

[Fourth Universalist Society, New York City]

Two Churches at Odds
Universalist Congregations on the Upper West Side
Are Too Close Neighbors to be Happy
PASTOR OF ONE HAS RESIGNED

Dr. Bolles of the Church of the Eternal Hope Decided to Withdraw Since
Dr. Eaton's Church Moved into His Field—Statements from Both Sides

The proposed erection of a new place of worship at Seventy-Sixth Street and Central Park West, by the Fourth Universalist Church, better known as the Church of the Divine Paternity, of Forty-fifth Street and Fifth Avenue, has caused quite a stir among the members of the Church of the Eternal Hope, Eight-first Street, between Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues. Some of them declare it is an encroachment upon their field.

The Church of the Eternal Hope, of which the Rev. Dr. Edwin C. Bolles is pastor, moved to its present quarters about four years ago from Eleventh Street, and has had a hard struggle ever since to maintain itself, owing, as it is explained, to the failure of the Dutch Reformed Church, which bought the Eleventh Street building, to pay the amount agreed upon. A mortgage on the old building was foreclosed and the Church of the Eternal Hope, to protect itself, had to buy in the property, which it subsequently sold at a loss of \$25,000, the sum of its indebtedness at the present day. The Board of Trustees had hoped to be able to clear that debt off in a short time, but the advent of the new church in their immediate neighborhood will, some of them say, materially retard their progress.

Dr. Bolles has already sent in his resignation, to take effect next May, when his contract expires, feeling that he can struggle no longer after the hard work he had done during his ten years' connection with the church. He gave as a formal reason for his resignation ill health and a desire for rest, saying that under present circumstances he thought it best that he resign and that a younger man should take up the struggle.

His resignation only increases the resentment against the other congregation felt by a number of the members of the Eighty-first Street Church. C. W. Plyer of 22 West Sixtieth Street, one of the Trustees, said to a reporter for the New York Times last night: "Yes, there is certainly a notion among a number of our members that the other congregation is trying to swallow us up, or, failing in that, to wipe us out. They are going to erect a large, fine building; they will have an expensive organ, and probably a high-priced choir and other attractions, such as we cannot afford. Naturally, we stand but little show.

"Dr. Bolles has worked hard, but now he feels that he alone will not prove sufficient attraction as against the pomp of the other church, and he is afraid that we cannot maintain ourselves. He does not care to have those of us

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who have been so liberal in the past to continue giving unless there would be some eventual growth, and with the new church right among us we cannot hope for an increase in membership to any extent."

The Rev. Dr. Charles H. Eaton, pastor of the Church of the Divine Paternity, when asked concerning the stand taken by the members of the other church, said: "My church has no desire whatever to injure the other. We simply sold our old building, because most of our members moved further up town. We realized a handsome sum with which to build, and still have an endowment fund of some \$200,000 left for philanthropic and educational purposes. We tried to get a site on Broadway and Fifty-seventh Street, but could not do so, and finally decided upon the site at Seventy-sixth Street and Central Park West as the best suited for our purposes.

"We do not feel that we are encroaching upon Dr. Bolles's territory, because his clientage and mine are entirely different. Even if they were to go to pieces to-day, I doubt if any of them would join my church. Besides, it will be a year before the new building will be ready to occupy."

The mortgage of \$25,000 hanging over the Church of the Eternal Hope has caused Dr. Bolles the greatest worry. Many members, however, still hope that he can be induced to reconsider his resignation. The Board of Trustees has taken no action yet in the matter.

New York Times, New York NY, 16 Mar 1897

Transcribed on 25 Jun 2009 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY