

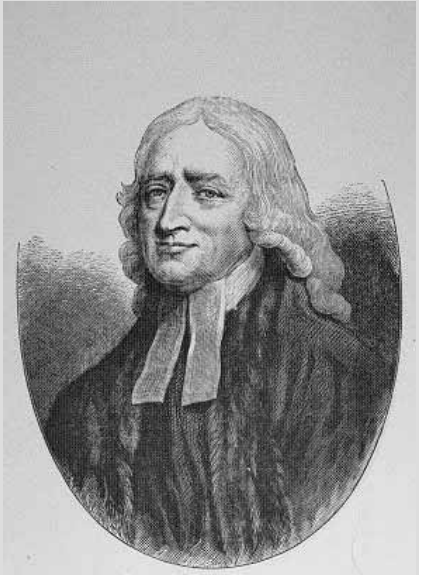


John Wesley in Georgia



Tuesday Morning James Oglethorpe, Esq, set out by Land for Gravesend, and the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, Student of Lincoln College, Oxon; the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley, Student of Christ-Church-College, and the Rev. Mr. Ingram of Queen's, in order to embark for Georgia.

There were sent along with these Gentlemen, as a Benefaction of several worthy Ladies and Gentlemen, 550 of the Bishop of Man's Treatises on the Sacrament, and his Lordship's Principles and Duties of Christianity, for the use of the English Families settled in Georgia.



John Wesley

John Wesley is considered the founder of the modern Methodist Church. As a young man, he spent time in Georgia which helped prepare him for this later evangelical work. The physical, ministerial and spiritual challenges that Georgia afforded Wesley enabled him to meet later challenges with renewed vigor and a broader understanding of himself, the Holy Scriptures, and his fellow man.

John Wesley Before Georgia

Born in 1703 at Epworth, England, John Wesley was the son of an Anglican minister and the 15th of 19 children. He attended both Charterhouse School and Oxford where he graduated in 1724. Three years later he was ordained as a minister at the age of 24. In 1729, he joined his brother

Charles' Holy Club whose members were derisively called Methodists. His education prepared him for life as an Anglican minister in England, yet his first real field of work lay far from England's shores.

John Wesley in Georgia

John Wesley set sail for Georgia with his brother, Charles, in 1735. After arriving in early 1736, John saw the venture as a key to the rebirth of what he termed 'Primitive Christianity.' He would carry the Gospel to a new land, encounter hardships, and thereby experience a new understanding of what the Christian faith entailed. He was stationed in Savannah while Charles was sent to Frederica to serve as James Oglethorpe's secretary and Frederica's minister. Early on ill health forced Charles to leave and John assumed some of Charles' duties as minister to Frederica. John made five separate visits to Frederica from April 1736 to January 1737. In all, he spent roughly three months at Frederica.

In addition to his duties as a minister at Savannah, John hoped to perform missionary work amongst the Creek and Cherokee of the region. He never was an effective missionary and wrote in his journal, "I came to convert the Indians, but, oh, who will convert me?"

Life as a colonial preacher offered many challenges to John. His congregation was symbolic of the early diversity of Georgia's settlers containing Anglicans, Dissenters, Highland Scots, French Huguenots, Spanish (Italian) Jews and French Swiss. In particular, John was impressed with the piety of a group of Moravians who settled in Georgia.

Controversy eventually forced John from the colony. He became embroiled in court proceedings brought against him when he refused communion to Sophia Hopkey Williamson – a woman he had courted before her marriage to William Williamson. He claimed it was because she did not communicate that she would attend communion at least one day before; many, however, felt that he was being vindictive towards a woman that he had courted who had married another man. Convinced that he would not receive a fair trial John left the colony of Georgia on December 2, 1737 noting in his journal, "about eight o'clock, the tide then serving, I shook off the dust of my feet and left Georgia, after having preached the gospel there (not as I ought, but as I was able)."

John Wesley After Georgia

After returning to England John Wesley had an experience he described as an 'infilling of the Holy Spirit.' He first field preached at Bristol in 1739 and soon after formed Methodist societies. During the 1740s, John approved of lay preaching for Methodists and he conducted the first Methodist conference. In 1784, he began

ordaining ministers for America. The Methodist movement grew, yet he affirmed that Methodists in England should remain Anglican in 1786. John Wesley – founder of Methodism – died on March 2, 1791, and is buried at City Road chapel in London.