perity. Compared to Georgia's lackluster performance, the opportunities in South Carolina appeared glittering.

It was ironic—though perhaps inevitable—that Georgia malcontents would choose as their model precisely the kind of society that Georgia's founders had sought to avoid. Sir Robert Montgomery, the first of His Majesty's subjects to attempt the establishment of a colony in Georgia, had warned against a commitment "to some single Product," which would "take up all the Labours of their People, overstock the Markets, stifle the Demand, and make their Industry their Ruin, merely through a Want of due Reflection on Diversity of other Products, equally adapted to their Soil, and Climate."[6] This was the view adopted by the trustees. Yet plantation agriculture offered the quickest route to riches for those in a position to take advantage of the opportunity.

Ambitious Georgia settlers launched a campaign to abolish the trustees' laws and emulate the South Carolina success story. For a decade the debate over slavery rocked the Georgia colony. In general, the opponents of the trustees' vision were the more affluent members of the Savannah community. Opposition to slavery came from the Scottish Highlanders around Darien and the German Salzburgers in Ebenezer as well as from Savannah artisans who feared slave-labor competition. To these settlers, "those Folk who wanted to bring in Negroes, . . . would put an End to all White Men's Work."[7]

Gradually the trustees retreated, modifying their land and rum policies and ultimately capitulating on the crucial issue of slavery. Pressures from James Habersham, the colony's most successful merchant and a spokesman for the Savannah business community; George Whitefield, the colony's best-known minister; and others proved too formidable to resist. The trustees' twenty-one-year charter was nearing its end, and the British government was discontented with Georgia's feeble commercial contributions to the empire. In 1750 the declining trustees lifted the prohibition on slavery. Two years later they surrendered their charter to the crown. The great utopian experiment had come to an end.

Perhaps the outcome was destined because Georgia stood in the path of the westward expansion from coastal slaveholding areas. Certainly it is not surprising that ambitious Georgians looked enviously at the alluring model of South Carolina. Yet as Oglethorpe's most recent biographer has argued, Georgia was not preordained to be a staple-crop, slave-labor, plantation colony. To the North, other colonies

survived quite nicely with town-oriented settlement patterns and small-scale agriculture, although, to be sure, Georgia faced special problems that it did not succeed in overcoming. Committed to an "almost naive faith that the environment can make or remake a man," Oglethorpe and his associates promoted a utopia in the wilderness that failed to survive.[8]

The future belonged to people with a different vision. By 1760 more than one-third of Georgia's people were property; by the time of the American Revolution slaves comprised almost half the population. Trading centers—Ebenezer, Frederica, Sunbury, Hardwick—disappeared as the trustees' township settlement pattern collapsed under the weight of plantation agriculture. The retreat from the trustees' vision became a rout during the era of royal government.

Georgia's royal governors and especially James Wright, who was chief executive from 1760 until his expulsion during the American Revolution, viewed Georgia's economic problems from an imperial perspective. Unlike Oglethorpe, who concluded that South Carolina was what Georgia should not be, Wright had served in a number of governmental positions in South Carolina and regarded it as a model colony that produced rice and raw materials while providing a market for slaves and finished products. The royal governors, the first of whom arrived in 1754, promptly set about reforming Georgia into a colony more compatible with the needs of Great Britain.

The new government's accomplishments were substantial. By 1773 Georgia contained an estimated thirty-three thousand people (approximately 45 percent of whom were slaves), almost ten times the population of two decades earlier. Increased production of rice, indigo, and other products provided the colony with foreign exchange and generated among some elements a burgeoning prosperity. Georgia's growing population and expanding plantations needed land, and Governor Wright aggressively pursued "treaties" with surrounding Indian tribes. Wright's successful "diplomacy" more than quintupled the size of the colony.

The establishment of a Commons House of Assembly provided Georgia with experience in representative government. The trustees, hoping to carry out their utopian experiment with as little interference from the subjects as possible, avoided creating a colonial assembly until 1751. Even then the assembly was only an advisory body. The Commons House of Assembly, composed of members who owned at least five hundred acres of land and elected by voters who owned

not less than fifty acres, had greater authority than its predecessor, but the real power in government lay with the appointed governor's council.

