CHARLES WESLEY:
GEORGIA’S FIRST SECRETARY FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS

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Charles Wesley is best known as the writer of the words to many well-known hymns such as “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” and “Christ the Lord is Risen Today” and with the development of Methodism in eighteenth-century England. Following their years in Oxford and before the flourishing of the Methodist movement, John, Charles’s older brother, and Charles Wesley journeyed to Georgia where they both encountered various difficulties. Neither was prepared for the situations that they faced upon their arrival in the new colony, nor were they willing to moderate their religious disciplines to fit the rustic setting and its obstinate inhabitants. Some scholars judge the Wesleys’ time in Georgia as a test or a crisis of faith that shaped practices that would influence the later rise of Methodism after their separate returns to England. The brothers had a significant encounter with the spirituality and theology of the Moravians who immigrated to Georgia at the same time, both on the ship crossing the Atlantic and after arriving in Georgia. While all this information may be true, it ignores the reason why they came to Georgia in the first place, namely, to convert the Indians. Neither accomplished this goal, but both had interactions with the native population in different ways. John was in Georgia longer and wrote much more extensively about his experiences there, but Charles’s story contains much drama and had a potentially greater influence on Indian relations in the long run that did John’s. This essay takes a closer look at Charles Wesley’s impact on Georgia in his role as Secretary for Indian Affairs and evaluates them in their own right.¹

John Wesley had a strong influence on his younger brother Charles and persuaded him to join the group that was going to Georgia in mid-1735.

Charles and John were in Oxford at about the same time and were members of the “Holy Club” that organized every hour of their daily lives in service to God. Their strict discipline earned them the nickname of “Methodists,” a title that began as a jeer and turned into a trademark. When John became enamored with the idea of going to Georgia to convert the Indians, Charles balked. Reflecting back on his life years later, he explained that he enjoyed the regular routine that the Holy Club offered and that he “only thought of spending all my days at Oxford.” Charles could not deny his brother’s influence, however, and he later admitted that “my brother, who always had the ascendant over me, persuaded me to accompany him and Mr. Oglethorpe to Georgia.” Furthermore, as a prerequisite to this position, Charles needed to accept Holy Orders and become a minister, something that he “exceedingly dreaded,” but John “overruled me here also.” When it came to relocating across the ocean and taking on an entirely new and unknown challenge, Charles had his doubts.²

Exacerbating this troublesome situation were the expectations of the colony’s supervisors. The Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in America, or simply the Trustees, had a precise methodology for how they wanted to settle their colony, and their rigid attitude would contribute to their downfall. They founded Georgia for three reasons—philanthropy, defense, and economics—and they instituted strict regulations for their subjects to follow in order to satisfy these objectives. Unfortunately for everyone involved, these rules were often impractical if not impossible to implement in this setting, resulting in much hardship for the settlers and frustration for the Trustees. The Trustees’ ineffective administration hampered Georgia’s progress during its early years, although it by no means was the only reason for its many difficulties.³

The Trustees’ selections of officials to govern Georgia contributed to their failure. The charter gave them “full power and authority to nominate, make, constitute, commission, ordain and appoint . . . such governors, judges, magistrates, ministers and officers, civil and military, . . . as shall by them be thought fit and needful to be made or used for the said government of the said colony.” The Trustees exercised this “power and authority” frequently and created a wide variety of offices to oversee different aspects of their colony. Regrettably, they often chose individuals who were unqualified for the position and rarely took the settlers’ needs or opinions into consideration.⁴

Charles Wesley was a victim of this unfortunate situation. Although he wanted to serve as a missionary, the Trustees appointed him to be the Secre-

³ Randall M. Miller offers the most scathing and complete indictment of the Trustees in his “The Failure of the Colony of Georgia under the Trustees,” Georgia Historical Quarterly 53 (March, 1969): 1-17.
⁵ For a detailed analysis of how the Trustees operated, see James Ross McCain, Georgia as a Proprietary Province: The Execution of a Trust (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1917), 29-197.
tary for Indian Affairs. Both John and Charles Wesley had made their intentions clear; Rev. John Burton informed his fellow Trustees in September, 1735, that “two gentlemen, one a clergyman, bred at the University, and who have some substance, have resolved to go to Georgia out of a pious design to convert the Indians. They are brothers and their names Wesley.”

A week later, the Trustees agreed to employ Charles as the Secretary for Indian Affairs, although the Earl of Egmont noted that “He being a very religious man and good scholar, will take orders, and occasionally officiate in the church till we can get a settled minister in our new Colony.”

