

Proverbs 27:9, “The Biblical View of Smoking”

**First preached, 11/29/98 PM Worship (Updated 4/23/08)
Sharon Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Rev. Dr. Jeffrey
K. Boer, D.Min.**

During the last three evening sermons, we’ve been studying what the Bible has to say about the Christian’s use of alcohol. We’ve been looking at this question in the context of our study of the Westminster Larger Catechism’s exposition of the 6th Commandment, **“Thou shalt not kill.”** In that exposition, the Catechism lists, among other things, under the *duties required* in the 6th Commandment, “a *sober* use of...*drink.*” And under the *sins forbidden* in the 6th Commandment, it lists, among other things, “*immoderate* use of...*drink.*”

We looked at the Scriptures and also cited historical and confessional support that defends the Christian’s moderate use of alcohol, both in everyday life and in the Lord’s Supper.

Up until now, we’ve been focusing on the Biblical view of the Christian’s use of *alcohol*, but many of the same principles could be applied in discussing the Christian’s use of *tobacco* products. The biggest difference, obviously, is that the use of tobacco products is nowhere *commanded* in Scripture while the use of wine is commanded in the Lord’s Supper. While the use of tobacco is not commanded in Scripture, its use is not *forbidden* either. In fact, there is both Biblical and scientific evidence that would indicate that smoking tobacco, in moderation, though not *required*, is *consistent* with the teachings of Scripture and *consistent* with godly, Biblical Christianity.

The pertinent sections of the Westminster Larger Catechism Q. & A. #136 are as follows:

Q. 136. *What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment?*

A. The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are [among other things listed], *...immoderate use of meat, drink, labour, and recreations...and whatever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.*

This implies, of course, that Christians should be concerned for the *health* implications of drinking alcohol, smoking, eating various foods, and participating in various activities as well. But when the Westminster Larger Catechism says that the 6th Commandment forbids “whatever...tends to the destruction of the life of any,” we must take care that we don’t go overboard in interpreting the meaning of that phrase.

For example: Is it a sin to live in the city because the air pollution there is significantly higher than in the country and would, therefore, “tend to the destruction” of one’s life? Is it a sin to put sugar on your corn flakes in the morning, since sugar is apparently not very nutritious and may leech vitamins from your system and give you cavities in your teeth? Or is it a sin to add a teaspoon of sugar to your coffee? And if eating sugar is a sin, then drinking Coke or other sodas with nearly 8 teaspoons of sugar (in the form of high fructose corn syrup) in every can must be a *cardinal* sin! And that’s not to mention the carbonated water, and various other chemicals that all “tend to the destruction of one’s life,” at least to some degree.

And if we’re going to call smoking a sin because it tends, at least to some degree, to the destruction of one’s

life, then do we not have to outlaw a *lot* of other things as well?

Actually, when it comes right down to it, there's a health risk, to one degree or another, associated with almost everything we do! Driving a car on a busy expressway isn't exactly risk free, as we all know! You're constantly exposing yourself to the risk of an accident. In taking an airplane flight to Atlanta, you're exposing yourself to the risk of a plane crash, not to mention the possible exposure to all those germs that are being recycled through the air circulation system of that plane in flight. When you eat raw or rare seafood or raw hamburger or raw eggs, you're exposing yourself to at least some risk of hepatitis B or mad cow disease or salmonella poisoning.

My point is that I don't believe that the Westminster Assembly intended for that phrase, "whatever else *tends* to the destruction of the life of any," to be taken in an *absolute* and *unqualified* sense. It's talking about things that are an obvious and serious, immediate danger to one's health or life, such as playing Russian roulette, or mainlining cocaine, or sniffing glue. There are many jobs, many foods and drinks, and many pleasures which carry with them at least a *moderate* risk to our health and well-being. Are all such things sinful for Christians? I think not.

