

George Whitefield's Bethesda: The Orphanage, The College and The Library

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IN MEN OF strong religious faith, righteous zeal is more often than not complemented by fervent convictions and well defined attitudes concerning almost every facet of their lives. George Whitefield (1714-1770), Oxford graduate, ordained Anglican minister, Methodist "dissenter," and evangelic leader of the Great Awakening, was no exception.

Arriving in the five-year-old colony of Georgia on May 7, 1738, Whitefield took only four months to find the "need" that was to occupy the remainder of his life. In such a short time he had discovered that the colony badly needed an institution to take care of the many orphans occasioned by the climate and conditions of the infant colony.¹ By the time of his death on December 30, 1770, the Bethesda Orphan House was known to practically every Christian in England and the American colonies.

On January 1, 1771, in accordance with the common law of England and acts passed by the colonial legislature of

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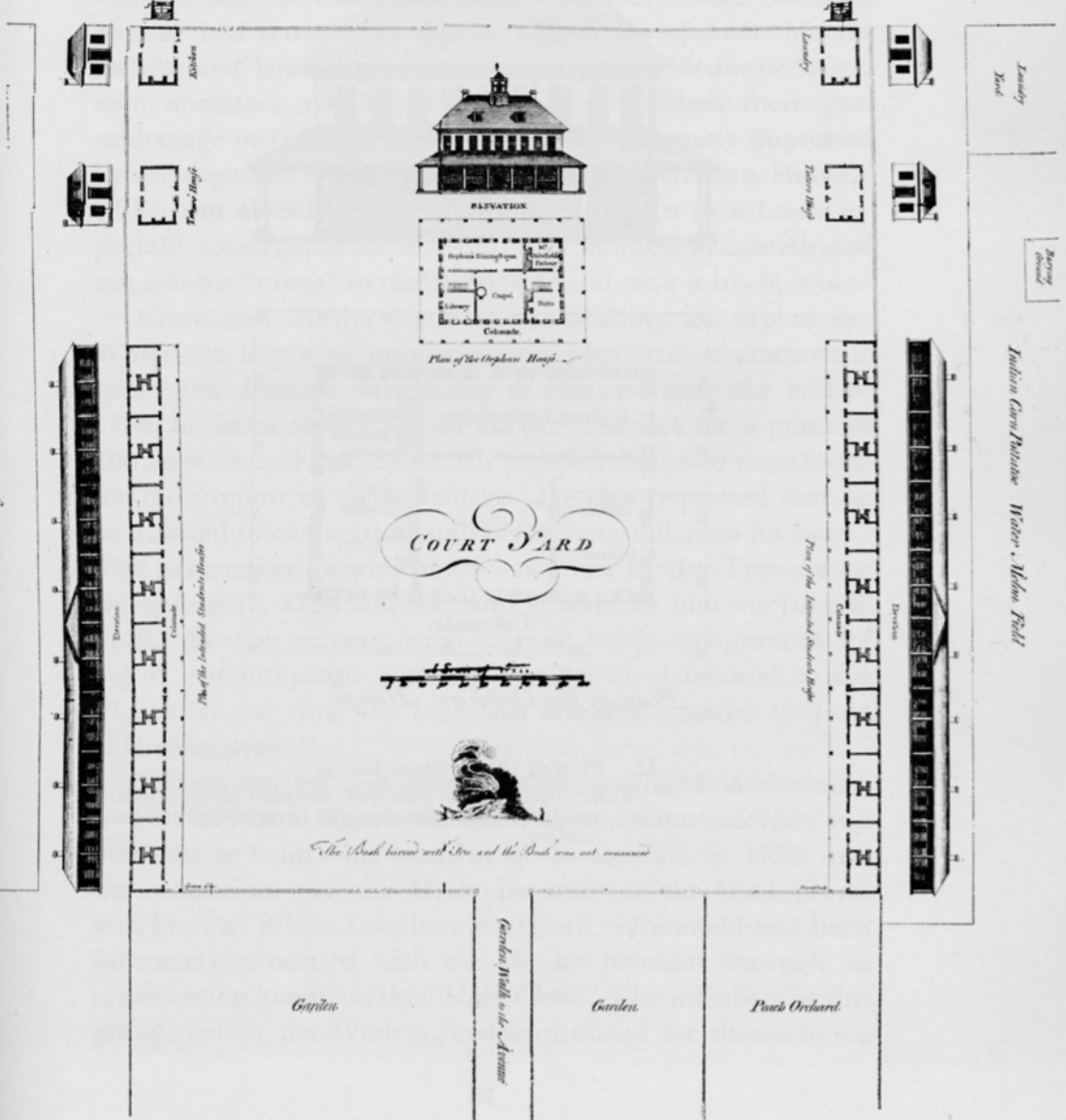
Georgia, Edward Langworthy, Robert Bolton, and William Moore arrived at Bethesda to begin the task of preparing "a true and perfect inventory of all the goods, chattels, wares, merchandise, etc. . . ." of the estate of the Rev. George Whitefield. The recorded copy of the inventory and appraisal of his property in Georgia (excluding lands) reveals an estate worth £2,053 5s. 1d.³ Preceding the inventory of the "goods, chattels," and so forth is a lengthy document (24 manuscript pages) entitled, "A Catalogue of the Books in the Library of the Georgia Orphan House Bethesda Academy," which lists by title approximately 1,200 volumes. The books were valued at £265 10s. 2d.⁴