A month after that, Egmont added to Charles’s duties claiming that “The youngest [Wesley] is to be private secretary to Mr. Oglethorp, as also Secretary of the Indian trade, and to act as minister of the new settlement at Frederica.”

The Trustees may have thought that they were getting two positions—a secretary and a minister—for the price of one, but by hiring him as secretary and presuming that he would be willing to act as a minister as well, they seriously confused matters for everyone involved.

What exactly did the Secretary for Indian Affairs do? Charles’s official appointment states that the secretary was responsible for “the better regulating the Trade with the Indians” but remains silent on how to do so. The position was created as part of the “Act for maintaining the Peace with the Indians in the Province of Georgia” enacted in June, 1735, for improving oversight of the Indian trade in light of previous abuses. Most recently, the Yamasee and Creeks rose up against the South Carolinians in the Yamasee War of 1715-1716 in retaliation for high prices, cheap goods, accumulating debt, and unfair business practices like inaccurate weights and measures.

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7 Roberts, Diary of Egmont, II: 196.

8 Roberts, Diary of Egmont, II: 200.

9 Examining the payment of Charles’s salary only complicates the matter further. The formal document promises that the Secretary for Indian Affairs would receive “such Salary Fee Perquisite or other Reward . . . as shall be directed and appointed by the said Common Council of the said Trustees” but does not specify the amount. CRG, 32: 173. Charles did not collect any compensation for any of his work until he returned to England, at which time he was given £50 in two separate sums “for officiating as a Missionary in Georgia.” CRG, 2: quotation on 187, 199; McPherson, Journal of the Earl of Egmont, 252, 270; Roberts, Diary of Egmont, II: 404, 439. Thus, the Trustees hired him for one job but paid him for another.

10 CRG, 32: 173-174, quotation on 173. See also CRG, 2: 123.

Although these warring parties had settled their differences in a series of treaties and promises, tensions remained, and both European colonists and Indians demanded stricter regulations of commerce, hence the need for this legislation.

Specifically, the Indian Act gave the Trustees the power to “Nominate Constitute and appoint One or more Commissioner or Commissioners Treasurer or Treasurers Secretary or Secretarys [sic] and such other Officers Agents Ministers and Servants as to them shall seem proper and Convenient for the Licencing [sic] Persons to Trade with the Indians and for the better regulating such Trade.” The secretary was expected to “keep a Book or Books in which shall be fairly Entered from time to time the Proceedings of the Commissioner . . . and Carefully keep the Bonds of all and every person or persons who shall take out Licences [sic] to Trade,” and he would receive ten shillings from each person who applied for a license. He would also manage all “the Books Papers Journals Seals and all other proceedings relating to the Affairs of such Indian Trade.” In addition, the Act listed the duties of the treasurer who would collect fees from the traders and of the commissioner who would hear and adjudicate complaints. It defined the responsibilities of the traders as well, which included purchasing a license every year, conducting commerce only with Indian nations allied to the British, and agreeing to obey all laws of the colony. It did not establish a standard for weights and measures, set a price scale, or list goods that could or could not be traded with the Indians since these matters fluctuated depending on the market. Nevertheless, it made great strides in improving oversight of the Indian trade by increasing the number of officials and requiring annual licensing of traders.12

On the same day that the Trustees appointed Charles Wesley to serve as Secretary for Indian Affairs, they also chose Austin Weddell as treasurer and James Oglethorpe as commissioner, which explains how Charles became known as (and was mistaken for) Oglethorpe’s secretary since he and Weddell answered to and worked for the commissioner.13 This series of appointments demonstrate how the Trustees often selected inappropriate individuals to fill available positions. While Oglethorpe had proved himself to be a capable administrator based on his recent sojourn in Georgia and had established positive diplomatic relations with neighboring Indian nations, he already had more than enough to do besides shouldering the responsibility of overseeing the entire Indian trade for the colony. He had also begun to make military matters his top priority over civic duties, much to the chagrin of his fellow Trustees. He accepted this title but never fully satisfied its requirements. Austin Weddell was a recent immigrant to the colony and a farmer,

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12 CRG, 1: 31-42, quotations on 32-34.
13 CRG, 32: 172-175.
not an accountant.\textsuperscript{14} Charles Wesley was more interested in converting the Indians than acting as a secretary, but the Trustees may have assumed that someone who was well-educated would be a perfect fit for this position because of his literary and penmanship skills. This combination of inaccurate expectations along with his appointment only as Secretary for Indian Affairs created a terrible misunderstanding that would have lasting consequences for everyone involved. This ambiguity was typical of the Trustees, however, and defined their supervision of their colony.

