

29th September 2020

Paper

**“If all the earth were paper white, and all the sea were ink,
‘Twere not enough for me to write as my poor heart doth think.”**

John Lyly, If all the earth were paper white

I've tried reading books and newspapers on electronic devices, but I don't like it. I miss the pleasure of turning a page and feeling the paper. I love writing letters, and I refuse to let emails be my only source of communication. So, with a fountain pen, attractive cards and quality paper, writing to people is something I enjoy. I'm old enough to remember being taught cursive writing with a pen with a nib, and an inkwell in my desk. I was once the "ink monitor" in my class, a most prestigious position!

But ... the environmental impact of using paper is huge. Discarded paper and cardboard make up roughly 26% of solid municipal waste in landfill sites. Worldwide consumption of paper has risen by 400% in the past 40 years. 35% of harvested trees are used for paper manufacture, meaning that deforestation is a major environmental problem.

Where we live, the Council recycles waste paper. But that leads to another issue. The de-inking process during paper recycling is a source of chemical emissions in the effluent, so much so that the *European Recovered Paper Council* has developed a "de-inkability scorecard" so that printed paper products which are best for recycling can be identified.

So, it looks like I'm going to have to compromise! I'll read my News and do my *Guardian* Cryptic Crossword on-line, but I'll also make sure all my paper-products are appropriately recycled. I'll still buy books, but I'll also make sure the books I've finished go to a *Christian Aid* Book Sale as a contribution to their work. I'll still write letters, but I'll try to keep them short – for you never know what their "de-inkability score" might be.

With the 16th century writer, John Lyly, "my poor heart doth think". Environmental issues are a major concern. Even the use of paper and ink, it appears, has to be considered if our planet is to survive – so that future generations can still enjoy writing and reading about our fragile world.

A prayer for today

Creator God, you have given us a world to enjoy and care for.

Help us to be good stewards of this precious gift. Amen

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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