The royal governor in council defined law, made appointments, and granted land. Unlike the trustees, council members were not noticeably squeamish about profiting from the colony they governed. Governor Wright soon owned eleven plantations and 523 slaves; Lieutenant Governor John Graham held twenty-five thousand acres and at least 240 slaves; Council President James Habersham possessed ten thousand acres and 198 slaves; and others in the king's service demonstrated little evidence of want. By 1773 some sixty people owned twenty-five hundred or more acres with twenty holding in excess of five thousand acres. These sixty men, who comprised fewer than 5 percent of landowners, held more than 50 percent of Georgia's slave population.

To promote slavery and to make it convenient for masters to encourage their black laborers in the performance of the backbreaking chores required for the cultivation of rice and indigo, the new government promptly rewrote the slave code. After accepting slavery in 1750, the trustees had promulgated a benign code that protected blacks from physical abuse and required that slaves be provided religious instruction. The trustees even hired a teacher to instruct slaves in writing and religion. The royal slave code, modeled on that of South Carolina, made teaching a slave to write a criminal offense, and it placed few restrictions on a landowner's control of his human property. Again reversing trustee policy, the king's government permitted slaves to be artisans, thereby undermining urban development by depriving skilled townsmen of markets in the countryside. As a leading student of colonial Georgia society has observed, "white artisans were devalued by slave competition."[9]

So, too, were smaller farmers. Government land policy during the royal period encouraged planters and speculators to acquire large acreages, while the high cost of initiating a profitable rice or indigo operation made it difficult for small farmers to establish a cash income. As Milton Sydney Heath has concluded, "The great body of small proprietors benefited in no such positive way from these policies; in fact, the aggrandizement of landed estates pushed them back onto the poorer and less advantageously located soils and thereby increased the degree of economic inequality."[10] Subsistence farming was nothing new to Georgia's yeomanry, but the success of plantation agriculture created a widening class chasm. It was hardly surprising that royal government was not notably popular among upland farmers, the people, as Habersham expressed it to Governor Wright, who "are really what you and I understand by Crackers."[11]

Georgia played little role in the coming of the American Revolution. It produced no Patrick Henry or Samuel Adams; indeed, it is probably best known as the only one of the thirteen colonies that complied with the Stamp Act, that was not represented at the first Continental Congress, and that initially sent no official delegation to the Second Continental Congress. In the war for independence, Georgia was a minor theater, noted mostly as the launching place for three unsuccessful invasions of British Florida, for a somnolent defense that permitted a British army to march into Savannah undetected, and for the failure to recapture Savannah after it had fallen. But if Georgia contributed little to the American Revolution, the American Revolution had enormous consequences for Georgia.

From the beginning, the Revolution in Georgia concerned considerably more than independence from Britain. The question involved not only home rule, but, perhaps more fundamental, which Georgians would rule at home. Unlike Virginia, where a mature and self-confident aristocracy led a war for independence from Great Britain, Georgia possessed a newer and less secure leadership that divided on the question of independence and in the tumult of war lost much of its power to spokesmen for the "crackers" and other outgroups who had found little place in royal Georgia.

Before the Revolution the colony had developed three loosely organized political factions. One supported Governor Wright and royal rule. It included much of the emerging aristocracy and drew support from ordinary subjects, especially from those of English ethnic background and Anglican church affiliation. The center of royal authority was the governor's council. There James Habersham, a schoolteacher who had become the colony's leading merchant and one of its largest planters, was president, and its membership included such men as Noble Jones, a medical doctor who had served the colony in various civil and military positions and who was a large plantation owner. They joined Governor Wright, Lieutenant Governor Graham, and other officials to uphold royal prerogative in Georgia.

The earliest of the opposition groups found its forum in the Commons House of Assembly. Soon after the formation of royal government, the Christ Church faction established control of the lower house. Centered in Savannah and the adjoining parishes that constituted "Old Georgia," the Christ Church faction represented those planters, merchants, and other social elites who were not part of the royal establish-