Besides this confusion over professional expectations, there was Charles’s lack of enthusiasm to go. John had pushed Charles into accompanying him to Georgia and accepting all the offices and responsibilities that went with it, but the younger brother knew that he did not belong there and that this missionary life was John’s calling, not his. Even so, he yielded to John’s influence, put his faith in God, and prepared for the trials ahead.

Those trials began on board the \textit{Simmonds} as they crossed the Atlantic Ocean to Georgia during the winter of 1735-1736. Contrary winds delayed their departure from England by almost two months. John had also pressured two friends, Benjamin Ingham and Charles Delamotte, into joining their venture, and the four quickly set up a daily routine of personal reflection as well as religious education of their fellow passengers. While some welcomed the prayers for a safe journey, many ridiculed the young men for their strict practices and beliefs.\textsuperscript{15} This rejection combined with uncomfortable living accommodations, unspecified illnesses, and several storms at sea destroyed what little attraction Charles had to this undertaking. He survived the trip but wished that he had not. Upon reaching the Georgia coast on February 5, 1736, he wrote to his friend Sally Kirkham back in England: “God has brought an unhappy, unthankful wretch hither, through a thousand dangers, to renew his complaints, and loathe the Life which has been preserved by a series of Miracles. I take the moment of my arrival to inform you of it, because I know you will thank Him, tho’ I cannot.”\textsuperscript{16} He begged her at length to pray for him and to remain devoted to God, and he resigned himself to his unfortunate fate as he declared: “Could I hide me from Myself . . . in these vast impervious Forests, how gladly would I fly to ‘em as my last asylum, and lose myself for ever in a Blessed Insensibility and Forgetful-


\textsuperscript{16} Tyson, \textit{Charles Wesley: A Reader}, 61-62.
ness!—But it is a fruitless wish.”

Two weeks later, Charles had recovered a bit of his interest. Rather than surrendering to despair, he referred to himself as “a Prisoner of Hope” and believed that “God is able to save the uttermost, to break my bonds in sunder, and bring Deliverance to the Captive!” He acknowledged that he had “come to a crisis,” but he also thought that he had found a possible door to recovery since “The work I see immediately before me is the care of 50 poor families; (alas for them that they should be so cared for!). Some few of whom are not far from the Kingdom of God. Among these I shall either be Converted or Lost.” Two weeks after that, he arrived at his final destination—Frederica.

Even though the Holy Club had prided itself on ascetic living accommodations, Charles’s previous experiences did not prepare him for life in this rugged wilderness. After establishing Savannah, colonists had branched out across the countryside setting up small outposts to solidify the British claim to the surrounding area. Oglethorpe was particularly interested in scouting the region to the south to create a line of defense against possible Spanish invasion, and he believed that St. Simon’s Island offered excellent possibilities for fortification. He convinced his fellow Trustees to agree to his plan, and he assembled a group to accompany him there in October, 1735. These immigrants shared the same ship as the Wesley brothers, and they stopped briefly in Savannah before continuing on to what would become Frederica in February, 1736.

When Charles arrived there a few weeks later, he must have been shocked by what he saw. Even though the colonists would have begun clearing the land, they would have only put a dent in the dense forest. Oglethorpe had great plans for the town and kept a close eye on its slow yet steady development, and he ordered a storehouse built for the supplies that they had brought with them from England and laid down the outlines of the future fort and town. He also provided shelters for the colonists which were “covered with Palmetto Leaves, to lodge the Families of the Colony in when they should come up; each of these Booths were between thirty and forty Foot long, and upwards of twenty Foot wide.” Francis Moore, one of these first Frederica colonists, observed that “The whole appeared something like a Camp; for the Bowers looked like Tents, only being larger and covered with Palmetto Leaves instead of Canvas.” Oglethorpe organized teams of workers to take on the myriad of construction projects as well as plant crops and hunt game

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17 Tyson, Charles Wesley: A Reader, 63.
18 Tyson, Charles Wesley: A Reader, 63 (italics in original).
20 Francis Moore, “A Voyage to Georgia; begun the 15th of October, 1735” in Reese, Our First Visit in America, 111-112.
21 Moore, “A Voyage to Georgia,” 117.
to provide food for the community, but he could not rush progress.  