This paper is a study of the origins and development of this library and the institution that supported it. Since the study concerns itself primarily with the library, many aspects of the institution as an orphanage are omitted. Emphasis will be placed on the period 1764-1779 when Whitefield attempted to turn Bethesda into a college and on the relationship of the library to the plans for that college.

Whitefield was not the first to think of establishing an orphanage in Georgia. The Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia had become aware of the problems involved in the care of orphan children shortly after the colony was established in 1733. They had approached John Wesley in 1737, asking him to draw up a plan for an orphan house and had set aside a small amount of money in case it should be established.⁵ John and Charles Wesley had come to Georgia in 1736 and, in spite of some disagreeable experiences there, they encouraged Whitefield to follow them to the New World. Whitefield's 1738 trip to Georgia was intended to be a short one, as he was going back to England to be ordained as a priest. Nevertheless, by the time of his departure in August, 1738, he was firmly convinced that the construction

The Plan and Elevation of the Present and Intended Buildings of the
Georgia ORPHAN HOUSE Academy

Salt Water Creeke

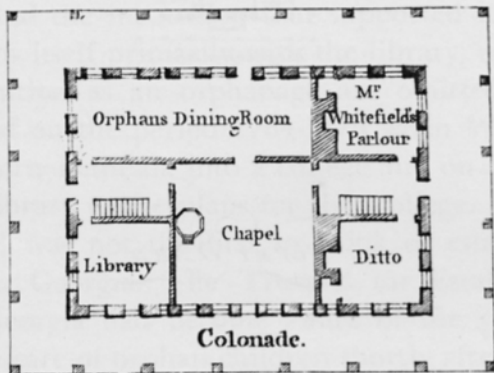


I. The Plan and Elevation of the Present and Intended Buildings of the Georgia Orphan House Academy.

From: The Works of the Rev. George Whitefield . . .
London: Ed. and Charles Dilly, 1771, III, 510.



ELEVATION



Plan of the Orphan House.

II. Plan of the Orphan House.

From: Detail of the Plan and Elevation of the Present and Intended Buildings of the Georgia Orphan House Academy.

of an orphanage in Georgia would be practical and "build up souls for God."⁶

One of the experiences which helped to convince Whitefield of the possibility and value of an orphanage in Georgia was the trip he made to nearby Ebenezer where the Salzburgers had settled. Under the influence of Johann Martin Bolzius and Israel Christian Gronau, two well-educated German ministers, the Salzburgers had established their own orphanage in January, 1738. Whitefield was greatly impressed by the organization and efficiency of their "Orphan House," which was already caring for twelve children in a house especially constructed for that purpose. Whitefield contributed some of his "stores" to the orphanage and gave it his blessing.⁷

Convinced of the value of establishing an orphanage, Whitefield began to implement his plan with characteristic speed and decision. Returning to England near the end of 1738, he immediately petitioned the Trustees for a grant of 500 acres of land near Savannah and permission to raise funds for the support of an orphanage. He also requested that he be allowed to choose the land and to transmit it to his heirs.⁸ The permission to raise funds was given by the Trustees on December 27, 1738 and the land granted to him on June 2, 1739.⁹ As soon as permission to raise funds was granted, he began a triumphant tour of the British Isles and raised £1,010 by the time the land was officially granted in June of the next year.¹⁰

It was during this interval that much of Whitefield's trouble and fame began. He had achieved some notoriety as a fiery orator before his first voyage to Georgia in 1738, and his association with the Methodist sect and the Wesleys was well known. While a student at Oxford, Whitefield had been intimately associated with the Wesley brothers through an organization known as the "Holy Club." The members of this group, led by the Wesleys, had formulated for themselves a

strict and methodical set of rules to be their guide in their daily and religious lives. Because of their unrelenting adherence to these rules, their fellow students applied the derisive term "method-ists" to them.¹¹ The influence of this group on Whitefield and the colony of Georgia can hardly be exaggerated.