The question I want to deal with first of all, is whether or not smoking tobacco can be classified as a substantial enough health risk to make it a sin? We're bombarded today with anti-smoking campaigns by various cancer organizations and by political lobbyists. After all, every pack of cigarettes and most packages of pipe and cigar tobacco in America now contain warnings that say something along these lines: "Pipe and smoking tobaccos and cigars contain/produce chemicals known to the state of

California to cause cancer, and birth defects or other reproductive harm."

Now I believe that smoking tobacco *immoderately* may increase the risks of certain kinds of cancers. That fact needs to be *weighed*, however, with at least three other facts:

1. First of all, some studies show that eating margarine, peanuts, and many other foods increases the risks of certain kinds of cancer. So does fluoridated and chlorinated water. So margarine and peanuts and most tap water, along with many other foods, also contain chemicals known to the state of California (and to all the other states as well) to cause cancer. In fact, *most* of the things we eat and drink every day, including our fluoridated drinking water, contain chemicals known to cause cancer, *if consumed in certain amounts*.

And that brings us to the second fact that needs to be weighed:

2. Smoking doesn't *always* cause cancer. The question is, "In what *quantity* does smoking become dangerous?" Does *all* smoking cause cancer? No. Does *really heavy chain smoking all your life* cause cancer? Sometimes yes, *sometimes no*. Why? Nobody knows for sure.

3. The third fact that needs to be weighed is that smoking tobacco has been found, by some studies, to have certain *beneficial effects* on health which need to be weighed against the *negative risks* to health.

In various scientific studies that I have read, for example, smokers have been shown to have:

*50% less cancer in general (those who *inhale cigarettes immoderately* have an increased risk of

lung cancer, but many *other* types of cancer risk are actually *reduced* by smoking).

*Even in the case of lung cancer, Japanese men, who are twice as likely to smoke as American men, not only live longer but also, remarkably, have lower rates of lung cancer than Americans.

*In fact, there's a stronger relation between medical radiation, such as X-rays and lung cancer, than there is between smoking and lung cancer.

*Smokers have 50% less Alzheimer's disease.

*Smokers have 50% less Parkinson's disease.

*Smokers have 50% less prostate cancer.

*Smokers have 50% less uterine cancer (or endometrial cancer).

*Smokers have 50% less ulcerative colitis.

*Smokers have 30% less colon cancer.

*Smokers have 5 times less osteoarthritis.

*One study of 300 women showed that those smoking a pack a day for four years had a 54% decrease in breast cancer over those who did not smoke at all.

*Thyroid cancer is significantly less common in women who smoke.

*Moderate smokers have less gum recession than nonsmokers. Smokers are actually at lower risk from gum disease than non-smokers.

*Nicotine prior to major surgery reduces memory loss due to that surgery.

*Nicotine stopped the growth of antibiotic resistant tuberculosis in laboratory tests, even in small amounts.

*Smoking lowers rates of sarcoidosis and allergic alveolitis (both of these are lung disorders).

*Smokers have less acne.

*Smokers suffer less obesity.

*Tourette's syndrome improved within 24 hours while wearing a nicotine patch.

*Attention Deficit Disorder patients showed dramatic improvements as well with nicotine.

*Smoking has been shown to stimulate alertness, dexterity, and cognitive capacity (Which might be one reason why the Synod of Dordrecht, which met in the Netherlands in 1618-1619 to discuss the doctrines of Calvinism, allegedly gave free cigars and beer to all the commissioners during their deliberations!).

*Smoking can also counter both depression and excitability.

*Smoking inhibits blood clotting, thereby dissolving harmful clots in the arteries and relieving ischemic heart disease. Smokers also have a much better chance to survive, heal, and do well after heart angioplasty.

*Nicotine produces new blood vessel growth around blocked arteries.

*Smoking by women during pregnancy has been shown to significantly decrease the risk of high blood pressure, eclampsia, Down's syndrome, and many other conditions related to pregnancy.

*Smoking by men was shown to cause a lowering of cholesterol.

*Children of smokers have a lower incidence of asthma.

*Study after study failed to find *any* consistent, positive correlation between smoking and musculoskeletal birth defects. In fact, many studies showed a negative correlation – that is, smoking

during pregnancy could result in *fewer* defects than not smoking.