If the rough conditions surprised Charles, he did not admit it in his journal. He held prayers outside “under a great tree” or in the storehouse when available, and he “had no better bed than the ground; on which I slept very comfortably, before a great fire.” He eventually took up residence with another colonist in one of the palmetto shelters, but accommodations remained primitive. He noted at one point that it “was thoroughly wet with today’s rain,” and on another day, he complained, “At one this morning the sandflies forced me to rise, and smoke them out the hut.” He continued to sleep on the ground, even though he tried to acquire some boards and even an old bedstead to lie upon but to no avail. It was certainly a far cry from his rooms at Oxford.

Charles was determined to do his best in his new position regardless of the challenging physical circumstances. Once he disembarked at Frederica on March 9, 1736, he declared, “immediately my spirit revived. No sooner did I enter upon my ministry, than God gave me, like Saul, another heart.” He was also grateful to escape his brother John’s dominance. “He is indeed Devoted,” Charles admitted, “but I cannot bear to think of his Happiness! And find a preposterous sort of Joy, that I am going to be removed from the sight of it.” His colleague Benjamin Ingham greeted him upon his arrival, and the townspeople welcomed him as well. Soon after, he organized regular prayer services and comforted several distressed settlers, all in keeping with his conception of what a good minister should do.

What he failed to realize, however, was that the Trustees had formally hired him to serve as the Secretary for Indian Affairs and merely expressed interest in his abilities as a minister. By officially appointing him to the first position and casually mentioning the second, they confused their expectations of Charles. Oglethorpe assumed that Charles would primarily work as his secretary and would hold religious services when necessary or convenient, so he was quickly disappointed with Charles’s performance or lack thereof. In contrast, Charles had helping the people as his main concern and saw his appointment as Secretary for Indian Affairs as a convenient ex-

22 Reese, Frederica, 18-19; “Mr. Ingham’s Journal of His Voyage to Georgia,” 177, 179; Moore, “A Voyage to Georgia,” 117-118. Interestingly, Moore never mentions the Wesley brothers in his account.
26 Kimbrough and Newport, Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley, I: 1.
27 Tyson, Charles Wesley: A Reader, 63.
28 This point of view is also consistent with Oglethorpe’s broader view on the relationship between civil and religious authority. See Harvey H. Jackson, “Parson and Squire: James Oglethorpe and the Role of the Anglican Church in Georgia, 1733-1736” in Phinizy Spalding and Harvey H. Jackson, eds., Oglethorpe in Perspective: Georgia’s Founder after Two Hundred Years (Tuscaloosa: U Alabama P, 1989), 44-65, specifically 56-59; Heitzenrater, “Charles Wesley and James Oglethorpe in Georgia,” 27-33.
This misunderstanding resulted in hard feelings almost immediately. Only two days after his arrival in Frederica, Charles asked Oglethorpe for some extra assistance for a poor woman and received a rebuke instead. Charles was stunned to “hear the first harsh word from Mr. Oglethorpe” and even more startled when “The next day I was surprised by a rougher answer, in a matter that deserved still greater encouragement.” These two incidents caused him to reflect: “I know not how to account for his increasing coldness.”

One possible explanation was that Oglethorpe expected Charles to work for him first and the settlers second while Charles put the settlers foremost as any good minister would. Oglethorpe was an extremely busy man with countless responsibilities, not the least of which was to maintain peace with the Indians and to shore up defenses against potential Spanish invasion, and he imagined that Charles would assist him with this important diplomatic business before all other activities. Instead, Charles was distracted by the settlers’ demands and gossip which caused Oglethorpe to dislike and distrust him.

Another probable reason was Charles’s strict religious practices. He instituted several rounds of daily prayers and enforced church doctrine and ritual, and he made religion his top priority and expected everyone else to do the same. Oglethorpe, on the other hand, needed to establish a bulwark from which he could deflect an imminent Spanish assault as well as provide adequate shelter in which the settlers could live. He put worldly necessities above spiritual ones and therefore had the opposite outlook from Charles on what took precedence, practical or pious matters.

Furthermore, Charles hated his job. One week after his arrival in Frederica, he noted, “I was wholly spent in writing letters for Mr. Oglethorpe. I would not spend 6 days more in the same manner for all Georgia.” Perhaps Charles saw such tedious paperwork as below his station as a learned Oxford graduate, or maybe he lacked the organizational skills and political ambition to take pride in it. He much preferred spending his time ministering to the people of Frederica who he felt desperately needed his attention. Conversely, Oglethorpe thrived in his role as supervisor of a new outpost and expected his secretary to share in his enthusiasm. This difference in opinion on work ethic and obligations further strained their relationship and caused additional hardship and negative feelings between the two.