As Whitefield's fame spread, so did his troubles, and the established churches increasingly refused to let him use their buildings as meeting places. He wrote:

But by the time I had taken priest's orders, the spirit of the clergy began to be much embittered. Churches were gradually denied to me. And I must let this grand design [the Orphan house] drop, and thousands (I might add ten thousands) go without hearing the word of God, or preach in the fields.¹²

So it was to the fields and open air he turned for his pulpit, and the Great Awakening was launched. When Whitefield arrived in Philadelphia in November, 1739 to purchase provisions for Georgia, he brought the impetus of this religious revival with him to the colonies.

Whitefield was born into an age which Jonathan Edwards described as being beset by "wickedness of almost every kind;" it had "well nigh come to the utmost extremity" in England, and it threatened to inundate the American colonies.¹³ Several small revivals had made some headway both in England and the colonies, but their results soon vanished. From 1735, soon after his graduation from Oxford, to the time of his death in 1770, Whitefield was engaged in the two-fold task of advancing this great new religious revival and in ministering to the needs of Bethesda. The needs of Bethesda, in fact, were the stated purpose of his many travels throughout the colonies and the mother country, but his crusade for Bethesda also gave him an excellent opportunity to vigorously preach his own religious views. He made no

less than seven separate trips to the American colonies and approximately one half of his professional life (thirteen years) was spent here.

The Great Awakening, both in England and America, was not caused by Whitefield, but he served as “. . . the catalyst of a spiritual and social ferment that had been brewing for more than a decade.”¹⁴ The success of Bethesda and the success of the Great Awakening (or at least Whitefield's part in it) are remarkably coincidental.

Whitefield arrived in Savannah in January, 1740, and immediately began to gather up the orphans of the colony. He rented the largest house in Savannah until his permanent quarters were completed at a place about three miles from town. He began a day school for the children in Savannah, opened an infirmary, and formulated plans for the maintenance and care of the orphans.¹⁵

In laying the groundwork for his orphanage, Whitefield, as had the Salzburgers, chose to imitate an institution that was widely admired by religious leaders in England and the colonies. In 1695 Professor Augustus Hermannus Francke and a group of religious separatists had established an orphanage and school near Halle, Germany. Having started as a “ragged school,” by 1706 Francke's orphanage was caring for 122 orphans and employed in the education of 988 children through its ten schools.¹⁶ The orphanage at Halle had adopted a strict regimen of discipline that Whitefield found much to his liking. Francke and his supporters had managed to combine their religious motives with their philanthropic tendencies, and, as a result, were doing a “good work” as well as advancing their own religious beliefs.¹⁷ The institution at Halle was to be much more than a mere model for Whitefield; it was to become his ideal in the development of almost every phase of Bethesda.

On March 25, 1740, the cornerstone to the permanent lo-

cation was laid and by July the main building and some smaller ones were completed. The Orphan House was a fine example of Palladian architecture and was a rather daring innovation for colonial Georgia.¹⁸ Whitefield determined to call the orphanage Bethesda, "a house of mercy to the souls and bodies of many people, both young and old."¹⁹ On November 30 the entire "family," now consisting of about 61 orphans, 60 staff members including hired servants, and about 25 miscellaneous workmen removed to the new site.²⁰

Whitefield was not present when the removal took place. He had left on August 19 for one of his frequent trips to the northern colonies. The supervision of the move was done by the Rev. Mr. Barber and James Habersham. Barber was to be in charge of the spiritual affairs at Bethesda and Habersham was the schoolmaster. Because of Whitefield's frequent trips to England and the other colonies in the next few years, Barber and Habersham were to take charge of nearly all affairs at the orphanage.

Well situated at the new location, affairs at the orphanage progressed rapidly. Daily life at Bethesda followed a pattern similar to the orphanage at Halle and was described in a pamphlet published under the title, "The Manner of the Children's Spending Their Time at the Orphan House in Georgia." The children rose at five every morning, spent a quarter of an hour in prayer and then assembled for chapel at six where a psalm was sung and an extemporaneous prayer offered. After a breakfast served amid the singing of hymns, the orphans were employed until ten at such tasks as carding, spinning, picking cotton and wool, and sewing and knitting. Some of the older boys were apprenticed to nearby tailors, carpenters and shoemakers. There followed four hours of formal schooling, interrupted at twelve by lunch and a "free period." At four they returned to work for two hours, took supper at six and then attended an evening chapel service.