*Studies have shown that nicotine acts as an analgesic, or painkiller, in humans.

Now I realize that there are many scientific studies which purportedly show smoking to be unhealthy. But all scientific studies have to be judged on the basis of logic, and consistency, and bias, and other standards of scientific accuracy. And *no* scientific studies have the authoritative weight of the infallible Scriptures. So all should be taken with a grain of salt.

What about *side stream smoke*? Are smokers endangering the health of those around them when they smoke? This theory has been one of the major weapons of the smoke-phobia crowd to promote their political agenda against smoking.

But a study by Drs. Gori and Mantel in 1991 showed that side stream smoke is drastically diluted compared to directly inhaled smoke. Dr. Gori writes, “For the average environmental tobacco smoke exposed individual, this estimate translates into an annual dose equivalent of far less than the mainstream smoke of one cigarette evenly dispersed over a 12-month period.”

Dr. William Campbell Douglass II, MD, voted “Doctor of the Year” by The National Health Federation, recently published his new book, “The Health Benefits of Tobacco: The Surprising Therapeutic Effects of Moderate Smoking and Second Hand Smoke: A Smoker’s Paradox” [Rhino Publishing, S.A., World Trade Center, Republic of Panama, 2004]. In this book, Dr. Douglass marshals scientific study after scientific study showing the *health benefits of smoking in moderation*. He says, “It has been

known for over ten years that passive smoking does not cause lung cancer. The UN has suppressed this sensational information because this falsehood is the only effective weapon they have to bludgeon smokers into quitting” [p. 154].

Dr. Douglass also writes, “One study, *funded by the National Cancer Institute*, found that nonsmokers have *no increased risk of lung cancer* as a result of exposure to secondhand smoke during childhood, in the workplace or from living with a pack-a-day smoker for as many as 40 years” [p. 157].

He later writes, “Another study, conducted by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and funded by the World Health Organization, similarly concluded that secondhand smoke poses no significant health risk” [p. 157].

Economically speaking, tobacco is THE most valuable non-food cash crop in the world, and a major contributor to the global economy. No other crop creates as much employment per acre of cultivated land as tobacco.

I’m not going to take the time in this sermon to cite all of the supporting documentation for those statements, but I’ll attach them to the e-mail version and I’ll also make them available to anyone who wants a copy of them. Many more resources can be found in Dr. Douglass’ book as well. [This book can be found at: <http://www.rhinopublish.com/>]

Most of these studies *included cigarette smokers*, many of whom would probably not be considered to be *moderate* smokers, and most of whom *inhale* the tobacco smoke. Most of the *negative* health risks associated with smoking tobacco are associated with *heavy smoking* and *inhaling*. And yet, these studies seem to show that even heavy smokers derive certain *health benefits* from smoking

along with the *increased health risks* of certain other kinds of diseases.

Moderate smoking carries with it *far less health risks* than *heavy* smoking, according to certain studies that have shown that 5-10 cigarettes can be quite easily assimilated over the course of a day with *relatively little risk*.

Heavier cigarette smoking is related to increased risk of *emphysema* (which takes @ 30 years of smoking to develop). And *heavier* smoking is also related to increased risks of *lung cancer* and certain other diseases. But even these risks are *5 times lower* in *cigar* and *pipe* smokers *who do not inhale*.

A slight increase in the risk of mouth or throat cancer may be related to the fact that many “chew” their cigars while smoking them. So overall, according to these studies, it’s apparently quite safe, and even *beneficial*, in some ways, to your health, to smoke several cigars a day, especially if you don’t inhale and you don’t “chew.” The point of all this is to say that the *health benefits* of *moderate smoking* appear to *substantially outweigh* the *health risks*. Even cigarette smoking appears to be fairly low risk, when done in *moderation*, since *moderate* smoking doesn’t carry with it all of those higher risks that are often associated with *heavy* smoking. It should also be noted that taking vitamin supplements, such as vitamin C, D, E, A, folic acid, and others, has been shown to further reduce the health risks of smoking.