Both men were at fault, however. Oglethorpe never made clear his expectations of Charles but rather assumed that since the Trustees had appoint-

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30 Kimbrough argues that the rumors spread by Mrs. Welch and Mrs. Hawkins about sexual innuendos, advances, and affairs by both men were the primary cause of tensions between Charles and Oglethorpe and were “clearly the source of his [Charles’s] anxiety and frustration during his life and ministry in Georgia.” Kimbrough, “Charles Wesley in Georgia,” 89-99, quotation on 98.
ed him to serve as secretary, he would take that job seriously. Moreover, Oglethorpe presumed that Charles would act as his personal secretary since he was the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to whom the secretary reported and he was unofficially the administrator for all of Georgia. Oglethorpe was also wildly ambitious; he anticipated a Spanish attack on Georgia at any time, and he planned to lead the settlers into battle and to use Frederica as his base of operations and as a barricade to keep out any enemy incursions. He focused on his role in this scenario and the glory that would accompany it. He did not seek to understand his bewildered counterpart or to correct his confusion. Charles, on the other hand, was so blinded by his religious objectives that he made ministering to the people his top priority over his secretarial duties. He was also incredibly naïve in worldly matters; he lacked any practical experience outside of Oxford and believed that he could simply transfer his lifestyle from school to the new colony and that everyone would not only accept his leadership but rejoice in the opportunity to participate in his disciplined version of religious practice. He focused on organizing regular prayers and services, attending to the needy, and reflecting on his personal salvation. He did not try to figure out the nuances of Indian diplomacy and trade as was required of a man with his position.

Because of this misunderstanding, Charles’s situation deteriorated rapidly. He was much more interested in serving the people, but they were much more interested in getting settled, not devoting themselves to achieving future redemption. He tried to enforce the law, both religious and secular, and became entangled in the malicious gossip of various busybodies in town. He continued to disappoint Oglethorpe, but he also “pray[ed] earnestly for my enemies, particularly Mr. Oglethorpe, whom I now looked upon as the chief of them.”³² Oglethorpe summoned Charles to his tent on March 25, 1736, and “charged me with mutiny and sedition, with stirring up the people to desert the colony.”³³ He cited their frequent meetings as evidence and pointed out “that the men were such as constantly came to prayers, therefore I must have instigated them.”³⁴ Charles denied the allegation and demanded that he face his accuser. Oglethorpe obliged and presented Mr. Lawley who dropped his claim when pressed about it, but Oglethorpe neither forgave the secretary nor forgot the incident. Instead, he insinuated that Charles had contributed to a woman’s miscarriage since he had ordered the doctor under arrest for firing a gun on Sunday which prevented him from attending to his patient, and he refused to let Charles (or anyone else for that matter) use any of his things.³⁵

Charles accepted these abuses in stride. He viewed himself as a suffering servant and found refuge in the Scripture. He believed that everyone had turned against him, even his few friends who feared that their association

with him would ruin their reputations, and he embraced the opportunity to be a martyr in order to prove his innocence. He refused any comforts and subsequently became ill.36

His brother John came to his rescue after receiving word of Charles’s situation. He spent two weeks in Frederica nursing the young man back to health and mediating the conflict between Charles and Oglethorpe. Oglethorpe again confronted Charles with charges, this time suggesting that he had had an affair with at least one married female settler, which Charles denied. The two seemed to settle their differences, although Oglethorpe maintained his doubts about Charles’s dedication to his official duty. Oglethorpe entrusted Charles with a ring and gave him important instructions to follow should he not come back from his upcoming journey to scout Spanish positions to the south, but he returned a week later unharmed. This gesture may seem like a reconciliation but looks more like a supervisor giving orders to his secretary, which is how Oglethorpe had always viewed their relationship.37

Even though Charles and Oglethorpe were back on speaking terms, that fact did not improve Charles’s reputation among the settlers, negate his hatred for his job as secretary, or cure his ill health. Charles found respite from his misery when he left Frederica for Savannah in mid-May, 1736, because “the Indian traders were coming down to meet me and take out licences [sic].” For once, he was grateful for his position as Secretary for Indian Affairs when he declared, “I was overjoyed at my deliverance out of this furnace, and not a little ashamed of myself for being so.”38 This relocation worked to Charles’s benefit in several ways. It removed him from the contentious situation in Frederica, and it offered the chance for him to recover his strength since he would no longer be sleeping on the ground or living in a palmetto hut.