From eight to nine Whitefield or Barber catechised the children, and after fifteen minutes of private prayer the children went to bed.²¹

To guide the children in their daily activities the "staff," (as of 1742 but varying somewhat after that time) consisted of two schoolmasters, two schoolmistresses, a surgeon, a nurse, a tailor, a joiner, a weaver, and a shoemaker.²² The orphanage was actually a combination of a vocational school and a religious school and was supposed to prepare the children for every phase of their lives once they left the Orphan House.

The events of the period 1742-1763 were a series of misfortunes and triumphs for Bethesda. Whitefield had managed to make enemies of the established clergy in Savannah by teaching his "pernicious doctrine."²³ He had to be called down by the Trustees on several counts, and was generally inclined to flout the authority of any official who stood in his way. He flagrantly disobeyed the Trustees regarding the use of looms at the Orphan House.²⁴ He failed to give an account to the Trustees of his collections and, in no uncertain terms, informed them, ". . . that I never did, and never shall look upon myself under any obligation to give . . . a Particular account of monies collected or expended by me. . . ." ²⁵ By the time the Trustees relinquished their charter to Georgia in 1752 and the colony came under the auspices of the Crown, Whitefield was on strained terms with nearly all the officials in Savannah.

Georgia became a Royal colony in 1754 and with the change in government, Bethesda's fortunes rose. Whitefield had commented in a letter to the Trustees in 1740 that ". . . I often think, as do many others, that the Orphan House is the Colony in Miniature."²⁶ For the period 1754-1764 this certainly seems to be true as the progress of both Bethesda and the colony greatly increased.

With the economic outlook of both the colony and Bethes-

da so improved and with the Spanish threat eliminated by Britain's newly-won possession of the Florida peninsula, Whitefield decided that the time had come to implement the final stage of development at Bethesda. He now proposed to establish a college ". . . for the education of persons of superior rank; who thereby might be qualified to serve their king, their country, and their God, either in church or state."²⁷

The idea of establishing a college in Georgia was not a recent one for Whitefield. In his petition to the Trustees for the use of slaves, he had noted that he intended "to make the Orphan House not only a receptacle for the fatherless children, but also a place of literature and academical studies."²⁸ In 1746 he had commented that many had applied to him to erect a public school and that it would be "exceedingly useful."²⁹ In 1757 he had drawn up a tentative college charter and submitted it to Lord Halifax, President of the Board of Trade for his perusal.³⁰

On December 18, 1764, he petitioned Governor James Wright and the Council for 2,000 acres to support the intended college. The petition was cleverly designed to appeal to the Georgia authorities on several levels:

Your memorialist further observes, that there is no seminary for academical studies as yet founded, southward of *Virginia*; and consequently if a college could be established here (especially as the late addition of the two *Floridas* renders *Georgia* more central for the southern district) it would not only be highly serviceable to the rising generation of this colony, but would probably occasion many youths to be sent from the *British West India* islands and other parts. The many advantages accruing thereby to this province, must be considerable.³¹

Supported by Habersham, now President of the Commons House of Assembly, Whitefield was granted 1,500 acres of land on July 2, 1765.

Again Whitefield intended to base his plans for a college on his ideal at Halle. Within a short time Francke had broadened his orphanage into ten different schools ranging from an elementary school to an Oriental College of Divinity.³² Whitefield also planned to follow certain procedures used by the various colleges already established in the northern colonies. He had had considerable experience with nearly all of these colonial colleges, and had been instrumental in the establishment of the College of Philadelphia.³³ He intended, however, to use a different approach in seeking a grant for his college charter; he chose to apply directly to the King. Not one of the older colonial colleges had applied to the King or the Privy Council for their charter, but instead had received it directly from the colonial governor (or other official) or the colonial assemblies.³⁴ Whitefield had a powerful friend in Lord Dartmouth, President of the Commissioners of the Board of Trade and Plantations, and he hoped to use this friendship and his own personal power to get the charter approved. The advantages to be gained by a charter from the King were immense as it would place Bethesda in a prestigious position among other colleges.

His formal application for a charter was delivered to the Clerk of the Privy Council in late 1766 or early 1767 and was addressed to "The King's Most Excellent Majesty." It was almost identical to his petition to Governor Wright in 1764 for the grant of land, but varied in its conclusion:

. . . your memorialist therefore prays, that a charter upon the plan of *New Jersey College* may be granted; upon which your memorialist is ready to give up his present trust and make a free gift of all lands, negroes, goods and chattels, which he now stands possessed of in the province of *Georgia*, for the present founding and towards the future support of a college, to be called by the name of *Bethesda College* in the province of *Georgia*.³⁵

Whitefield had not, however, reckoned with a powerful enemy—Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury. Secker had long regarded Whitefield as a dangerous influence because of his “dissenting” religious opinions and his constant denunciations of the ministers of the Church of England and its missionaries in America. The memorial and a draft of the charter were referred to Secker for him to consider and make certain “corrections.” From June 1767 to February 1768, Whitefield engaged in a lengthy correspondence with the Archbishop over the “corrections.”³⁶ Most of them were minor, but two were of primary importance—both to Whitefield and the Archbishop. Secker insisted that the Charter require the head-master of the college be a member or minister of the Church of England, and that the liturgy of the Church of England be used in the daily exercises. Whitefield strongly objected to these two requirements since he believed that they had retarded the progress of the College of New York. He further noted that the College of Philadelphia had no such stipulations in its charter, and that it had progressed very rapidly in development. His main objection, however, was that the support for the intended college had come from a wide variety of religious groups and consequently it must be founded on a “broad bottom.”³⁷

Having already lost his best ally when Dartmouth resigned his office in July, 1766, when the Rockingham ministry fell, and unable to move the Archbishop from his objections, Whitefield gave up and returned to Georgia. He informed Governor Wright of the developments and noted that he now proposed to add a “public academy to the Orphan House, as the College of Philadelphia was constituted as a public academy . . . before its present charter was granted. . . .”³⁸

In accordance with this plan he had the two wings of the intended academy finished and repairs were made on the main building during 1768-1769. On January 18, 1770, he

entertained the Governor and Council with a fine dinner at Bethesda and revealed to them his plan for the future of the orphanage.³⁹ The elaborate dinner was designed to impress the Georgia officials with the bounty of Bethesda and to prepare them for approval of a petition for the charter, which Whitefield intended to make when he returned from his upcoming tour of the northern colonies. Whitefield left Bethesda on April 24, 1770 and died in Newberryport, Massachusetts, on September 30, 1770.⁴⁰

Whitefield's will was probated in Savannah on December 10, 1770. In it he bequeathed:

. . . that building commonly called the Orphan House at Bethesda in the province of Georgia together with all other buildings lately erected thereon and likewise all the Buildings, Lands, Negroes, Books, furniture and every other thing . . . to . . . Selina, Countess Dowager of Huntingdon; desiring that as soon after my decease, the plan of the intended Orphanhouse, Bethesda College, may be prosecuted . . .⁴¹

The Countess had been a friend and benefactor of Whitefield since his college days and had made him her personal chaplain. She shared his religious views wholeheartedly and had established Lady Huntingdon College in Wales to disseminate these views. Later she was to use students and staff from this college to carry on the work of Whitefield at Bethesda.⁴²

Whitefield had spent a total of thirty-two years laying the foundation of his projected college. During this time he had collected by gift £8,120 19s. 10½d. The general debit and credit statement from December 1738 to February 1770 showed that £15,404 2s. 5¼d. had been received (including monies received other than gifts) and expended by the Orphan House.⁴³ With such a budget as this and the prospects of even more money through the profits from the slave labor Whitefield was about to employ on the 4,819 acres of land he

owned, the financial status of the intended college seems quite secure.⁴⁴

Whitefield would probably not have had any trouble in obtaining students for his college. It would have been the only college south of Virginia, and would have served not only the continental colonies, but also the British dominions in the West Indies. Whitefield also had a tremendous following among the colonists, and doubtless these people would have sent their children to a school where they would be taught the "proper" religious views.⁴⁵

The inventory or "Catalogue . . ." listed approximately 1,200 volumes and over 170 pamphlets.⁴⁶ How well would this number of volumes support the educational objectives of the institution? What kind of books were included? How did the library compare, both in size and content, with other institutions in the colonies? Also of interest are the questions of selection and acquisition, cataloging and classification and use. These questions will be answered, as well as the sources permit, in the remainder of this paper.

Whitefield had not gone so far as to completely formalize his educational objectives. It seems certain that he intended the school to be an outlet for the dissemination of his Methodist beliefs, but he also intended to initiate a program of higher education that would be a remarkable addition to the colony of Georgia.⁴⁷ The nearest thing to a curriculum design is his "College Rules" written in 1770. The part relating to curriculum is as follows:

Great care to be taken that all read, write, and behave properly. No music but divine psalmody; such as *Butt's Harmonica Sacra*, *Knibb's* and *Madan's* collection of tunes. All are to be taught *Bland's Manual Exercise* by some deputed officers. . . . All orphans and students shall be obliged to learn and repeat, and, if capable, to translate into *Latin* all the thirty-nine articles, or those specific in the act of toleration. The homilies

to be read publicly . . . every year by the students. . . . All to be first thoroughly instructed in the history of *Georgia*, and the constitution of *England*, before they are taught the history of *Greece* or *Rome*. *Kimber's* history of England is a good one for beginners, then may follow *Rapin's*. The young negro boys are to be baptised and taught to read. . . . The following divinity books to be read. . . .⁴⁸

