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**FACSIMILE MESSAGE**

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**DATE:** January 4, 2008

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**SUBJECT:** Archdeacon Paterson Smyth

### TRANSITION AND ANXIETY

In this chapter will be reviewed the events and activities of St. George's Church over the period of the first quarter of the present 20th Century.

No man could be more richly equipped mentally and spiritually, to deal with the problems of the new age that were making their appearance in the early years of this century, than the Rev. John Paterson Smyth LL.D., Litt. D., who was called by the Proprietors of St. George's Church to fill the position of Rector in the place vacated by Bishop Carmichael on his elevation to the Bishoprick of Montreal in 1906.

A scholar, with a distinguished academic record, a writer of theological books claiming a world-wide reputation, a preacher of eloquence and power, a magnetic personality blended with an affectionate disposition -- Dr. Paterson Smyth was undoubtedly the nearest approach to the type and character of man whom the congregation of St. George's would welcome as a successor to their beloved Bishop Carmichael.

He had had a wide parochial experience, in addition to his achievements in the academic sphere. He found at St. George's a well-organized parish with a great variety of parochial activities. He was soon impressed by the high quality of leadership, revealed by those who assumed responsibility for the management of parochial affairs. The change of Rectors was accepted cheerfully, for it was only the change of one lovable Irishman for another. He soon won a warm place in the hearts of the people. In the care of Dr. Paterson Smyth the reputation and tradition of St. George's was in safe keeping.

The change of Rectors often means a change of methods in the operations of parish societies, and sometimes the introduction of new activities. Dr. Paterson Smyth made but few changes but added to the parochial curriculum, lectures, and Bible studies, which were highly appreciated by members of the congregation for many years.

On his arrival in the parish he found a very congenial colleague ready for him in the person of the Rev. H. F. Plumbire who had been Assistant Minister since 1903.

Even then, English-speaking families were moving westward out of the parish, and the effects of that movement were reflected in a decrease of members in most of the societies.

Large congregations continued to attend the Sunday services at which they were privileged to listen to one of the greatest interpreters of the Bible. Up to the days of World War I, Dr. Paterson Smyth's series of sermons on "The Life and Letters of St. Paul" and "The Gospel of the Hereafter" attracted crowds. He was a missionary enthusiast and was never weary of pleading for the extension of the Church in the Diocese and Western Canada. In 1912 St. George's parish contributed \$86,435.00 or more than 34 per cent of the \$250,000.00 required by the Diocese of Montreal for the Permanent Endowment, Superannuation, and Mission Funds. Again in 1920 when St. George's Church was passing through anxious days, the congregation took a prominent part, and generously contributed \$80,000.00 towards the Forward Movement Fund.

In 1908 the Church-wardens and Finance Committee, as for some years before and after, were haunted by the perennial spectre of accumulated debt. For the third time in 25 years, it was suggested that pewrents be increased by 10 per cent. No action was taken, and a canvass for funds was made instead.

In 1909 Mrs. James Ross presented to the Church a hand-some covering for the Altar Table and a pulpit antependium, and the gift was connected with the names of Archbishop Bond and Bishop Carmichael. In the same year it was resolved that a Sounding Board be placed over the pulpit, "provided that a special Fund for the purpose was contributed." No fund became available.

In 1910 the beautiful Memorial Window to Bishop Carmichael was placed in the West end of the Nave over the gallery as a gift from the Misses Crawford; and in the same year Mr. R. Wilson Smith presented a complete set of cassocks for the use of the choir.

On November 19th, 1912 a meeting was held to consider "the advisability of the sale of the Church and site". Details of the draft of an agreement entered into with Messrs. N. B. Stark and Co. is withheld from publication in this review. The draft of the suggested agreement was laid before the meeting and discussed at some length. The resolution was approved "That the Incumbent and Wardens of St. George's Church be and they are hereby authorized to sell the whole of the property of the Church situated in Stanley, Osborne, and

Unfortunately, Mr. Plumtre resigned in 1908 having accepted the offer of a parish in Wiltshire, England. He returned to Canada in the following year 1909 on his appointment to the Rectorship of St. James' Cathedral, Toronto. The Rev. W. S. Major succeeded him as Assistant Minister a position which he held for nearly 25 years. While death had removed some of the great men who had served the Church so loyally in the days of Bishop Carmichael, most of them were still on the active list of church officials.