More importantly, it put him in Savannah in time to issue licenses to Indian traders, the primary task of the Secretary for Indian Affairs. According to the Indian Act, “all such Person or Persons that shall Trade Traffick [sic] or Barter to or with any Indians . . . shall come to the Town of Savannah [sic] at least once every Year in order to take out a New Licence [sic] . . . in the Month of March April May or June in which Months all Licences [sic] shall expire.”39 Traders must also “Publish their Names in the Office of the Secretary for Indian Affairs for at least ten days before they have a Licence [sic] granted them.”40 To facilitate this process, it made sense for Charles to be in Savannah since the Act specifically stated that was where license renewal would occur and the tasks of secretary required him to issue and record the licenses. Since the traders had to renew their licenses in person, Savannah was also a more convenient location than Frederica given that the first town

39 CRG, I: 38.
40 CRG, I: 37.
was situated on the Savannah River, a major thoroughfare into the backcountry, while the latter outpost was a hundred-mile journey to the south either on open water or through dense wilderness. Furthermore, Savannah was the administrative center of the new colony, so it would be a logical place to publish traders’ names so that they could settle any legal troubles that they may have incurred such as debt. On the whole, Charles’s move from Frederica to Savannah would allow him to do his appointed job more effectively.

Charles probably did not see it this way. Even as he recognized his responsibilities as Secretary for Indian Affairs, he immediately began ministering to the local population. He continued his brother’s traditions of public Sunday services and private visits with settlers, while John went to Frederica to fill the temporary gap caused by Charles’s departure.41 Charles did, however, perform the duties expected of him as the Secretary for Indian Affairs, although the mundane paperwork and the unsavory clientele must have grated on him. At the end of May, he tersely commented in his journal that “I first met my traders at Mr. [Thomas] Causton’s, the head bailiff, as I did some or other of them every day for some weeks,” but he spent far more time reflecting on his religious activities.42 By early June, he began to consider resigning his post even though it meant losing his ministry as well. On June 16, he noted that “This and many foregoing days have been mostly spent in drawing up bonds, affidavits, licenses, and instructions for the traders; the evenings in writing letters for Mr. Oglethorpe.” Two weeks later on July 1, he mentioned that “I was at court while the Creek Indians had an audience of Mr. Oglethorpe, which I took down (as several afterwards) in shorthand.”43 The majority of Charles’s journal, however, records spiritual matters rather than secular affairs.

Charles may not have considered his work as secretary important or even worthwhile, but in fact, it was a vital part of the Indian trade. By requiring the men who wanted to participate in this commerce to come to Savannah once a year to purchase a license, they had to prove their integrity and character to the local magistrates and maintain that high level of reliability or else forfeit their right to trade. This seemingly tedious task for both the secretary and the traders provided the regulation and enforcement that both whites and Indians had requested and made sure that only trustworthy, law-abiding men took part in this lucrative business because they knew that they would be held accountable for their actions. Obviously, this arrangement was not foolproof, but it offered strong assurances against potential abuse.

Georgia’s Indian Act had an unintended consequence, however, in that it irritated neighboring South Carolinians. Despite the fact that much of the legislation had been modeled on the older colony’s guidelines for the Indian trade, it imposed additional restrictions that they found unnecessary.

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Specifically, South Carolinian traders did not believe that they needed to purchase a separate license to participate in commerce with Indians living in Georgia since that colony had been carved out of South Carolinian territory. Georgians, on the other hand, expected all traders regardless of their origin to have a license from Savannah to be able to do business in Georgia and levied fines and/or confiscated goods from those found in violation of the law. When the Indian Act took effect in June, 1735, South Carolinians wasted no time voicing their protests against this measure. Oglethorpe, in his role as commissioner for the Indian trade, unsuccessfully attempted to reason with South Carolinian officials and insisted on enforcing all provisions of the Indian Act.44 Charles Wesley as secretary observed the growing conflict and noted the detrimental effects that it was having on the relationships between South Carolina and Georgia as well as between whites and Indians, but he could do nothing to stop it. Instead, he simply performed his duty of issuing licenses to those who applied for them and looked forward to the day when he could leave these troubles behind him.