Whitefield then listed by title 25 different theological works. The library had all but two titles listed on this reading list. On the teaching of Georgia and English history the library had several pamphlets relating to Georgia and 55 volumes relating strictly to British history. There was a total of 30 volumes on ancient history, as well as copies of the writings of Ovid, Horace, Virgil and others. There were a number of French, Latin and Greek grammars to supplement the classical part of the curriculum.⁴⁹

Whitefield had also thought of term papers by the orphans and students. His "Subjects for Annual Prizes . . ." suggested such topics as: "Oration on the Mercy of God," "Our Lord's Nativity," "On the Benefits of an Union Between Great Britain and her Colonies," "The Rise and Progress of the Colony of Georgia," "The Rise and Progress of Commerce and Religion in the Other American Colonies," and "An Oration on the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles."⁵⁰ The library was well equipped to aid the aspiring student in preparing a paper on any of these subjects, and seems to have been capable of supporting the institutional curriculum as designed by Whitefield.

Through various sources we are able to make a very accurate restoration of the library. When the main house was built in 1740, Whitefield had not provided for a specific library room; the room on the left side of the second story was used as a bedroom for the orphan boys.⁵¹ Exactly when it was appropriated for the library is uncertain, but in 1766

it was in use as a library and a large number of books had been collected.⁵² The library was one of 27 different rooms in the house and measured 30' by 40'. The furnishings of the room consisted of a mahogany reading desk, a large over table, four window chairs, two mahogany slabs in brackets, "A Plaster of Paris bust of ye Founder as large as life," (some kind of picture or bust of Whitefield appears in every room), a tapestry, and a fire-place with accompanying materials.⁵³ Presumably the books were arranged on shelves around the room. Although the appraisalment does not specifically mention them, the "Catalogue . . ." by its various divisions, gives the impression that there were a total of 27 different book cases or shelves.

As would be expected of an institution that would be oriented towards religious education, approximately 75% (900 volumes) of the books in the library were of a religious nature. The remaining subjects can be broken down as follows:

I. Dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.	45 Vols.	(approximately)
II. History and biography	108 Vols.	(approximately)
A. British History	55 Vols.	(approximately)
B. American History	10 Vols	(plus pamphlets)
C. Natural History	8 Vols	(approximately)
D. Ancient (and General) History	30 Vols.	(approximately)
III. Geography and travels	10 Vols.	(approximately)
IV. Literature (including poetry & mythology)	75 Vols.	(approximately)
V. Music (primarily hymns)	23 Vols.	(approximately)
VI. Education (theoretical & practical)	3 Vols.	(approximately)
VII. Science (general)	19 Vols.	(approximately)
VIII. Medicine	7 Vols.	(approximately)
IX. Law and government	13 Vols.	(approximately)
X. Philosophy	12 Vols	(approximately)
XI. Periodicals	5 Titles	(approximately)
XII. Young peoples' books	7 Vols.	(approximately)

The religious volumes represent practically every type of religious work available at the time. Included were dictionaries, encyclopedias, lexicons, commentaries, study guides, concordances, expositions, Bible translations, theological and philosophical works and sermons by a great variety of authors. There were 29 volumes relating to church and Biblical history, representing almost every religious denomination of the day. There were 25 volumes by the Wesleys and 26 volumes of Whitefield's own works.

How does Bethesda compare with other educational institutions in the American colonies? In his study of the origins of the American college library Louis Shores concluded his analysis of the contents of the collections of these institutions by saying:

While the colonial college collection, judged by our conception of what constitutes suitable library material, appears to have been off balance because of a predominance of theological works, it must be remembered that the avowed purpose of colonial higher education was training for the ministry.⁵⁴

As an example of subject content in colonial college libraries, Shores also makes an analysis of a gift of over 1,000 volumes to Yale in 1733 by the Rev. George Berkeley. The following is drawn from his analysis:⁵⁵

Languages	59 Titles	Medicine	25 Titles
Logic	1 Title	Geography and travels	8 Titles
Oratory	9 Titles	History (all categories)	75 Titles
Poetry	23 Titles	Biography	10 Titles
Mathematics	16 Titles	Divinity	97 Titles
Natural Philosophy	10 Titles	Law and government	10 Titles
The Sciences	39 Titles	Miscellaneous	20 Titles

A comparison of this gift with the Bethesda collection indicates that Whitfield's collection is not quite so

well rounded in content as Berkeley's gift to Yale, but it certainly had a sound beginning in most of the categories mentioned.