On September 10th, 1907 a great welcome was extended to the Bishop of London, the Rt. Rev. A. F. Winnington-Ingram, when he preached in St. George's Church. The church was filled to capacity and a great crowd stood outside the church. Those were not the days of amplifications and broadcasts. The Bishop preached a noble sermon, and Bishop Carmichael pronounced the benediction. One of the nice little touches which indicated the character of the Bishop of London came two days later, when in the rush of his ceremonies, speeches and receptions in Ottawa he found time to remember Mr. Joseph Tomkins the Vestry Clerk, and sent him, with an inscription from himself, a copy of one of his books. Mr. Tomkins was very proud of it to the end of his days.

Dr. Paterson Smyth was appointed Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, and Examining Chaplain to Bishop Farthing in 1909.

As the author of the widely-used book, "The Bible for the Young" it was naturally expected that he would have a special interest in the St. George's Sunday School, which had always been a flourishing institution. Both the Rector and Mr. Plumtre with the co-operation of the teachers gave much time and thought to that important work. In the nineties of the last century St. George's Sunday School claimed an average attendance of over 600 children. In 1907 the "transition" in the religious interests of the people was beginning to be revealed. An excerpt from Mr. Plumtre's Annual report on the Sunday School will speak for itself. — "The most difficult problem we have to face today is - How to bring the children of our seat holders in touch with the Church. A very small proportion of them come to our Sunday School. Many may go elsewhere to Sunday School. By absence from the Sunday School of their own Church, children grow up with divided interests, and the ties of church membership are greatly weakened."

Windsor Streets, with the Church, Rectory, and Schoolhouse thereon erected etc." Another resolution was at the same meeting unanimously approved. "That the Incumbent and Wardens of St. George's Church are hereby authorized to apply to the legislature of the Province of Quebec for all necessary powers to legally complete the sale and transfer of the Church property."

It is presumed that very convincing reasons were submitted in support of the decision, but such reasons are not recorded in any of the Minute books of the Vestry.

On January 8th, 1914, another resolution was passed at a Meeting of the Vestry "That the Rector and Wardens or Rector and either of the Wardens be, and they are hereby authorized, to acquire by purchase for and on behalf of St. George's Church, that certain tract of land on the south side of Dorchester Street West in the City of Montreal known as the Mussen Property etc." The location referred to in that resolution may now be traced to the block across Dorchester Street West, from Bishop Street. So the sale of St. George's Church was now an accomplished fact, and enterprising printers and vendors of picture post-cards vouched for the fact by the sale of picture post-cards on which was printed, under a beautiful picture of the Church the dread sentence, "St. George's Episcopal Church, soon to be demolished". It is not revealed how the congregation reacted or felt over this proposed transaction. But it is of special interest to read what Dr. Paterson Smyth had to say in his New Year's letter dated January 1914.

"We have had much anxiety and work over our Church question. The Rector and Wardens in private conclave have gone on steadily month after month in their plans and negotiations. You understand that where delicate negotiations were going on with neighbouring parishes and with owners of sites, it was not advisable for us to talk much. I assure you that we are working ceaselessly and prayerfully for the good of old St. George's. Some of us, and especially your Rector have a great dislike to moving away from our downtown parish. We may perhaps be forced to do it. But I am glad to say that things are more hopeful."

In that message was the note of anxiety, and the anxiety was not dispelled for some years.

At the Vestry meeting held on Easter Monday, 1914 the plans of the new Church and buildings were exhibited and discussed.