Charles eventually conceded defeat and formally resigned his position as secretary on July 25, 1736. He had discussed the idea of returning to England with several people since his relocation from Frederica to Savannah, but to his credit, he stayed long enough to fulfill his obligations as Secretary for Indian Affairs. He also used the time to look for an opportunity to set sail and found one towards the end of July. On July 22, he performed his final tasks when he “got their licenses signed by Mr Oglethorpe, countersigned them myself, and so entirely washed my hands of the traders.”45 He was obviously relieved to finish that unpleasant business. Oglethorpe met with Charles one last time and requested that he take a leave of absence rather than resigning so that he could rethink his decision and find a suitable replacement should he choose not to come back to Georgia. He also asked Charles to deliver some papers and to meet with the Trustees and other interested parties to answer questions about Georgia and to give a full report about the situation there, thus maintaining the administrator-secretary relationship to the very end. On July 26, Charles departed Georgia never to return despite his promises to Oglethorpe that he would reconsider his resignation. He recorded: “at twelve, I took my final leave of Savannah. When the boat put off, I was

45 Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley*, I: 45. Nehemiah Curnock agrees with this negative assessment of Charles’s opinion of his position when he commented that “This strengthens the impression that Charles had no love for business, and no natural aptitude for the post into which he drifted.” He also points out Charles’s dislike for the Indian traders and concluded that “Both Charles and John were troubled in conscience with respect to some of the transactions with traders and Indians, which their position compelled them to countenance” (Nehemiah Curnock, ed., *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* [London: Epworth, 1938], I: 250, 252).
Charles’s return trip featured stops in Charlestown and Boston before the final voyage across the ocean. He hated the first city where he witnessed the horrors of slavery firsthand, but he enjoyed the second city where he recovered his health, made friends, and preached several sermons. During his travels across the countryside, he noted that the landscape was “wonderfully delightful. . . . The temperate air, the clear rivulets, and the beautiful hills and dales, which we everywhere met with, seemed to present the very reverse of Georgia.” He finally arrived in England during the first week of December much to everyone’s relief since he had spent most of the voyage being ill and enduring stormy weather conditions and the Trustees and other officials had assumed that his ship had been lost at sea.

On December 8, 1736, Charles met with the Earl of Egmont and gave a lengthy and detailed report about the situation in Georgia, focusing at the outset on Indian affairs presumably since it was required of his position but also because Egmont showed interest in that topic. In particular, Charles expressed great concern over the deteriorating relationship between South Carolina and Georgia with regards to the Indian trade and the detrimental effects that this growing tension was having on Indian relations more generally. South Carolinians deliberately traded without Georgia licenses, provided rum to the Indians in direct violation of another Georgia law prohibiting all strong liquor in the colony, and warned the Indians not to send their children to school or else “we Shall detain them prisoners and hostages to keep their nations in Slavery.” The situation had become so serious that it caused Charles to declare: “the people of Carolina are utter Enemies to Georgia.” He even went so far as to say that if the situation were not resolved soon, “there would be an end of all hopes of converting the Indians to Christianity, or of preserving peace with them. For if the Carolina Traders are not obliged to take their Lycences [sic] from Georgia, and Submit to the regulations of the Georgia Act, they will go on to cheat the Indians as formerly, and new Wars will follow, in which case Georgia will be attack’d by them, they making no distinction of British Subjects when once engaged in War.” Charles provided other information as well, but he focused the first quarter of his report on the Indian trade, demonstrating its importance as well as his atten-

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46 Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley*, I: 46. Curnock raises the possibility that Oglethorpe had to decide which brother, John or Charles, would return to England with firsthand accounts of the colony and that he picked Charles because John was the more capable minister and a better fit in Georgia. Ward and Heitzenrater agree with this conclusion when they comment: “Charles, having been less successful in Georgia even than John, who was now much in Oglethorpe’s confidence, was chosen.” In reality, Charles’s position as secretary made him the natural choice to send back to England and report on Indian affairs and other matters (Curnock, *Journal of John Wesley*, I: 252-253; Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works of John Wesley*, Volume 18, 167).

