

E-READ

The General Conference of the New Church **Articles and Letters**

Contributions

If you would like to contribute a letter or article to future issues of e-Read, please send it via email to :

gemma.mclean@gcnc.org.uk

Please note that publication is at the discretion of our Spiritual Leadership.

Donations

E-News and E-Read are provided completely free of charge. If you would like to make a donation to help the General Conference of the New Church maintain these services, please visit:

<http://gcnc.org.uk/donations>

Recycling and Waste

by *David Friend*

“A much more fundamental recycling has, however, been going on since time immemorial - the recycling of knowledge.”

We are constantly being reminded that we should be recycling more than we do and that, if we continue to throw recyclable materials away into waste - which ends up in land-fill - at the rate we do at present, the natural resources of the globe will run out. We have taken on board the increasing clamour of the likes of Sir David Attenborough to reduce our use of plastic, as it is poisoning the world's oceans and is increasingly to be found contaminating our food supplies. But what about other recycling?

Even if we accept the pleading of the experts and try to put pressure on manufacturers to reduce their use of plastic products, we are left with the problem of waste disposal. We may accept a moral responsibility to reduce our throw-away habits and adopt a greater use of recycling, but the situation doesn't seem to improve. Instead of hills of assorted waste, we have mountains of recyclable plastic which nobody seems to know how to dispose of without polluting the atmosphere. The consumption of left-over food seems to be considered old-fashioned by some folk, but using 'left-overs' in both family and commercial situations should be the norm, not the exception. Recycling appears to be a better option than just throwing things away.

Since 1967, the year Dr Christian Barnard, managed to perform the first successful heart transplant, the recycling of living tissue has become almost commonplace. Medical

science and surgical techniques now allow us to recycle parts of our bodies - and that's a good thing; isn't it? At least something is being done for the benefit of other people.

A much more fundamental recycling has, however, been going on since time immemorial - the recycling of knowledge. Mums and dads have, for centuries been teaching their offspring what they need to know to survive in the great big world outside. Universal education for children is provided by the majority of the world's nations these days. Those who want to learn are encouraged to use the information available in the recycling centres - libraries, schools, colleges and, increasingly, modern technology, in the development of computers. The skills and knowledge of humanity is growing all the time on the back of the recycling of information passed on from one generation to the next.

But what of life skills? What about the reasons for life itself? What about spiritual matters? Here again recycling is the primary source of information. Parents can only go so far with their offspring in these matters. Experiments are the basis of all learning, and this is true of spiritual matters. We can all read what other people have had to say - Jesus was primarily a teacher and left us a guidebook to help us learn. But it is still as we apply those teachings to our lives that the power of the recycling comes to the fore. Mum and dad always said that if you put your hand in the fire it will get burnt - and it's true. Lessons like this are hard, but we still need to try for ourselves to prove they are right. With spiritual matters it seems to be impossible to prove anything at all - we have to take it on trust. That is called 'faith' - and Christians have to have it. But it can only become yours if you test it for yourself and learn from the results. You are then equipped to be a recycler yourself.

But where does waste fit in? Our Lord, in his infinite wisdom, has provided for that as well. Even the hardest and most durable materials break down in the end - some of which may take millions of years - but processes within the natural world are designed, in time, to dispose of all of what we waste. Our responsibility is to ensure that the human race is not engulfed by the increasing piles of waste before nature has had a chance to do its work.

Do we have other sorts of waste as well? Intellectual waste, for instance? "The phlogiston theory is a superseded scientific theory that postulated that a fire-like element called phlogiston is contained within combustible bodies and is released during combustion." (Wikipedia) I have a book which presents the phlogiston theory as fact - it was written in the late 1800s. This might now be considered as 'intellectual waste', but it nevertheless provided humanity with the platform for later scientists to find what is now considered to be the truth of the matter. Such is an example of how even 'intellectual waste' is used to advance the knowledge and understanding of modern mankind. Who knows what our understanding of the natural world will be like in 100 years from now?

What about spiritual waste? Is there such a thing? As we've seen above, waste to one generation can be a stepping stone to greater understanding for later seekers. It can be the same on a personal and individual basis. A specific temptation can be your problem today but, if you resist it, you make spiritual progress and the temptation, in that form, may be considered to be a waste product. It has, however, given you a stepping stone on the road of life - one step nearer to heaven.