

PATTERSON VS. CARSON

Two Brooklyn Clergymen at Odds Over Question of Growth of Universalism
DR. POTTERTON TO DR. CARSON
Pastor of Church of Our Father Resents a Pulpit Statement Made by His Colleague

To the Editor of the Brooklyn Eagle:

In the Eagle of Monday, December 5, the Rev. J. F. Carson, D.D., is reported to have said: "The greatest losses in Protestantism in Brooklyn have been in what may be termed the liberal churches, the Universalist church heading the list with a loss of 288 members. What is true denominationally is true in the region of individual churches. We want no new gospel, but we want a new faith in the old gospel."

The losses reported of the Universalist Church are not real. The federation of churches, in appealing to me for statistics, did not ask for the membership of the Church of Our Father, but for the resident and active members.

In my desire to be honest I gave the Federation the true figures. This showed an apparent loss when the real facts are that we have gained during the year. It should be known to our Presbyterian brother that the strength of the Universalist Church cannot be determined by the roll of membership, but by the number of families affiliated with the church. It is only in recent years that emphasis has been placed upon the importance of church membership. Dr. Carson makes his criticism more specific in declaring: "What is true denominationally is true in the region of individual churches." No proof is offered by Dr. Carson, and none can be, if the statement is untrue. The outlook for the Universalist Church in Brooklyn is brighter than for years. Next spring we shall build in Flatbush a new edifice for the recently organized society of the Church of the Divine Love, of which the Rev. Dr. Luther F. McKinney, a clergyman of large experience and ripe ability, is pastor.

This society is largely made up of young college graduates, who are enthusiastic believers in the "new gospel."

This is fact number one for Dr. Carson.

The Church of the Good Tidings has been located for years in a small chapel on Quincy street, but under the leadership of its enthusiastic, self-sacrificing and hard working minister, the Rev. Charles R. East, the property has been sold and a fine corner lot on Madison street and Stuyvesant ave., purchased, upon which a modern edifice will be erected. This improvement is due to growth and increased strength. This is fact number two for Dr. Carson.

All Souls Church, with an honorable history of nearly seventy years, has found that its environment was working against it, as it is against all Protestant churches in Williamsburg, and to overcome that danger, the property was recently sold.

It is probable that under the guidance of their faithful and popular pastor, the Rev. L. Ward Brigham, and an able board of trustees, a new location will be secured and a church building consistent with the desire and financial ability of All Souls erected. Better days than in recent years are before this society. This is fact number three for Dr. Carson.

As to my own church, the Church of Our Father (First Universalist Society), I can only refer any person desirous of knowing the facts to the trustees, or extend an

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invitation to be present at the annual meeting in January. Dr. Carson may accept the invitation if he wishes to know the truth, and I believe he does. He has been led into making baseless declarations, by figures which mislead in the report of the Federation of Churches, and I am now wondering if he will do us the justice to accept the facts which have been presented. I feel that he is too large and noble to deny the Universalists their position, earned by honest effort in disseminating the gospel of love and of service, in proclaiming the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, and in leaving the old lump of orthodoxy to the degree that "the old gospel" of total depravity, unconditional election, particular atonement, effectual grace, vicarious sacrifice and endless misery for the vast body of the unelect is not effectually preached.

The new gospel of the Fatherhood of God, revealed in the saintly, self-sacrificing and self surrendered life of Jesus Christ, affirmed by the authority of love and generating spiritual power to realize the kingdom of God upon earth, is the conquering and victorious faith of the twentieth century.

While Dr. Carson is learning that he is preaching with power and success "the new gospel," I congratulate him upon his splendid Presbyterian efforts to make universalism a condition in Brooklyn.

THOMAS EDWARD POTTERTON

Parsonage, Church of Our Father, December 10, 1904.

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Transcribed on 14 Sep 2009 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY