



The New Church Newsletter Hurstville Society December 2005

He Interceded for Us

Reflections on the Lord's Advent by Rt Rev Peter M. Buss Sr

"...And He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" **Isaiah 53:12.**

The Lord came in power and might. He was a prophet and a leader; He was the King of glory to those who afterwards believed. He was and is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Yet during His life on earth He was, more than anything else, despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief, as Psalm 53 says. He was indeed wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His bruise has health been given to us.

What is the intercession of the Lord which is spoken of when it says, "He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors?" The root meaning of the word is to "pass between," -giving the idea of one who comes between two adversaries. The dictionary definition is "to act between two parties with a view to reconciling differences." (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary).

Think of a loving mother who shows love to her little child. He accepts the love, and that is their wonderful bond. But at times he acts from anger or wilfulness. Then what does she do? She reasons with him, showing him what is wrong with his behaviour, and how to become a loving person again. That "reasoning" is intercession -coming between the child and the unhappiness which his wilfulness will bring upon him. She uses "truth," and truth intercedes for that child, showing him how to escape unhappiness.

There was no need for intercession while humankind was good, for there was no rift between

God and people. But when evil arose, then there was separation, and that was very bad -for us. After all, our only chance of happiness was through conjunction with the Lord.

From His standpoint, there was no need of intercession. For He is Divine love, and love always intercedes of itself. When there is division, love always seeks to bridge differences, overlook the mistakes of the past, and forge a unit once more. The Lord's love continually intercedes on our part, making excuses, pleading for us, seeking to forgive and overlook our faults, and lead us back to the happiness we are fleeing.

There is intercession in all love. This is beautifully described in the Arcana Coelestia: "As regards intercession, the case is this. There is intercession in all love, consequently in all mercy; for mercy is of love. That he who loves, or who feels compassion, continually intercedes, can be seen from examples. A husband who loves his wife, wishes her to be received kindly by others, and to be treated well; he does not say this in express terms, but continually thinks it, consequently is in silence continually entreating it, and interceding for her" (AC 8573). Because he loves her, he wants her to be happy, thus well received, in whatever company she comes. Gently, from love, he is hoping for and guiding towards this. It does not show itself unless she is somehow not well received, and then he actively intercedes for, and pleads for her. A wife does the same for her husband.

The Lord's infinite love intercedes for us all the time. If we make mistakes, He forgives. This is what happened with the human race. People sinned, and the Lord offered forgiveness, and the hand of love. Yet time and again it was struck aside, and people plunged further and further away from the Divine love until it seemed that there was total separation. People didn't want what the Lord had to offer. They didn't want His love and the priceless gifts it brought. They despised them.

Therefore the Lord sought a new approach -a new form of intercession. Where love is refused, He intercedes through truth. Truth is the intercessor -and the Lord on earth, who taught Divine truth and therefore is Divine truth -was the intercessor, the medium through whom fallen people could return to the Divine love.

The Lord on earth taught the way of truth. He came down to earth and built a bridge across that chasm. He built the way of truth. He taught on earth, and in His Holy Scriptures, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the New Word: He taught people how to come back to heaven. He took upon Himself and fought and conquered every evil state which was threatening us, thus forever commanding obedience and servility from hell. And He showed the way out of every evil state there is -the way of truth.

His truth is the mediator between humankind and the Divine love. When people sin, and bring misery upon themselves, and the threat of judgment, the Divine truth acts as a mediator. It says: "You have sinned, and to every sin there is a punishment. But here is how you may escape eternal unhappiness. Follow this path, and you can return to your God." Every truth is a pathway leading to the Divine love. Each teaching in the Word comes between humankind and the judgment of evil, pleads our cause, shows us a way out of hell.

The Lord was born on earth solely to provide a path to heaven innumerable paths -for each soul that ever will be born in His creation. The ways of the Divine truth are His intercession on behalf of fallen humankind. As He suffered on earth, so at times He suffers rejection at the hands of most of us -in the quietness of our hearts. But still He intercedes, and finds ways for us. There is no day in our lives when we cannot turn. "I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, according to His loving kindness. For He said, 'Surely they are My people, children who will not lie.' So He became their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them, all the days of old" (Isaiah 63:7-9). Amen.

Intelligent Design and Scientific Snake Bite

by Rev Don Rose

The Bible tells of a time in the wilderness journey when people suffered deadly serpent bites. The cure was effected by raising a bronze serpent on a pole. People who looked up at it were healed. As we read in Numbers (chapter 21) "And so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived."

Jesus recalls that "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness". (John 3) The serpent can symbolize our natural senses, what we can see and hear and touch. This is good. But what if the serpent gets fixated on what is merely of the earth? "Upon your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust." (Genesis 3:14)

What if a person gets to the point of not believing in anything he cannot see with his eyes or touch with his hands? Will he deny the existence of love? Will he deny wisdom? The denial can have an element of arrogance. In pride one could say, "I have studied science and looked through the finest microscopes, I do not see God."

