes, “Mr. Timothy,” POSTSCRIPT TO THE South-Carolina Gazette, no. 383, [1], June 25, 1741; Zealot the Second, “Mad with Revenge he gather’d all his Wind, And bounc’d like Fifty Bladders from behind,” POSTSCRIPT TO THE South-Carolina Gazette, no. 287 [1]-[2], July 23,
In Boston, Whitefield's fundraising work prompted questions over exactly how ministers' salaries should be paid. The initial comments came from a Scottish letter to a friend in New England critiquing the itinerant's ministry. After describing the problems that Whitefield's collections caused in Scotland, the author wrote that the revivals were fortunately confined to a few districts, partly because of "our legal Establishment, that so few Ministers entered into the Spirit of Whitfieldism: For had our Clergy depended upon the voluntary Subscriptions of their People, it might have been a violent Temptation in their Way to run with the popular Humour." A few months later, the testimony of laymen in Boston echoed this complaint and urged their ministers to "be Courageous, to oppose Errors, to promote Truth and to make a Stand of it, tho' you thereby risqué your Salaries." Rustico Clerus also alleged that Whitefield's clerical supporters were promoting the itinerant for their own financial gain. Noting that he was stationed at a small parish with a small salary, he asked if he could "pay a Visit to some of your most noted encouragers of Itinerancy" and if they would allow him "to join in their Work, and share in the Wages, without grudging me either the Honour of the one, or the Profit of the other." Clerus noticed that the itinerants had "fill'd their Pockets with something more Substantial from the Treasures of the Laity" and he desired to share in their wages. If the clergy thought that a higher salary was not a "proper Gospel Motive," he promised to give whatever excess money he received, to "founding an Orphan-House." 95

95 A LETTER FROM A Gentleman in Scotland, to His Friend in New-England. CONTAINING An Account of Mr. Whitefield's Reception and Conduct in Scotland, the two Visits he made there; and also of the Work at
Disinteresse Spectateur in Philadelphia was concerned that Whitefield's lack of salary set a dangerous precedent for other clergymen. He claimed that he did not think Whitfield was a "profane wicked liver, but on the contrary verily believe he intends the good of Souls," but worried that those who followed in his footsteps would not have the itinerant's good "Judgment." Spectateur's reflections debated "whether the publick Hireling or private Receiver is the worst." Although the Apostles had worked with no salary, they were guided by the Holy Spirit and therefore did not have to pay for their education or to support their families. In the complicated world of the eighteenth century, Spectateur believed it was important "to inquire what manner is best for supporting the Clergymen of the Gospel." He was particularly concerned that Whitefield's collections caused women and servants to steal money from their husbands and masters to toss into the collection plate. This alone was "sufficient Reason to embrace the Order observ'd in the Church of England, and establish'd by our Laws, as being most consistent to the Welfare of our Religion, otherwise we rise up in Rebellion against the Persons we have chosen to defend our Rights and Priviledges, By making Laws for the Support of the National Interest." Although Whitefield called himself a member of the Church of England, Spectateur believed he was more accurately described as a Dissenter because he had "no Allowance from our

_Cambuslang, and other Parts. Wherein many Mistakes, relating to these Things, that have been formerly and lately transmitted to this Country, are recited, and the whole Affair set in a true and impartial Light (Boston: Printed and Sold by T. Fleet, 1743), 14-15; [J. F.] THE TESTIMONY and ADVICE of a Number of LAYMEN respecting Religion, and the Teachers of it. Address’d to the Pastors of NEW-ENGLAND. (Boston: 1743), 9; Rustico Clerus, "Mr. FLEET," The Boston Evening-Post, no. 489, Dec. 17, 1744, [4]. New England ministers were supported by a tax, but also relied on voluntary contributions from the laity to help cover their living expenses. See Janice Ellen Wood, "Prostituting the Pulpit? The Negotiated Authority of Eighteenth-Century New England Clergy," (PhD. Diss., University of Kentucky, 2008), 79-92, 151-170._
Church. His livelihood depends on his Followers, for which Reason I have before called him the private Receiver, whose Practices proves prejudicial to many industrious honest Men." His reliance on his audience for funding corrupted the itinerant and caused him to hide "his Principals from the Publick, untill by some degree he procured a great Auditory to him by preaching some good Sermons, and being a good Orator he gain'd the Applause of some of the better sort, who contributed Sums of Money to build a Meeting-House." There was not enough money and now the cost "is likely to fall as a general Tax on his Followers." For Spectateur, Whitefield's reliance on collections was not wrong because the itinerant was defrauding his audience, but because it set a dangerous precedent for funding the church.96