It had at one time been assumed that the Proprietors could build a new St. George's on any site they chose and purchased and a very attractive site on Sherbrooke Street was thought of. The parochial system of the Church of England does not allow for such an easy transplantation of Church buildings. So in order even to build on the acquired Mussen property which was within the boundaries of the Parish of St. James the Apostle it was necessary to obtain the consent of the Rector and Wardens of that parish, and also the approval of the Bishop and Executive Committee of the Diocese, to extend the boundaries of St. George's parish to include the purchased site. That consent was graciously granted by the Rector and Wardens of the Parish of St. James the Apostle. Had the project been carried out and a new St. George's Church erected on the proposed site, there would have been two Parish Churches only about two blocks apart. The failure of Messrs. N. B. Stark and Co to fulfil their obligations under the terms of the agreement with St. George's Church, and the outbreak of World War I on August 4th, 1914, caused further progress to cease. It took at least five years for those responsible on behalf of St. George's to extricate themselves from the financial involvements in which they found themselves. In 1915, arrangements were in course of adjustment with N. B. Stark and Co. regarding the sale of the Church, and also new arrangement made with the Mussen Estate with regard to the purchase of the site on Dorchester Street.

It was in 1909 that the Boy Scouts began its operation in Montreal and in 1910 a Troop was formed in connection with St. George's Church. The Rev. R. C. Ascah was appointed second minister in 1912 and he devoted himself faithfully to service among the young people of the parish, particularly the Sunday School, the Troop of Boy Scouts and boys of the choir.

In 1910 in response to the suggestion from the Chance Guild, the organization which later developed into the most valuable auxiliary of the Church, the Women's Guild, the silver Flagon which is still in use was donated by Mrs. J. H. Birks.

In 1913 Mr. P. J. Illsley provided some interesting statistics regarding the choir membership in the 25 years during which he had been organist in St. George's Church. He had had as members 720 boys and 256 men. He had known three Bishops, served with two Rectors and twelve assistant ministers. The choir had given 4 members to the ministry of the Church.

As successor to the late Dr. Illsley, Mr. John J. Weatherseed, an organist with an English Cathedral training was appointed. He came to St. George's, a young man, as did Dr. Illsley, and he received a very warm welcome from the Choir and the Congregation.

Before the appointment of the new organist the organ was thoroughly examined, and was found to be in a very poor state of repairs, in many particulars requiring a thorough overhauling. The total cost of such repairs amounted to \$2924.25. It will be remembered that the organ was the gift of the late Mr. James Crathern. Without any request from the Board of Management his daughter, Mrs. McArthur came forward and generously defrayed the entire cost. Another very generous member of the congregation, Mrs. Henry Munderloh, contributed the entire salary of a curate for three years.

The old wooden organ blower which constituted a considerable fire hazard, was replaced by a steel one.

The new members of the Committee of Management for 1926 were Mrs. H. Munderloh, Mr. A. D. Braithwaite and Mr. Mr. C. F. Benson.

The most outstanding feature of interest to the congregation during 1926 was the regrettable resignation, owing to ill-health, and advanced years, of the dearly loved Rector, the Ven. Archdeacon J. Paterson Smyth, who through a high sense of duty remained at St. George's for a considerable time after the doctor had warned him to cease from all work. To say that he was greatly missed, does not in any sense convey the idea of how greatly and sorrowfully his retirement was felt and continued to be felt by the members of his congregation. His big Irish heart and loving personality endeared him to each individual member of St. George's.

At a General Meeting it was decided to make him a retiring allowance of \$1500.00 per annum and at the same time members of the congregation presented him and Mrs. Paterson Smyth with a purse as a token of their affection and regard.

He was spared for his loved ones and friends, until February 14th 1932, when he died in his 81st year. In the Church that knew so well the tread of his feet, the sound of his voice, the thrill of his spiritual presence, his funeral took place three days later. The bells of the church were muffled. The service was simple, brief and without eulogy. The Bishop of Montreal took the prayers and performed the committal at the graveside.

The service arrangements were made by the Rector, Canon Gower-Rees.

High tribute was paid the late Archdeacon by Bishop Farthing at a commemoration service held at St. George's Church on the following Sunday morning, February 22nd.