There was a man who dedicated most of his life to bringing faith to people who were in danger of losing it. He wrote books to heal spiritual outlook "lest such a spirit of denial, which especially prevails with those who have much worldly learning should also infest and corrupt the simple in heart and the simple in faith."

This was Emanuel Swedenborg. What was the remedy he proposed for those who negativity gravitated towards atheism? Having been a scientist before being a theologian, he said that one can take the very same data which some have looked at in a downward fashion. Yes, take those same things and lift them up and open your eyes to wisdom.

People speak of "intelligent design." Swedenborg frequently talked of "wisdom" in the created universe. He says to take some object of nature. "Examine it with a good microscope, and you will see wonderful things; while the interiors that you do not see are still more wonderful. Observe the order in its development . . . If you are willing to think spiritually, which you can do if you wish, will you not see wisdom here?"

The power of a growing thing is “not from the seed, nor from the sun of the world, which is merely fire, but in the seed from God the Creator whose wisdom is infinite.”

Some in their thinking have “looked downward toward the earth, and not upward toward heaven.” They see no love and no wisdom, and they say to themselves, “What is a thing that you do not see? Is it anything?”

Swedenborg recounts wonders of animal behaviour, how bees gather honey, how birds have amazing knowledge. Who could design all this? “No one can do this unless he be wise; and no one but God, whose wisdom is infinite can so give order and form to the universe”. (Divine Love and Wisdom 356)

Science instructors do well to stick to the facts and let the students evaluate theories without undue influence from the teacher. Well, I never taught science, but I have taught religion, and my best advice is to lift up your eyes with affirmation. Behold the wisdom in what you see.

This article was originally published in The Intelligencer, a newspaper in the Philadelphia area and is republished here because the topic has been a current issue in the news media in Sydney in recent months.

More History

In our November Newsletter we left Rev Richard Morse and Miss Mora White at the Thirteen General Assembly in London in August 1928. Mr Morse was speaking to the clergy about the Hurstville Society and how Miss White was travelling on to Bryn Athyn to train as a teacher so that when she returned to Australia she would start a New Church Day School in Hurstville.

As this is the December edition our excerpts this month will have a Christmas flavour. Mr Morse has returned from his trip and Miss Annie Taylor, who has taken on extra work now that Miss White is away, writes for New Church Life (NCL).

NCL 1929 – April The Christmas activities were varied this year [1928]. Our tableaux were given on the Sunday evening before Christmas, small children being chosen for the characters. It was advertised as a Children's Service, the parents being invited; and although there is a general exodus to the beaches and health resorts at the Christmas vacation, we nevertheless had a larger attendance than at any previous ones; and it was inspiring to hear our little church building resound with Christmas hymns.

At the end of a short service, two tableaux were shown, the first representing Mary and Joseph in the stable scene. A very artistic stable, with thatched roof, was erected in the church, and two children, aged nine and ten years, represented Joseph and Mary in characteristic costumes, very soft and pretty in tone, also appropriate. They looked beautiful. The other tableau represented the three wise men approaching the stable, over which was the star, while the church was in semi-darkness. Before the curtain was drawn for the first tableau, ten little girls in white dresses, and with white wreaths in their hair, sang "Holy Night." For the second one, all the Sunday School children sang "From the Eastern Mountains." Mr. Morse's address during the service treated of the Advent.

On Christmas night, the Christmas tree, loaded with gifts, presented an attractive sight for young and old. There were seventy presents to be distributed, many having been made by the children. Owing to the generosity of members, friends and children, some nice presents were displayed. All the teachers and officers of the Sunday School received gifts from the parents of the children.

We have recently added to our church property, Mr. Morse having extended the lot by about 100 feet; he has also added an extra block, 64'x100', adjacent to the church property. A portion of his own land is being made into a tennis court for the use of the church people, and for the school which we hope to have in the near future. A. T. We read later that: a tennis court [was constructed] at the end of Mr. Morse's ground, and opposite the portion recently bought for a playground.

NCL 1929 – June Miss M. White, who has been our organist, and a teacher in the Sunday School, and who is now being prepared at the Academy Schools to teach the day school which we plan to open on her return, is prolonging her stay in Bryn Athyn for another twelve months. We were disappointed at her not returning as first arranged, but Bishop de Charms considered it necessary that she remain for a longer preparation, in view of the many difficulties that will be encountered in the early beginnings of a New Church school.