All of the controversies surrounding Whitefield's collections in Boston, Charleston, and Philadelphia abruptly stopped in 1746 after the itinerant published his audited accounts. Unlike his previous accounts, Whitefield's 1746 audit did not list individual contributions but instead printed the amounts collected and disbursed between December 15, 1738 and January 1, 1746. William Woodrooffe, William Ewen, and William Russel in Savannah completed the audit and signed it on April 16, 1746. Whitefield and Habersham signed that the accounts "to the best of their Knowledge, contain a just and true Account of all the Monies collected by, or given to them" and that Whitefield had not "converted or applied any Part thereof to his own private Use and Property, neither hath

96 "[Conclusion of what was begun in our last.]" THE AMERICAN WEEKLY MERCURY, no. 1360, Jan. 29 to Feb. 4, 1745.6, [1]-[2]; "An Enquiry into the Cause of our present Animosities in Religion" THE AMERICAN WEEKLY MERCURY, no. 1360, Jan. 21 to Jan. 29, 1745.6, [2].
charged the said House with any of his travelling, or any other private Expences whatsoever." Woodrooffe, Ewen, and Russel testified that they had "carefully and strictly examined all and singular Accounts relating to" Bethesda which were contained in a forty-one page book entitled Receipts and Disbursements for the Orphan House. They found that Whitefield had not used any of the money for himself "but, on the contrary, hath contributed to the said House many valuable Benefactions." The auditors concluded that "in Justice to the Reverend Mr. Whitefield and the Managers of the said House," they could attest that the money was "faithfully and justly applied to and for the Use and Benefit of the said House only." 

Unlike his previous accounts, Whitefield published the audit in both a pamphlet and in colonial newspapers. The pamphlet began with an overview of the history of Bethesda from its inception to the present day. He also included a discussion on how he planned to fund the house in the future, an update on the orphans who had graduated, and a description of the benefits the orphanage had brought to Georgia. The colony may have struggled at times, but Whitefield wrote that "God willing, I intend to carry on my Design till I see the Colony sink or

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97 A FURTHER ACCOUNT OF GOD's dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, From the Time of his ORDINATION to his EMBARKING for GEORGIA. TO WHICH IS ANNEX'D A brief ACCOUNT of the RISE, PROGRESS, and PRESENT SITUATION OF THE Orphan-House in Georgia. In a LETTER to a FRIEND (Philadelphia: W. Bradford, 1746), [65]. Woodrooffe and Ewen were both prominent Malcontents who had run afoul with the Georgia Trustees in the early 1740s. Ewen came to Georgia in 1734 as an indentured servant and rose to prominence as a merchant. Throughout his career he served on Malcontent committees, commissioner for Ebeneezer, superintendent of Savannah, and vendue master for Georgia. He also held offices in his parish for the Church of England. See New Georgia Encyclopedia, s.v. "William Ewen (cs. 1720-1776/1777)," by Sam Fore, last edited August 21, 2013, http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/william-ewen-ca-1720-17761777; See also E. Merton Coulter, ed., The Journal of William Stephens 1741-1743 (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1958).
swim. . . . tho' it had been greatly detrimental to my own private Interest, yet I do not repent of the Undertaking.” On the back cover of the pamphlet, he included a note directing future donations to a network of his supporters.

Whitefield also published his audit in newspapers throughout the colonies. Benjamin Franklin’s *Pennsylvania Gazette* ran the first printing in May of 1746. In addition to the audit, Whitefield included a preface that stated it was “a Minister’s Duty to provide Things honest in the Sight of all Men, I thought it my Duty, when lately at Georgia, to have the whole Orphan House Accounts audited.” He had only sent “an Abstract of the whole, with the particular Affidavits, and common seal of Savannah” to the papers because printing every receipt would be too expensive. However, anyone who wanted to see the originals could visit James Habersham in Savannah or, if he could find someone willing to “defray the Expence of Printing,” he could publish a full account. The preface and audit (including the heading “Mr. FRANKLIN”) were reprinted in full in *The Boston Evening-Post* on June 9 and *The Boston Gazette* on June 17. *The South Carolina Gazette* never published the audit, despite running Publicola’s original requests.