Why do I cite all of this medical stuff in a sermon, when I’m not a medical doctor, and when we know that medicine, unlike Scripture, is a very inexact science?

I do so because, as Christians, we’re responsible to weigh the results of science and of medicine in making certain decisions in our lives. We have to apply the

Scriptural principles associated with the 6th Commandment, “**Thou shalt not kill,**” *taking into account* the best scientific and medical knowledge we have available today, but also recognizing that the Scriptures must be our *ultimate, infallible* guide to ethics.

I’m arguing that the medical information we have available today does not automatically outlaw all smoking as a sinful violation of the 6th Commandment. Just because some studies show that smoking “is bad for you,” that doesn’t mean all smoking is a sin any more than drinking Coke is a sin. There are plenty of studies showing that Coke “is bad for you.” Many other studies have shown that fluoridated and chlorinated water is bad for you. In making any such decisions we must weigh the risks with the benefits and the enjoyments.

To move on to another argument, some have said that Christians should exhibit “self-control” and abstain from such “worldly pleasures” as smoking. But if abstaining from legitimate God-given pleasures and activities is how we are to demonstrate Biblical “self-control,” then why not abstain from *all* pleasures? And if abstaining from all God-given pleasures is NOT the way to demonstrate Biblical self-control, then what’s the point of abstaining? Why not *use* such things *Biblically* and *in moderation* as the Scriptures would encourage? Isn’t that also demonstrating self-control?

Ecclesiastes 5:18-6:2 says, “**Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him – for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work – this is a gift of God.**”

He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart. I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men: God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God *does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless* [or “vapor”], a grievous evil.”

The book of **Ecclesiastes** contains numerous similar passages, indicating that the enjoyment of the various God-given pleasures of life is not sinful.

“What about the example you’re setting for your children?” some might ask.

Well, what example *should* we set for our children? Asking that question betrays an automatic assumption that there’s something *wrong* or *sinful* about smoking. What example are you setting for your children when you drive a car? Well, hopefully, you’re setting a *godly* example of *responsible driving*.

As we saw in the case of alcohol, *moderate, responsible* use is the normal, Biblical way to demonstrate responsibility and self-control. That’s not to say that it’s the only way – or that there are never Biblical reasons for abstaining from legitimate pleasures. But partaking of God’s good gifts in moderation *is* being a *good example* for your children, because you’re teaching them the *proper use* of these gifts of God. To argue for total abstinence from all alcohol and tobacco products may mean that you’re teaching your children that the “Fundamentalist” views of alcohol and tobacco are correct – that these good things of God are somehow evil or sinful *in themselves*. As Reformed Christians, we know they’re not.

In **I Timothy 4:1-8** and **Colossians 2:20-23**, Paul discusses these matters in quite dramatic terms. Instead of preaching “total abstinence,” Paul *warns against* those who preach “total abstinence.” He emphasizes that godliness does not come through “total abstinence” from things in God’s good creation. In fact, in **I Timothy 5:23**, Paul recommends that Timothy *stop “abstaining” and start drinking alcohol* (in moderation) for his *health*.

I now want to take a few minutes to show, from Scripture, that smoking is not *unnatural* for man, but that the Scriptures show that it’s fully consistent with his nature, being created in the *image of God*.

The Scriptures are clear that God appreciates the sweet-smelling incense or smoke of man’s sacrifices and prayers that are offered up unto Him. Of course, God is a Spirit and He doesn’t have a physical nose to smell things, but the Bible talks about God in human terms for the sake of man’s understanding, and the Bible indicates that *God enjoys nice smelling smoke*. If nice-smelling smoke is said to be pleasing to God, and if we’re created in His image, how then can smoking, in moderation, be evil?

In Isaiah’s vision of God in His temple in **Isaiah 6:3-4**, we read, “**And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.**”

Similarly, **Revelation 15:8** says, “**And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power...**”

I doubt very much that this cloud of smoke that filled the temple had a foul smelling odor. I’m sure it was a wonderful smelling smoke.