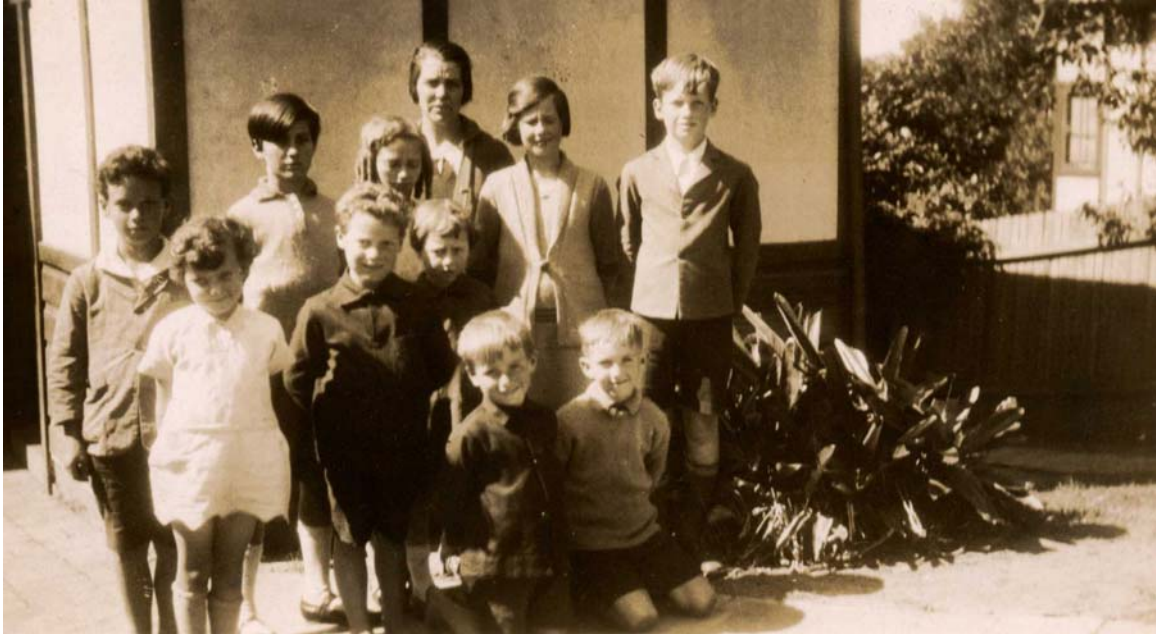
A. T.

NCL 1930 – March Here is a little bit of history about our long term member Tom Taylor and his sister Nell, mother of Gai Kennedy. We read: Two little children, Tommy and Nellie, . . . used to relate at home every Sunday what they were taught in Sunday School. This aroused their parents' interest, and Mr. Taylor, who had been a chorister in the Church of England in London, but who had given up all church affiliations on account of its irrational teaching, as well as the questionable lives of some of its adherents, began to attend our services, and took charge of the singing . . . He and his wife are now regular participants in all our activities . . . So grateful are Mr. and Mrs. Taylor for and to the Church that in the porch of their new home [two doors down from the church], Mr. Taylor, who is a tiler, has made a panel in which Bryn Athyn reappears in Australia. The name is formed of white tiles, having a frame composed of purple and dark red tiles. It is seen quite plainly from the street. R. M.

NCL 1930 – October Miss Annie Taylor travels to Bryn Athyn for the Fourteenth General Assembly to join Miss Mora White and they return together. . . . glorious weather greeted Miss Annie Taylor and Miss Mora White on their return from America on Friday morning, August the 15th. Anyone who has entered Sydney Heads in the early morning of a perfect day, and, as the ship slowly winds its course toward the city, has looked upon the ever varying beauty of what is perhaps the most beautiful harbor in the world, will realize to some degree the sensations experienced by the two travelers at their home-coming. R. M.

NCL 1931 – February The first New Church day school came into being at Hurstville on Tuesday, October 7th, 1930, -a date that may be deemed important to the New Church historian a century hence. The distinction of being the first pupils is held by five children, -Nellie and Tommy Taylor, Betty Adams, Fred and Theodore Kirschstein, whose ages range down from 12 1/2 to 7 years. Alwyn Kirschstein and Lois Joice Scheers, both 5 years of age, have since increased the roll to seven. R. M.

NCL 1932 – March *The Day School, with its complement of twelve children under Miss White's able tuition, had its first full-year celebration on December 17th [1931]. The many and various articles of handcraft that were displayed on tables and walls at the break-up celebration caused much surprise and pleasure. . . . What might be regarded as the principal item on the program was the Pastor's presentation of an ornate certificate to Nellie Clara Taylor (13 last May 17), who had passed sixth grade. [NB. This certificate was in the archive display at our 100th Anniversary in July this year.]*



Day School with teacher Mora White in early 1931. Pictured on the far left is Theo Kirsten. On the right at the back are Nellie and Tommy Taylor

On the evening following, the children of the Sunday School received their prizes, which were disposed among the leaves and branches of a graceful and tall gum tree, illuminated with many small candles. After the children had danced round the tree several times, admiring it, and each wondering which of the presents it would have, Father Christmas appeared in quite orthodox fashion with long white beard and moustache, to give every successful child his or her present from the tree.

