The Founding of Georgia (1733)

This article details the trustees' determination to establish Georgia as a haven for debtors and prisoners with a representative form of government. Although Georgia's founding principles contrasted with the nearly feudal visions of South Carolina's founders, both settlements eventually became dominated by slavery and the plantation agriculture that it made possible.

In America there are fertile lands sufficient to subsist all the useless Poor in England, and distressed Protestants in Europe; yet Thousands starve for want of mere sustenance. The distance makes it difficult to get thither. The same want that renders men useless here, prevents their paying their passage; and if other pay it for 'em, they become servants, or rather slaves for years to those who have defrayed the expense. Therefore, money for passage is necessary, but is not the only want; for if people were set down in America, and the land before them, they must cut down trees, build houses, fortify towns, dig and sow the land before they can get in a harvest; and till then, they must be provided with food, and kept together, that they may be assistant to each other for their natural support and protection...

From the Charter.--His Majesty having taken into his consideration, the miserable circumstances of many of his own poor subjects, rely to perish for want: as likewise the distresses of many poor foreigners, who would take refuge here from persecution; and having a Princely regard to the great danger the southern frontiers of South Carolina are exposed to, by reason of the small number of white inhabitants there, hath, out of his Fatherly compassion towards his subjects, been graciously pleased to grant a charter for incorporating a number of gentlemen by the name of The Trustees for establishing the Colony of Georgia in America. They are impowered to collect benefactions; and lay them out in cloathing, arming, sending over, and supporting colonies of the poor, whether subjects on foreigners, in Georgia. And his Majesty farther grants all his lands between the rivers Savannah and Alatamaha, which he erects into a Province by the name of Georgia, unto the Trustees, in trust for the poor, and for the better support of the Colony. At the desire of the Gentlemen, there are clauses in the Charter, restraining them and their successors from receiving any salary, fee, perquisite, or profit, whatsoever, by or from this undertaking; and also from receiving any grant of lands within the said district, to themselves, or in trust for them. There are farther clauses granting to the Trustees proper powers for establishing and governing the Colony, and liberty of conscience to all who shall settle there...

By such a Colony, many families, who would otherwise starve, will be provided for, and made masters of houses and lands; the people in Great Britain to whom these necessitous families were a burthen, will be relieved; numbers of manufacturers will be here employed, for supplying them with clothes, working tools, and other necessaries; and by giving refuge to the distressed Saltzburghers, and other persecuted Protestants, the power of Britain, as a reward for its hospitality, will be encreased by the addition of so many religious and industriou...
many other materials for manufactures, which she is obliged to purchase from Southern countries. As towns are established and grow populous along the rivers Savannah and Alatamaha, they will make such a barrier as will render the southern frontier of the British Colonies on the Continent of America, safe from Indian and other enemies...

Christianity will be extended by the execution of this design; since, the good discipline established by the Society, will reform the manners of those miserable objects, who shall be by them subsisted; and the example of a whole Colony who shall behave in a just, moral, and religious manner, will contribute greatly towards the conversion of the Indians, and taking off the prejudices received from the profligate lives of such who have scarce any thing of Christianity but the name. The Trustees in their general meetings, will consider of the most prudent methods for effectually establishing a regular Colony; and that it may be done, is demonstrable. Under what difficulties, was Virginia planted?--the coast and climate then unknown; the Indians numerous, and at enmity with the first Planters, who were forced to fetch all provisions from England; yet it is grown a mighty Province, and the Revenue receives £100,000 for duties upon the goods that they send yearly home. Within this 50 years, Pennsylvania was as much a forest as Georgia in now; and in these few years, by the wise oeconomy of William Penn, and those who assisted him, it now gives food to 80,000 inhabitants, and can boast of as fine a City as most in Europe.

This new Colony is more likely to succeed than either of the former were, since Carolina abounds with provisions, the climate is known, and there are men to instruct in the seasons and nature of cultivating the soil. There are but few Indian families within 400 miles; and those, in perfect amity with the English:--Port Royal (the station of his Majesty's ships) is within 30, and Charlestown (a great mart) is within 120 miles. If the Colony is attacked, it may be relieved by sea, from Port Royal, or the Bahamas; and the Militia of South Carolina is ready to support it, by land.

For the continuing the relief which is now given, there will be lands reserved in the Colony; and the benefit arising from them is to go to the carrying on of the trust. So that, at the same time, the money by being laid out preserves the lives of the poor, and makes a comfortable provision for those whose expenses are by it defrayed; their labor in improving their own lands, will make the adjoining reserved lands valuable; and the rents of those reserved lands will be a perpetual fund for the relieving more poor people. So that instead of laying out the money upon lands, with the income thereof to support the poor, this is laying out money upon the poor; and by relieving those who are now unfortunate, raises a fund for the perpetual relief of those who shall be so hereafter.