

**THE DUKE DIVINITY  
SCHOOL REVIEW, VOL.  
31, WINTER 1966, NUM. 1**

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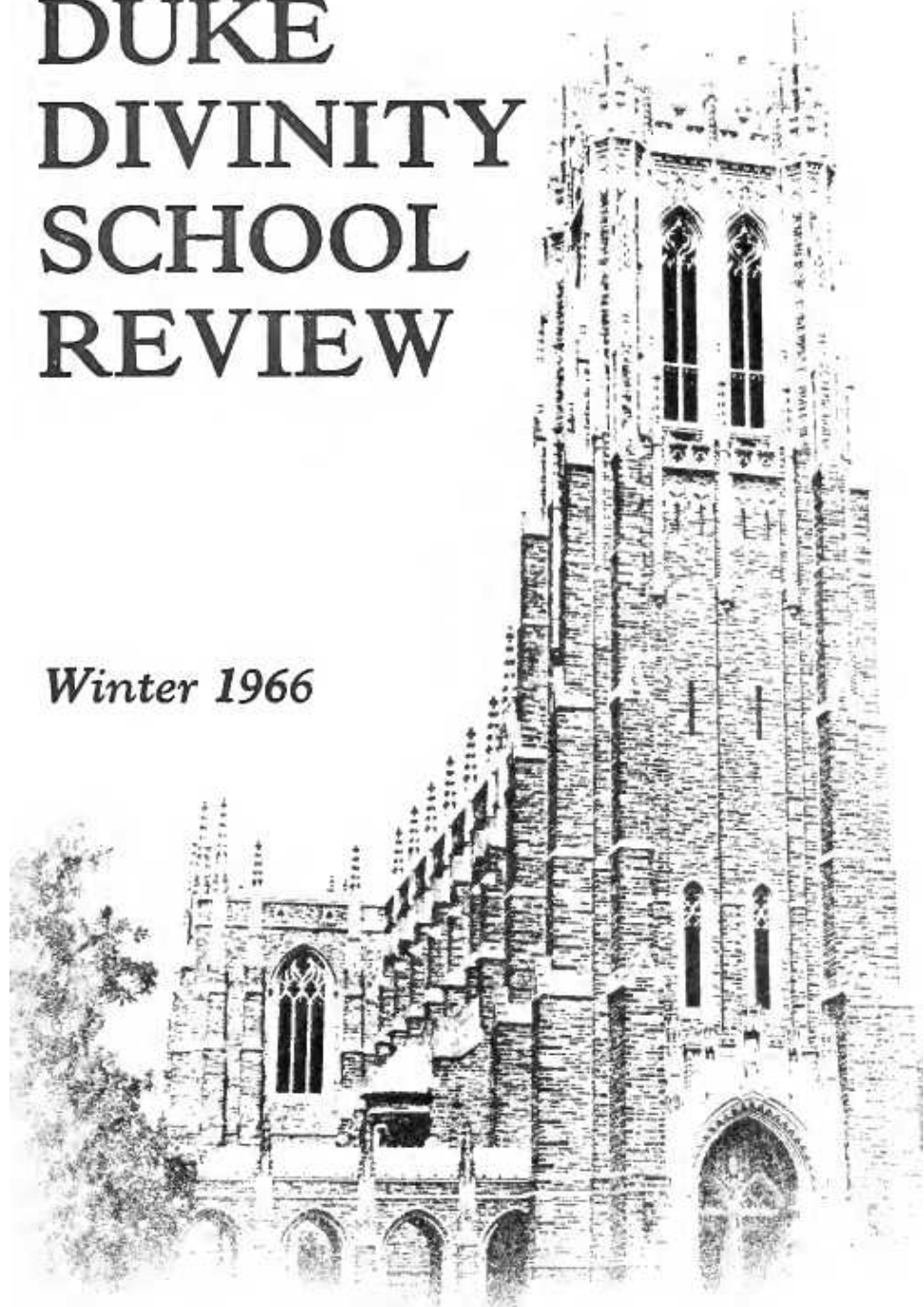
**VARIOUS**