Whitefield’s audit effectively ended the criticisms over his finances. The *Boston Evening-Post* included one last slur on the orphanage in the same issue that included Whitefield’s accounts. An anonymous letter from Charleston

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98 *A FURTHER ACCOUNT OF GOD’s dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield [1746]*, 62. See Chapter 1 for a discussion of Whitefield’s fundraising network on his second tour.
explained that Whitefield had “dissolved the Orphan House . . . and thus he finished that famous Bubble, and brought it to its long expected, infamous and dishonourable End.” However, the author had to publish a retraction the next week, stating that the itinerant had “behaved himself very quietly here . . . and has made no publick Collections, nor private ones that I hear of.” The author had been informed that the orphanage was dissolved “but it proved a mistake,” although it was still “morally certain that the whole will be at an End in very little time.” After this half-hearted criticism, almost no complaints about Whitefield’s finances were printed in Boston for several years. In Philadelphia and Charleston, Whitefield’s audits were met with nearly complete silence from his critics.100

Instead, Whitefield’s old ally Josiah Smith and other supporters began to retake the press coverage of Bethesda. Smith wrote that the itinerant had “conquer’d many Prejudices, which seemed invincible, and mightily increas’d the Number of his Hearers, Friends, and Admirers,” and that he was “much pleas’d with his Method of Proceeding in his Orphan-House.” Nearly a year later, Smith wrote that “since Actions are the best Expositors of the Heart, I appael, for the Truth of my Assertions, to the generous Collections we have privately made” for the orphan house. Whitefield used the money to buy his South Carolina plantation named Providence and still had enough left over to give to Bethesda. Smith was not alone in puffing the orphanage. In 1748, a group led by Samuel

100 “The following Letter Was written by a Gentleman at Charlestown in South-Carolina, Soon after Mr. Whitefield’s Return from Georgia,” The Boston Evening-Post, no. 565, June 9, 1746, [2]; “Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Charlestown, S. Carolina, to his Friend in Boston, dated May 8 1746,” The Boston Evening-Post, no. 566, June 16, 1746, [4].
Fayrweather went to tour Bethesda and wrote glowing reports about the orphanage. One eyewitness cheered that "The Displays of Mercy towards poor Orphans, I had such a Sight of, as never before: My Admiration was rais'd and I was lost in Wonder!"\(^{101}\)

While it is unlikely that Whitefield's audit instantly changed the minds of his critics, it removed his financial controversies from the press for several reasons. First, it answered the calls of many of his most strident critics. Opponents such as Publicola and Edward Wigglesworth had demanded that Whitefield produce an audit to clarify the temporal situation of the orphan house, to assure donors that their money was being well invested, and to hold the itinerant accountable to contemporary financial standards. Whitefield's audit did not conform to the template that Publicola had suggested, but the external verification accomplished similar goals. Second, the audit showed that the itinerant was not stealing money from the institution. Critics such as John Caldwell could no longer argue that the declining orphanage "prove[d] what is laid to Mr. W---d's Charge." Third, Whitefield's limited collections on his second tour along with his more decorous behavior in general was noticed by both friends and critics alike. His audit also coincided with diminishing interest in revival news. In Frank Lambert's estimate, the number of colonial publications dedicated to revival coverage dropped from thirty-five percent to five percent in

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\(^{101}\) "The following Extract of a Letter from the Reverend Mr Smith at South-Carolina, We Have Just Now Received," THE Boston Gazette, OR Weekly JOURNAL, no. 1266, June 17, 1746, [2]; "Extract of a Letter from So.-Carolina, dated March 21. 1747," THE Boston Gazette, OR Weekly Journal, no. 1312, May 5, 1747, [3]; "Extract out of several Letters written from Mr. Samuel Fayrweather of Boston, N. E., now in South-Carolina,--to several Ministers in this Town," THE Boston Gazette, OR Weekly JOURNAL, no. 1476, August 30, 1748, [1].
1746. The critiques that Whitefield had extorted his audience were no longer relevant and disappeared from the presses. After his audit, Whitefield's finances ceased to be a matter of public debate.102

Conclusion

When Whitefield left Boston in 1764, one of his admirers published a laudatory poem about his visit to the city. The author instructed the itinerant to “Go then, thou Man of God! still, still display / All the rich Treasures of thy heav’nly Tongue! / We owe thee much, and much our Hearts would pay! / Take all we can—a Blessing and a Song.” One of Whitefield’s critics published a response to the poem called “A CONTRAST” that altered the wording and italicization of the original to poke fun at the itinerant: “Go, man of Bedlam! to the weak display / All the wild Rev’ries of thy guileful Tongue / We owe thee much, and much our Hands would pay / Take all we’ll give.” The editors of the Boston News-Letter wrote that “Replies come fast among us” as Whitefield’s supporters rushed to defend him. The backlash against the mocking poem was so severe that the author published an apology the next week claiming that “he hath not any personal Disrespect to that Gentleman or any of his Adherents, nor intended it in that Performance; his Design being merely Jeu d’Esprit, a matter of Humour.” Quite the contrary, he found Whitefield’s conduct on his trip to Boston “well worthy of so renowned a personage” and asked the editors to insert his apology “as it sincerely meant” to “be some Reparation” to Whitefield’s followers. The swift and violent reaction against “A CONTRAST” reveals how dramatically the response to Whitefield’s finances had shifted since he published his audit in 1746. His collections were no longer controversial or even “a matter of Humour.”

103"Addressed to the Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD, on his Departure," THE Massachusetts GAZETTE. And BOSTON NEWS-LETTER, no. 3146, June 7, 1764, [3]; “A CONTRAST,” The BOSTON Evening-Post, no. 1501, June 11,
Whitefield’s critics were not silent in the press for want of material as the itinerant had resumed publicizing his collections once his financial controversies fizzled out. When Whitefield was not in the colonies, local newspapers occasionally reprinted reports of his London charity sermons. Whitefield also used the press in 1753 to attack the finances of the Moravians in his *Expostulatory Letter* to Nicholas Zinzendorf. In this letter, he accused the group of being over £40,000 sterling in debt. The incident distressed Whitefield and his letters of the period show his preoccupation with the Moravian “Babels.” Echoing the language that had been used against him a decade earlier, Whitefield questioned “what Kind of Infatuation” had prompted “many of the poor English brethren” to give “their all” to the Moravians. Zinzendorf’s followers would be “obliged to shut up their shops, go to Prison, or be turned out into the wide World, to the utter Ruin of themselves and their Families.” Whitefield of all people knew how damaging such accusations could be and did not make the claims lightly. Instead, he believed that Moravian financial impropriety was a result of their “scheme” that was “antichristian in almost every respect.” Although his *Expostulatory Letter* went through several editions on both sides of the Atlantic, his colonial critics did not connect Zinzendorf’s debt to Whitefield’s own financial struggles. Whitefield himself did not seem to see the similarities between his previous situation and that of the Moravians, instead arguing that their prior success was because “GOD generally suffers such buildings to go high, and their fall may be more conspicuous.” Whitefield likely did not denounce

1764, [3]; “It was far from our Intention to give any Cause for Disputation” THE Massachusetts GAZETTE. And BOSTON NEWS-LETTER, no. 3147, June 14, 1764, [3]; “Messrs. FLEET,” The BOSTON Evening-Post, no. 1502, June 18, 1764, [3].
the Moravians to eliminate a competitor for English charity dollars, but instead due to theological differences with the group.\textsuperscript{104}