The point is this: If our God uses a cloud of sweet-smelling smoke in order to manifest His *presence* and in order to manifest His *glory*, it goes without saying then that smoke, in and of itself, is not evil. And smelling such smoke is not evil either.

Exodus 30:7-8 says, “**Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come.**”

This sweet-smelling incense or smoke was to *constantly* be offered up on the Lord’s altar. It was seen as good smoke. It’s called *fragrant* smoke. That’s the Hebrew word, “sam,” referring to “good smelling” smoke.

Psalms 141:2 says, “**May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.**”

And **Revelation 8:3-4** says, “**Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel’s hand.**”

It’s a *natural* thing, then, for man, *created in the image of God*, to enjoy the pleasing smell of aromatic incense and smoke. Since man is not an animal who has descended from other animals, but who was created in the image of God, we can’t argue that the desire to smell smoke is an “unnatural” desire, as some want to imply.

Now to our text, in **Proverbs 27:9**: This verse says, “**Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart.**”

“Incense” is nothing more than a substance that was *burned* to produce an aromatic, sweet-smelling *smoke*.

There were various kinds of incense, but all of them were *burned* for the nice smell of their *smoke*. Incense was even one of the three gifts mentioned in **Matthew 2:11** that were brought to Jesus by the Magi. It says, “**On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.**”

That incense was to be *burned* to create a nice smelling *smoke*. Jesus would have *inhaled* some of that *smoke*. That was not a sin. Inhaling nice smelling smoke is not a sin, at least not when done in moderation.

Cigars and cigarettes and pipe are all in the same category as incense. They’re *burned* for the nice smell they give. Just like the perfume and incense mentioned in our text, they “**bring joy to the heart.**”

Now I know some of you may say, “They don’t bring any joy to *my* heart! I can’t *stand* the smell of cigarettes or cigars.” Some of you may even be *allergic* to some kinds of smoke – just as some people are also allergic to various perfumes and other substances that are not sinful. Obviously, we must all be careful that we don’t wear heavy perfume around people that are allergic to it, if we can help it, and we shouldn’t smoke around people that are either allergic to smoke or who can’t stand the smell. In short, we should be courteous to those around us.

But that still doesn’t mean that smoking is a sin or that wearing perfume is a sin. We should also weigh the health risks *and benefits* of smoking. We should consider, according to the best of our knowledge, what is a *moderate* level of smoking, so that we’re not *immoderate* in our use of these good gifts of God. And as godly, Bible-believing Christians, we should give thanks to God for both wine and

aromatic smoke as well as for any other things that God has created to **“gladden the heart of man.”**

May God’s Name be praised for the good gifts He gives man to enjoy. And may He be praised especially for the good gift of His precious Son, Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us that we might have life abundant, even eternal life in Him! Jesus Christ is the embodiment of that fine wine that gladdens the heart of man! Jesus Christ is the embodiment of that sweet smelling incense that brings joy to the hearts of both God and man!

Amen!

=====
The following articles are appended for further study.
=====

The following article is written by Dr. William Campbell Douglass II, MD, a graduate of the University of Rochester, the Miami School of Medicine, and the Naval School of Aviation and Space Medicine. He's been named the National Health Federation's "Doctor of the Year." Here is a copy of his entire article RECOMMENDING cigar smoking FOR your health, published in the *Second Opinion* newsletter which he used to edit [July 1995 issue, pp. 4-7]. I'm reproducing the entire article so that you can see each statement he makes in the context of the rest of the article.

Eat Tobacco?

Dr. William Campbell Douglass II, MD

The American people have been worked into such a frenzy about cigarette smoke that people in Europe think we have gone completely off the deep end.

All of you know that I am absolutely opposed to cigarette smoking. I hate it! I'm particularly opposed to smoking in public places as it invades the space of others and not only irritates their eyes and breathing passages (including mine), but makes many of them a little crazy with paranoia.