In size the library at Bethesda also compares favorably with the other colonial college libraries. This is especially true when one remembers that Whitefield did not begin laying plans for establishing the college until 1764, and probably did not begin the extensive collecting of books until after that date.

TABLE I
COLLECTIONS IN OTHER COLONIAL COLLEGE LIBRARIES⁵⁶

CHARTER DATE	INSTITUTION	LIBRARY BEGAN	NO. OF VOLUMES AND DATE (As Near 1771 as possible)
1636	Harvard	1638	5,000 in 1764
1693	William & Mary	1693	3,000 in 1776
1701	Yale	1700	4,000 in 1766
1746	Princeton	1750	1,281 in 1760
1754	Columbia	1756	2,000 in 1760 (?)
1755	Pennsylvania	1749	1,670 in 1832
1765	Brown	1768	250 in 1772
1766	Rutgers	1792	100 (?) 1800
1769	Dartmouth	1763	355 in 1775

Whitefield would have been no source of inspiration to the present-day librarian or college instructor. He exercised the role of censor with characteristic zeal. The propensity to serve as literary arbiter for one and all seems to have been with Whitefield most of his life. While on board the *Whitaker* bound for Georgia in 1738 he wrote that he:

Exchanged some bad books that were on board (which I immediately threw into the sea), for good ones. All that I have found with them, as yet, have been ready to surrender them up; and I find by daily experience more and more, that people who

are truly awakened to a sense of the Divine life, cannot bear to read anything trifling, but throw away their useless books. . . .⁵⁷

He applauded the burning of £40 worth of books by "such authors as Chubb, Foster, etc." by a young man "convinced of self-righteousness."⁵⁸ In selecting or accepting books for his library at Bethesda, Whitefield seems to have been equally decisive in excluding any undesirables. Of the more than 45 specific titles he expressed a dislike for in his published works, not one is listed in the "Catalogue . . ." of the Bethesda library. This group included the popular *Whole Duty of Man*, of which William Stephens said Whitefield had "publickally declared his Abhorrence . . ."⁵⁹ and such writers as Clarke and Tillotson.

Most of the volumes in the Bethesda library apparently came from religious admirers of Whitefield, as had his monetary support for the institution. One of his critics, the Rev. Thomas Bosomworth of Savannah, had noted that Whitefield had gone around collecting large sums of money and books for the furtherance of this "heretical" institution.⁶⁰ This method of furnishing a library also coincided with the method of acquisition used by other colonial colleges. Shores notes that ". . . the major portion of colonial college library holdings resulted from direct or indirect benefaction. . . ."⁶¹ In addition, the other colonial colleges used direct purchase as a method of acquiring volumes to stock their libraries. Whitefield probably bought books for his library, but his purchases undoubtedly accounted for much less than the 10% of acquisitions that Shores contends most colleges acquired through purchase.⁶²

Unfortunately no copy of Whitefield's proposed charter for the college at Bethesda has been located and it is impossible to make an exact statement regarding his policy of book selection. The closest thing to the charter that is

available is an anonymous criticism, possibly that of Archbishop Secker, of the submitted charter. The criticism, from which the first and last pages are missing, reflects the policies set forth in the charter in regard to book selection as well as other facets of the proposed institution. The content of the collection might have been very different had Whitefield accepted the writer's suggestion that all books intended for student use be chosen by the institution's board of governors. This policy would be the "safest" way to control the Master of the institution.⁶³ The critic went further to make clear that, regardless of the religious views of those students attending the college, all books used at the college should be "conformable" to the Church of England and other Protestant Reformed Churches.⁶⁴

The selection and acquisition of books for the Bethesda library, as of 1770, was done almost completely by Whitefield, and was dependent upon his tastes and judgments of what ought to constitute acceptable reading and educational material.

The currently accepted card catalog in libraries did not come into use until after 1850; before that time catalogs were in the form of books—either manuscript or printed.⁶⁵ The appraisers of Whitefield's estate were charged by law to make a "true and perfect inventory of all the goods, chattels, wares, merchandise . . ." of the deceased.⁶⁶ The law did not, however, require them to make a catalog of each volume or title as they did in the case of the library of this estate. In choosing to make a title by title inventory of each volume in the library, they were conforming to the accepted practice used throughout the colonies when a large number of books was found to be a part of an estate.⁶⁷ These three men, however, chose to go far beyond the simple listing of titles, and did, in fact and name, prepare a catalog of the library. The "Catalogue . . ." they recorded was remarkably similar to other manuscript

and printed catalogs used in other libraries of the period. Speculation as to why the appraisers went to this extra trouble is difficult. Even though all three were fairly well educated, apparently none of them had special training in bibliographic work. It may be that they merely copied, and added the price evaluation to, an existing manuscript catalog prepared by someone at Bethesda. More likely, however, is the possibility that they simply went through the library from shelf to shelf, beginning with the largest volumes, copying down the authors and/or titles of each volume.