Whitefield also continued making collections on each of his subsequent colonial tours. On his fifth and sixth trips to the colonies between 1754 and 1755 and 1763 and 1765, Whitefield began collecting primarily for local causes. One glowing article in 1754 reported that Whitefield had raised approximately £111 sterling for the charity school at the Philadelphia Academy, a collection that was but “one noble Instance” of the “charitable Disposition and great Publick Spiritedness of the Citizens of Philadelphia! Who, it cannot be doubted, will put in Practice the other Methods the Preacher so well recommended of relieving the Poor.” On his sixth trip, Whitefield collected for the poor in each city he visited, the Philadelphia hospital, the Philadelphia Academy, and, “notwithstanding the present Prejudices of many People against the Indians,” Eleazer Wheelock’s Indian School. In addition to advertised collections, Whitefield made impromptu contributions to local causes out of his own pocket. On one such occasion, Whitefield learned that there was no provision for the “Support of Debtors” in New York and the itinerant “generously gave, out of his Purse, enough to purchase ten Cords of Wood” and “promised to make a Collection for their Relief.” The city of Boston also thanked Whitefield “for his charitable Care and

Pains in collecting a considerable Sum of Money in Great Britain" for the victims of the fire of 1760.105

Whitefield also shifted how he advertised his collections. In keeping with his new habit of collecting for local causes, Whitefield began to make his collections at more traditional services. For example, he preached a charity sermon at the "annual Collection for the Poor of the Presbyterian Church" in New York where the raised "double the Sum" that had ever been collected on such an occasion. He also began to publish the biblical text he preached on in his sermon reports, a feature noticeably missing from the newspaper coverage of his earlier tours. His later charity sermons were never published and were preached on different texts than his earlier sermons.106

The changes in his fundraising techniques are evident in a sermon he preached in January of 1770, a few months before his death. Whitefield was in the midst of his last tour and was continuing his efforts to turn Bethesda into a college. With "a more particular application being impracticable, the Reverend Mr. Whitefield takes his method of begging in favour of as many gentlemen and Captains . . . as it might suit to accept this invitation, to dine with him at the Orphan-house academy." The Governor of Georgia, his Council, and members of the Assembly were among those that accepted the invitation. A procession led

105 "Sunday last the Reverend Mr. WHITEFIELD," The Pennsylvania Gazette, no. 1344, Sept. 26, 1754, [2]; "NEW-YORK, JANUARY 23," The BOSTON Post-Boy & Advertiser, no. 338, Feb. 6, 1764, [3]; "NEW-YORK, Jan. 2," The BOSTON Post-Boy & Advertiser, no. 335, Jan. 16, 1764, [2]; "Boston, February 27 1764," The BOSTON Evening-Post, no. 1486, Feb. 27, 1764, [3].
106 "NEW-YORK, JANUARY 23," The BOSTON Post-Boy & Advertiser, no. 338, Feb. 6, 1764, [3]. In his Autobiography, Franklin famously noted that he could "distinguish easily between Sermons newly compos’d, & those he had often preach’d in the Course of his Travels. His Delivery of the latter was so improv’d by frequent repition" that it sounded like an "excellent Piece of Musick." It is unclear how often Whitefield preached the newer sermons but they were still successful at collecting money. Franklin, Autobiography, 111.
by “the orphans in flat caps and black gowns, like the servitors in the university” made its way to the worship service. Whitefield preached “a very suitable sermon” from Zechariah 4:6-10 and detailed the history of the orphanage and “the promising prospect of its future and more extensive usefulness.” After the service, the guests “were very genteely and politely entertained with a handsome and plentiful dinner” that included “a proper variety of plain and well dressed dishes” and “plenty of wine and punch.” Newspapers throughout the colonies covered the evening’s events approvingly and the Georgia House of Assembly published a thank you note to Whitefield for his “indefatigable zeal for promoting the welfare of the province in general, and the Orphan house in particular.”

The glowing response to Whitefield’s 1770 charity sermon contrasted sharply with the controversies that surrounded his collections between 1742 and 1746. Although this period produced the bulk of the criticisms of his fundraising, it was paradoxically the time span when Whitefield was most quiet about his collections. During these years, attacking Whitefield’s finances became a particularly potent way to discredit the evangelist and the revivals he promoted. While both Whitefield and his audience had interpreted his ministry using commercial language, the debates over his finances were not about the

commercialization of religion. Instead, the arguments about how charitable
giving should be collected, organized, and applied reveals different
understandings of how religion, charity, and the economy should relate to one
another in the mid-eighteenth century. As the colonists debated Whitefield's
collections, those on either side of the controversy posed different
understandings about the nature of accountability and how God acted through a
market economy.
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