In an editorial in "The Star" February 15th a glowing tribute appeared which read "The death of the Venerable Archdeacon Paterson Smyth removes from the religious life of Montreal a noted churchman and a famous theologian who was at the same time a true servant of humanity. For twenty years he occupied the rectorship of St. George's Church, and during that time he established his reputation as a powerful preacher and a distinguished writer on religious themes. He also won in an unusual degree the confidence of his congregation, and he was their spiritual advisor and consoler in a very real and practical sense, apart from his services in the pulpit."

Figure 1  
Figure 2  
Figure 3  
Figure 4  
Figure 5  
Figure 6

**From:** St. George's Church [mailto:office@st-georges.org]  
**Sent:** Friday, January 04, 2008 2:37 PM

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of the General Synod (1893 - 1896). In 1902 he was elected Coadjutor Bishop of Montreal, with the right of succession to the See of Montreal. He was consecrated on April 25th 1902 at St. George's Church. He remained Rector of St. George's Church while Coadjutor Bishop and succeeded to the Bishoprick on the death of Archbishop Bond on October 9th, 1906. He was enthroned on November 4th, 1906 as Bishop of Montreal at Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal.

He died on the Feast of St. Matthew the Apostle September 21st 1908 at the age of 73 years.

#### FIFTH RECTOR

The Venerable John Paterson Smyth after a distinguished career at Trinity College, Dublin graduated in 1880 as B.A. and LL.B.; B.D. in 1888; LL. D. in 1893; Litt. D. in 1901; M.A. in 1902; and from Bishop's University Lennoxville in 1908 the honorary degree of D.C.L. Ordained deacon in 1880 and priest in 1881 he was curate of Lisburn Cathedral (1880 - 1883), Curate of Harold's Cross (1883 - 1888); Incumbent, Christ Church, Kingstown (1888 - 1902); Chaplain to Lord-Lieutenant (1889 - 1907); Professor of Pastoral Theology, Trinity College, Dublin (1902 - 1907) Vicar of St. Ann's Dublin (1902 - 1907).

He came to Canada as Rector of St. George's Church, Montreal and held it from 1907 to 1926. He was Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Montreal (1909 - 1926); Canon of Christ Church Cathedral Montreal (1910 - 1914); Archdeacon of St. Andrews and Clarendon 1913 - 1924; Archdeacon of Montreal 1924 - 1926.

He was author of, *How are you our Bible, The Old Documents and the New Bible, How God Inspired the Bible, The Divine Library, The Bible for the Young, and the Gospel of the Hereafter.*

After a rectorship of twenty years, Archdeacon Paterson Smyth resigned in 1926, but continued his theological work and writings.

He died on February 14th, 1932 at the age of 80 years, at Montreal.

#### SIXTH RECTOR

The Venerable Archdeacon Albert Philip Gower-Rees graduated from Christ's College, Cambridge in 1905 as B.A. and M.A. in 1908. Bishop's University Lennoxville conferred upon him in 1932, the honorary degree of D.C.L. He was ordained

**To:** Scheller, Joel

**Subject:** Re: Archdeacon Paterson Smyth

Hi Joel:

I have searched our registers and found the entry for Archdeacon Paterson Smyth's funeral. It states that his wife's name was Annie Josephine Ferrar.

The witnesses to the funeral were G.N. Paterson Smyth M.D. and C. Paterson Smyth. I believe these were probably his son and daughter-in-law. I have found records of the funeral for Geoffrey Neville Paterson Smyth and Carol Ross Paterson Smyth, husband and wife - they both died on the same day, July 12, 1940, he was 39 years old and she was 30. I have found no records of any baptisms of their children, so I assume they were childless.

Annie Josephine Ferrar Paterson Smyth died on October 13, 1941, aged 77 years. There was only one witness at her funeral, who was not a Paterson Smyth.

From all this I deduce that they only had the one son, who died young and with no children. I would have no records of more distant relatives, but I hope this helps.

Carol

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TO KNOW CHRIST AND MAKE HIM KNOWN