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# THE DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL REVIEW

*Winter 1966*



## A Prayer of Dedication

O teach us to know Thee our God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent; and enable us to do Thy will on earth as it is done in heaven. Give us to fear Thee and to love Thee, to trust and delight in Thee, and to cleave to Thee with full purpose of heart, that no temptations may draw us or drive us from Thee; but that all Thy dispensations to us, and Thy dealings with us, may be the messengers of Thy love to our souls. Quicken us, O Lord, in our dullness, that we may not serve Thee in a lifeless and listless manner, but may abound in Thy work, and be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." And make us faithful in all our intercourse with our neighbour, that we may be ready to do good and bear evil; that we may be just and kind, merciful and meek, peaceable and patient, sober and temperate, humble and self-denying, inoffensive and useful in the world; that so glorifying Thee here, we may be glorified with Thee in Thy heavenly kingdom. *Amen.*

From *A Collection of Prayers for Families*, by John Wesley (1744).

THE  
DUKE  
DIVINITY  
SCHOOL  
REVIEW

*Bicentennial of  
American Methodism*

Volume 31

Winter 1966

Number 1

# Contents

A Prayer of Dedication <i>by John Wesley</i> , . . . . .	Inside Cover
Sam's Creek Revisited, . . . . .	3
<i>by Howard C. Wilkinson</i>	
Wesley and Antinomianism, . . . . .	10
<i>by Earl P. Crow, Jr.</i>	
John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards, . . . . .	20
<i>by Charles A. Rogers</i>	
The Doctrines in the <i>Discipline</i> , . . . . .	39
<i>by Frank Baker</i>	
Frank Mason North: Ecumenical Statesman, . . . . .	56
<i>by Creighton Lacy</i>	
The Dean's Discourse, <i>by Robert E. Cushman</i> , . . . . .	71
Focus on Faculty, <i>by Donald J. Welch</i> , . . . . .	75
Looks at Books, . . . . .	77
<i>(including The Reformation by Hans J. Hillerbrand)</i>	

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# Sam's Creek Revisited

HOWARD C. WILKINSON, '42

Chaplain to Duke University

... The occasion for this sermon\* is the celebration in this year, 1966, of the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the first Methodist Church in the United States. In 1766 (if not earlier) Robert Strawbridge came from Ireland, organized a congregation of fifteen Methodists, and built them a log church on Sam's Creek, in Maryland, now less than an hour's drive north of the nation's capital.

That, then, is the occasion. What of the explanation? Why, in an interdenominational Chapel, would we have a sermon dealing with a particular denomination? Precisely because this Chapel is interdenominational, not non-denominational. Its congregation, its choir, its ushers, its musicians, ministers, preachers, hostesses, maid and janitor are members of particular, denominational churches. From time to time we single out a certain denomination for special attention, so that all of us might be aware of the contribution which that member is making to the whole body of Christ. For example, on October 24, 1965, from this pulpit the Methodist Dean of the Duke Divinity School fired a "21-gun" homiletical salute to the reformation taking place now within the Roman Catholic Church. And so it goes.

## I

But there is exceptional justification for taking a look at the Methodist Church on the occasion of its second centennial. I think of three reasons. The first is that Mr. James B. Duke, who founded this University, was himself a Methodist, and he credited the Methodist Church with giving him the inspiration, vision and encouragement which led to this magnificent deed.