It was then that a minor tragedy occurred. Mr. T. R. Taylor, who personated Father Christmas, being clean shaven, was inexperienced regarding the vagaries of a long beard; and when about to remove a present from the tree, accompanied by one of his little jokes, he was not aware that the lower end of the beard had come in contact with a candle. The fuel was surprisingly sympathetic, and instantly his head and shoulders were enveloped in flame; but almost as instantly it was extinguished by Mrs. Adams, who threw a coat around Mr. Taylor's neck. The only effect left was a slight injury to the eyebrow. It may not be certain that Mr. Taylor regards the shock - which it certainly was - as an indication that his personation savored more of the Old Church, which believes in literal fire, and that he had lost himself, for the time being, in his character; for I know that my friend really believes that, as soon as regeneration begins, from that

moment progress towards eternal youth begins. To grow old in heaven is to grow young, and continually to advance towards the spring-time of life. The Father Christmas of the New Church, giving presents to children, is an angel in the bloom of vigorous youth, having a well-trimmed beard.

RICHARD MORSE.

Message from Bishop Peter and Lisa Buss

To our many dear friends in Australasia,

Lisa and I want to thank you very warmly for all your kindness to us over the last eleven weeks. We feel we have cemented many friendships and made some new ones. Our stay with you contains a host of wonderful memories which we will treasure. It is a privilege indeed to serve a church where we can have special bonds with people such as you.

With much affection, Peter and Lisa

January Arrangements

As decided at the last Society meeting there will be **no church services on st and th 8 January** due to many of the congregation attending the Summer Camp on Phillip Island in Victoria. Rev Erik and Lynn-Del Sandstrom will also be attending the camp.

Please note that as has been regular practice in past years there will be no newsletter in January but there will be a calendar with some news notes of items of importance for the month.

News Notes

As Christmas approaches please consider donating some Christmas fare in the **Exodus Foundation's** basket in the front of Baringa. Please do it soon so we can have a full basket with something worthwhile for collection in early December for those less fortunate than ourselves. Instead of food you could also donate a toy but at Christmas time the Exodus Foundation specify the toy must be a new one which they can use as a gift for a child.

Tom and **Shirley Taylor** continue to be in our hearts as they soldier on. Shirley has a forthcoming knee operation and while she is recovering from this Tom will go into respite care. We pray that all will go well for them.

Congratulations to **Michelle Heldon** who has been awarded the Friends of the National Art School second year prize for painting. Michelle also starred in the National Art School's production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* playing the parts of Flute and Thisbe. A large contingent of her friends attended to give her great support.

Welcome to Rev Erik and Lynn-Del Sandstrom

We are very happy to announce that Rev Erik Sandstrom and his wife Lynn-Del will be with us from 9th December until mid February. Please join us for a **Pot Luck lunch** on **Sunday 11 December** after church to welcome them. *Bring something to share for lunch.* As Christmas will be only two weeks away we will be incorporating some **carol singing** on this occasion.

Also please note that you are welcome to join the **Roseville Carols by Candlelight** on **Sunday 18th December** at 7.30 pm.

December Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Sam Johnson** (1st), **Gai Kennedy** (2nd), Beryl Laidley (14th), **Tom Taylor** (15th), Ken Horner (16th), Patricia Walsh (19th), Kristen Johnson (29th)

Religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do what is good

(Doctrine of Life 8)

The New Church is an international organization of people striving to improve their conscious relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, the one God who rules heaven and earth.

We extend a warm welcome to everyone, and invite you to take what you like and return it freely. We use the Bible and the Heavenly Doctrine revealed by the Lord and published by Emanuel Swedenborg to guide us in our lives, especially in our relationships. We freely share our love and understanding with each other, and try to give one another support in our spiritual journeys.

Temporarily the Hurstville Society is without a **Pastor**. During this period the Society will be served by lay leaders and visiting preachers.

Worship Services are held each Sunday at 10:00 AM. **Sunday School** is held concurrently with the worship service (prior notice required).

Young People's Group is held once a month in conjunction with the Young People's Group at the New Church at 2 Shirley St, Roseville.

A tea and social in conjunction with **discussion** meets on the 1st Friday of each month (January excepted) beginning at 7 00 pm. This will be conducted by visiting ministers when available or lay led as appropriate.

Bible Study and **Discussion Classes** previously held midweek have been suspended until further notice.

The Swedenborg Bookroom, at 22 Dudley Street, Penshurst, contains books by and about Emanuel Swedenborg for sale or loan. It is open by appointment.

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Call or come at anytime.