Having cleared the smoke, I am now going to give you a report that will surprise you and, if you are an antismoking zealot, make your eyes bulge a little and cause black smoke to jet from your nostrils.

It has been reported from some of our best medical journals that cancer and Alzheimer's disease are 50 percent less frequent among smokers. It sounds like a man-bites-

dog story, but the reported case studies are quite impressive. These reports are not new – just ignored. The apparent protective effect of smoking was first reported 30 years ago. With their backs to the wall, I am surprised the tobacco industry hasn't promulgated these findings.

The International Journal of Epidemiology reported in 1991 that Alzheimer's disease was 50 percent less prevalent among cigarette smokers and the heavier the smoking, the less the risk.

Parkinson's disease, an affliction perhaps worse than Alzheimer's because the victim is trapped in a waxy state of semi-paralysis with his mind still functioning, is also 50 percent less common among smokers. (At least with Alzheimer's, you are unaware of your progressive deterioration into a new babyhood.)

Articles that appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine and the Journal of the American Medical Association over 10 years ago, reported a 50 percent less incidence of osteoarthritis. This degenerative disease is five times less common among smokers! This was documented by the federal government's "Health and Nutrition Examination Survey," the first report of its type.

Prostate cancer, the most common male neoplasm, was found to be 50 percent less common among smokers and, for women, the New England Journal of Medicine reported in 1985 that cancer of the uterus was also 50 percent less common among female smokers.

Even children's diseases, such as Tourette's syndrome (a bizarre neurological disorder) and attention deficit disorder have shown dramatic improvement with nicotine. (Can't you just see little Jane puffing away at the morning break?) The kids with Tourette's usually improved within 24 hours of application of a nicotine patch.

These findings are a striking contradiction to popular notions about the devastating effects of smoking. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that smoking causes emphysema and is related to other cancers such as cancer of the lung and even breast cancer.

What are we to make of all this? Should you start smoking at age 60 to prevent Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, prostate cancer, uterine cancer, osteoarthritis, colon cancer, and ulcerative colitis? The idea is, admittedly, preposterous. But, as Forbes magazine pointed out, the lung damage from smoking takes 30 years to develop – and at 90 you're not going to worry about it.

But perhaps there are alternatives to bad breath and brown-stained fingers. You could smoke a nice aromatic cigar (on the porch, of course) after lunch and supper. You don't have to, and shouldn't, inhale the smoke to get the nicotine effect; it will be absorbed from your mucous membranes. You can drink something cool while smoking your stogie, which will keep the weed from irritating your mucous membranes and you will still get the benefit of swallowing some of the nicotine.

Have I gone mad telling you this? If you think so, read the medical journals yourself. In 30 years of practice, I have noted that my cigar-smoking patients all led a long and healthy life. Churchill died at 90, H.L. Mencken lived to 75, and George Burns is still going strong at 99. All of them smoked cigars constantly from late childhood to the very end. None of these gentlemen were patients of mine, but I wish they had been, especially my two role models: Mencken and Burns.

There are other possibilities to enable you to get your ration of nicotine (assuming that is the beneficial agent in tobacco). You could smoke a pipe, chew tobacco (NOT

recommended, as chewing causes cancer of the mouth and tongue – and it doesn't take 30 years), or dip snuff like my great-grandmother Lucy Bell (who lived to the age of 99). Snuff-dipping is really messy and you would be an outcast for sure at the garden club and maybe even the pool hall.

You could even snort snuff powder. In the 18th century, it was quite fashionable to snort snuff. Hold your hand out with the palm sideways. Lift your thumb up to a vertical position. You will notice a depression at the base of the thumb. This is where the snuff was placed. Then, with the nose close, one sniffed it into the nasal passages (it was called sniffing, not snorting – gentlemen don't snort). In anatomy, this depression is called the snuff box.

I know all this sounds a bit ridiculous, but everything I've told you is true. However, I know you're not going to take up smoking in any form. Converting you to the foul weed is about as likely as getting a Muslim to turn Jewish – or vice versa.