Regardless of the procedure by which it was drawn up, the "Catalogue . . ." reflects to a great extent the methods used by the "professionals" of the day. Arrangement in the "Catalogue . . ." is by size from the larger folio volumes to the duodecimo volumes and the pamphlets. Arrangement in most of the colonial library catalogs was also by size.⁶⁸ A typical entry in the Bethesda "Catalogue . . ." would consist of the author's surname in the possessive case, a very brief title, the number of volumes included, and the appraised value of the volumes. By comparison, a typical entry in a printed catalog of the colonial period would consist of the author's surname in the possessive case, brief title, an occasional date and place of publication, the number and size of the volumes (if catalog was not arranged by size), and an infrequent donor note.⁶⁹

The lack of any kind of classification by subject or an alphabetization of authors and titles would have made the Bethesda "Catalogue . . ." extremely difficult for the prospective reader to use. This was not, however, an unusual fault as many large libraries still used a classification by size.⁷⁰ There may have been a librarian at Bethesda, or among the appraisers, but most likely the arrangement by size was simply accomplished by Whitefield, Habersham or Barber, all well educated men who would have been familiar with the principles of library arrangement. The appraisers, serving

in this case as catalogers, were probably familiar enough with the typical arrangement in libraries and simply followed what they knew to be a generally accepted practice.

Even though Whitefield was building up the library for use by his intended college students, it was in existence long enough for the resident orphans to make considerable use of its facilities. Since there are no extant records of library circulation or use at Bethesda, we can judge only its possible usage on the basis of available materials that could be read by the orphans. As well as can be determined from the "Catalogue . . .," only seven volumes specifically related to young people or might be called children's books. These seven volumes fit into the category of advice on manners and morals. The library is surprisingly devoid of titles in the area of religious instruction to young people, many of which were available on the market. Of the more than twenty titles listed in Monica Kiefer's *American Children Through Their Books, 1700-1835* for the period before 1770, not one appears in the "Catalogue . . ." of Bethesda's library.⁷¹

The library was probably used by the professional staff at Bethesda much more than it was used by the orphans. The great number of religious works would certainly have met the needs of any clergyman at Bethesda. The volumes on education, medicine, and the specialized subjects should have been sufficient resources for the teaching personnel and the physicians stationed at Bethesda. The library was not, however, too well equipped to serve the non-professional staff (carpenters, shoemakers, tailors, etc.) as only one volume in the collection is occupationally oriented.

It may be that the library was used to some extent by various people in Savannah and the nearby community. Even though Bethesda was three miles from town, many people came that distance to hear Whitefield preach when he was at the Orphan House.⁷² With its preponderance of religious

works, the library would have been an excellent means of furthering Whitefield's religious beliefs among these people.

The Countess of Huntingdon intended to carry out Whitefield's design for the projected college to the best of her ability. In October, 1771, she gathered up a number of students and ministers from the College at Wales and sent them to Georgia. Arriving in Georgia in early 1772, the new missionaries immediately embarked on an evangelic crusade for the conversion and education of the Indians and Negroes in the colony.⁷³ To carry on the educational work, the Countess had appointed the Rev. Mr. William Piercy, a minister at Charles Town, as president. To assist him she sent the Rev. Mr. John Crosse and the Rev. Mr. Walter Shirley, both disciples of Whitefield.⁷⁴ Under the capable leadership of these men Bethesda seemed to prosper; this prosperity would not last long.

On June 9, 1773 the *Georgia Gazette* reported the following:

. . . on the 30th May, about 8 o'clock in the evening, the Orphanhouse Academy was burnt down by fire, occasioned by lightning; . . . the fire spread with such amazing rapidity and swiftness that very little of the furniture or the books in the Library were saved.⁷⁵

The destruction of the central building and its valuable library was the death blow to Whitefield's glorious dream for a religious institution of higher learning in Georgia.

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⁶⁷Louis B. Wright notes in *The Cultural Life of the American Colonies* (1957) that inventories usually do not list titles, but refer to "one parcel of old books." This appears to be true where a small number of books were a part of an estate, but it is not true where a large number of volumes is involved.

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