tion to his obligations as Secretary for Indian Affairs.\textsuperscript{48}

A week later, Charles attended a meeting of the Trustees, mainly to deliver Oglethorpe’s papers and to report about the colony, just as his supervisor had ordered him to. By doing so, he satisfied another component of his secretarial job, albeit one of the more menial ones. He also met with assorted British officials including the Bishop of London, and despite his negative personal experiences, he “sent them away advocates for the colony.”\textsuperscript{49} In fact, most of his comments about Georgia were positive or had a positive spin to them. Why? Charles harbored no ill will towards the colony, its objectives, or its leadership, and he forgave his enemies who had ruined his reputation like any good Christian would. Furthermore, Charles took Oglethorpe’s advice to heart with regards to his resignation and considered returning to Georgia, so he presented a favorable outlook on the situation in case he decided to keep his position there. He “told Mr. Oglethorpe my desire of returning with him to Georgia, if I could be of any use there as a clergyman. But as to my secretary’s place, I begged him to tell me where, when, and how I should resign it.”\textsuperscript{50} Oglethorpe once again refused to consider his resignation, and Charles continued to do his job. As the Board of Trade attempted to mediate the South Carolina-Georgia Indian trade dispute, Charles spent two weeks in June, 1737, attending their meetings and testified “upon oath that all the traders licensed were supposed to be within Georgia.”\textsuperscript{51} In the end, his chronic poor health and his brother John’s return to England in February, 1738, convinced him not to visit Georgia again. He tendered his resignation in early April, 1738, and Oglethorpe finally accepted it.\textsuperscript{52} A month later, the Trustees appointed John Clarke to serve as Secretary for Indian Affairs citing that “Charles Wesley for want of his Health is not able to perform the said


\textsuperscript{49} Kimbrough and Newport, \textit{Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley}, I: 68-72, quotation on 70.

\textsuperscript{50} Kimbrough and Newport, \textit{Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley}, I: 80. Soon after his departure, Charles “wrote to my brother concerning my return to Georgia, which I found myself inclined to refer wholly to God.” Kimbrough and Newport, \textit{Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley}, I: 56. In the letter, dated October 1, 1736, Charles reflected on “how to dispose of the remainder of a wretched life.” He considered returning to Georgia because it “alone can give me the solitude I sigh after,” but he would do so only if “I could have a small village remote from any town, where I may hide myself from all business and all company.” Much of the letter contains complaints about having too many social obligations, making it sound like Charles sought isolation above all else (Frank Baker, ed., \textit{The Works of John Wesley, Volume 25, Letters, I: 1721-1739}, [Oxford: Clarendon, 1980], 476-479, quotations on 477 and 478). As late as August 1738, Charles still expressed a desire to return to Georgia “as soon as his Health will permit him to be itinerant Minister,” but he never did. CRG, 30: 11.

\textsuperscript{51} Kimbrough and Newport, \textit{Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley}, I: 83-84, quotation on 84. The conflict between South Carolina and Georgia over the Indian trade would not be resolved until July, 1738, when the king and his privy council ruled in favor of South Carolina (Sweet, \textit{Negotiating for Georgia}, 104).

Charles’s term of office was over at last.

Charles Wesley’s experiences as Secretary for Indian Affairs for Georgia give historians the opportunity to look at that position more closely and assess its impact on Indian relations more broadly. Most obviously, it points to the need to control the Indian trade. While issuing annual licenses appears more tedious than regulatory, it forced those men who wanted to participate in this lucrative commerce to register their names, pay a fee, obtain proper certification, and obey all regulations connected to that business. It required them to appear annually in town and before the magistrates, and it held them accountable for their behavior and made them to prove their worthiness to participate in this endeavor. The task seems simple enough, but it held weighty consequences for all who were connected to the Indian trade. As Secretary for Indian Affairs, Charles could potentially wield great power since he determined who received licenses and who did not, even though he saw the position as more clerical than authoritative.

The secretary also needed to report the current state of affairs to the Trustees, and Charles unfortunately had much to tell. Because of the Indian Act, interactions between the Indians and the Georgians remained peaceful, but the relationship between Georgians and South Carolinians was deteriorating rapidly which could have detrimental effects on all Indian affairs in the Southeast. Charles’s statements about this dispute upon his return to England and his testimony before the Board of Trade were invaluable to the Trustees and strengthened their case for increased control over the Indian trade.

Thus, while Charles may have despised his job, he actually played an important role in early Georgia. Indian affairs were nothing to be trifled with especially during the first years in which a colony was founded, and Charles’s requisite attention to his responsibilities helped maintain peace at a time when tensions ran high. He may not have done an exemplary job, but by fulfilling the basic obligations of his position, he kept the Indian trade in Georgia on an even keel and prevented a bad situation from getting worse. Charles Wesley will never be heralded as a notable Secretary for Indian Affairs because of his short term of office but he should receive credit for doing his duty amidst difficulties and distractions.

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53 CRG, 32: 267-268, quotation on 267. The two sentences that switch Charles Wesley to John Clarke represent the only difference in wording between the two appointments.