There are many evidences of the influence of Methodism upon Mr. Duke, but let me summarize the matter by quoting a portion of an address given by the late Judge William R. Perkins, the father of the present Chairman of the Duke Endowment. Judge Perkins

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\*A sermon preached in Duke Chapel on January 16, 1966, and printed in *The North Carolina Christian Advocate*, February 10, 1966.

knew Mr. Duke well; he was the personal legal Counsel of Mr. Duke, and in this address, delivered four years after Mr. Duke's death, he explained the motives and purposes which the benefactor had in setting up the Endowment. Here are his words:

... according to Mr. Duke's plan ... the objects of the Endowment may be conveniently classified as religion, hospitalization and education ... To appreciate the provisions for religion one must realize that Mr. Duke was a Methodist of the rural district type and such had been his father and his grandfather before him. And a first rate type it was and is. The Circuit Rider had entered deep into the warp and woof of their lives ... Mr. Duke often remarked; 'My old daddy always said that if he amounted to anything in life it was due to the Methodist circuit riders,' to which he [James B. Duke] invariably added: 'If I amount to anything in this world I owe it to my daddy and the Methodist Church.'

The second factor has to do with the financial support which the Methodist Church has voluntarily given to the University through the years. The Church does not own the University; it is privately owned by its Board of Trustees. The Church does not control or hold veto power over the Duke administration. No bishop, nor all the bishops together; no church board, nor all the boards acting in concert, can countermand the actions of the President of Duke University or the Board of Trustees. Yet the church which began on Sam's Creek gives Duke University a substantial sum of money each year for faculty salaries and the erection of new buildings. The current rate of giving is in excess of \$200,000 each year.

The third and final reason for a special look at Methodism here has to do with the so-called "Fifth Decade" planning. It is no secret that this University is now engaged in the greatest development program in its entire history thus far. After years of careful evaluation and projection by groups of faculty, administration, trustees, students and alumni, a goal was fixed and an ambitious campaign was launched. The immediate and crucial objective was announced as the securing of \$102,876,000 from anyone and everyone in the United States who will contribute.

This was not a campaign thrust upon the University by any outside group. It was, so to speak, an inside job. Something else was an "inside job": the selection of the men upon whom the University would depend to lead us to victory. Without any other criterion than that of proven ability and demonstrated interest in Duke University, the University itself selected six men who would head the over-all campaign and its five sub-divisions. There was no deliberate

attempt to pick Methodists. Yet five of these six men whom the University chose happen to be Methodist!

Therefore, in summary, we believe that, at Duke, there is special justification for a focus upon the 200th anniversary of the Methodist Church in America, because Methodism played a decisive role in the University's founding, it continues to give something more than token financial support, and most of the key leaders in our great "Fifth Decade" campaign receive their spiritual nourishment in the Methodist Church today.

What conclusion should we draw from this? What does it all mean? That Methodist students at Duke should be given better grades in Chemistry than Baptist students? That Methodists should be given preferred seats at home basketball games? That Methodist professors should receive higher salaries than Presbyterians? That Methodist Fords should be given better campus parking places than Episcopalian Cadillacs?

Merely to express these questions in words is to reveal the impossibility and the undesirability of preferential treatment of Methodism on this intentionally interdenominational campus. What, then, should we conclude from the fact that the Methodist Church has played, and will continue to play a decisive role in the fortunes of the University? The only conclusion which I care to press here is that the students and faculty who have benefited and will benefit so largely from the influence of American Methodism should take a bit of time to become knowledgeable about that church. I suggest that enough time be spent in study that is free from negative bias, at least to dispel the worst mis-conceptions which some people have of Methodism. The *actual* shortcomings and the *genuine* weaknesses of Methodist people and of the Methodist Church are bad enough! They do not need to be made to appear worse than they are by distortion and outright fabrication.

## II

Let me briefly indicate, therefore, a few areas in which American Methodism has made distinct contributions.

The first characteristic which I shall mention is Methodism's interest in education, including higher education. John Wesley once declared, "The Methodists may be poor, but there is no need they should be ignorant." Francis Asbury, the greatest leader of early American Methodism, agreed with Wesley on this point, and he began by educating himself at great sacrifice. Indeed, he drafted