For those of you who think the idea of smoking two cigars a day, or even one, is too much, and it will be for most people, and you won't smoke a pipe, dip or snort snuff, or chew tobacco, I've heard there's another way to get your nicotine – EAT the tobacco.

It has been reported that the tobacco leaf – raw, not cured as for cigarettes and cigars – is an excellent source of niacin and other nutrients and, of course, nicotine. It is said to be tasty in salads, but I haven't tried it. I'm not recommending that you eat tobacco-leaf salad as I haven't done enough research on it, yet. All I have at this point is an unsubstantiated rumor.

In the meantime, try the cigars if you can (1) overcome your aversion, (2) promise not to inhale (if Mr. Clinton can resist such temptation, so can you), and (3) take

the persecution from your family, your friends, and the smoke police.

[References: International Journal of Epidemiology, 1964; Journal of the American Medical Association, 1981; New England Journal of Medicine, 1983 and 1985; Forbes, July 4, 1994.]

=====
=====End of Second Opinion article=====

That last cited article from Forbes magazine is also attached below in full.

Thank you for smoking...?
(health benefits from smoking)

Authors: Brimelow, Peter
Citation: *Forbes*, July 4, 1994 v154 n1 p80(2)

Subjects: Smoking_Health aspects
Reference #: A15476256

=====
Abstract: Smoking cigarettes appears to have some physical benefits despite reports to the opposite. It may reduce the risks of developing diseases such as prostate cancer and endometrial cancer, in addition to the behavioral benefits.
=====

Full Text COPYRIGHT *Forbes* Inc. 1994

THE HANGPERSON'S NOOSE is unmistakably around the tobacco industry's neck. In Florida and Mississippi, state governments are attempting to force tobacco companies to pay some smoking-related health care

costs. In Washington, D.C., the Environmental Protection Agency has claimed that "secondhand smoke" is a significant risk for nonsmokers and the Food & Drug Administration is making noises about regulating nicotine as a drug. And recently the American Medical Association agreed, reasserting that nicotine is addictive. Smokers have already been driven from many workplaces into the street for a furtive puff. But further legal harassment, to the point of what an industry spokesman calls "backdoor prohibition," seems unstoppable.

Lost in this lynching frenzy: the fact that smoking might be, in some small ways, good for you.

Hold on now! Let's be clear: The Surgeon General has indeed determined that smoking is dangerous to your health. Lung cancer and cardiovascular diseases are highly correlated with cigarette consumption. Annual smoking-related deaths are commonly said to be over 400,000 (although critics say the number is inflated) [Actually, Dr. Douglass points out in his book that this number is a complete fabrication – JKB].

But so is driving automobiles dangerous to your health (over 40,000 deaths a year). Yet people do it, because it has rewards as well as risk. And they judge, as individuals, that the reward outweighs the risk.

This is called freedom.

Well, what are the rewards of cigarette smoking? Apart from intangible pleasure, the most obvious is behavioral. A battery of studies, such as those by British researcher D.M. Warburton, show that cigarettes, whatever their other effects, really do stimulate alertness, dexterity and cognitive capacity.

And alertness, dexterity, etc. can be useful. Such as when driving. Or flying – as Congress recognized when it

exempted airline pilots from the ban on smoking on domestic flights.

These behavioral benefits suggest an answer to the Great Tobacco Mystery: why almost a third of adult Americans continue to do something they are told, incessantly and insistently, is bad for them. (Duke University economist W. Kip Viscusi reported in his 1992 book, *Smoking: Making the Risky Decision*, that survey data show smokers, if anything, exaggerate the health danger of their habit.).

Smokers, according to numerous studies such as those by University of Michigan researchers Ovide and Cynthia Pomerleau, are different from nonsmokers. They tend toward depression and excitability. Current understanding is that nicotine is “amphoteric” – that is, it can act to counter both conditions, depending on how it is consumed. (Quick puffs stimulate, long drags calm.)

The implication is fascinating: A large part of the population seems to be aware of its significant although not pathological personality quirks, and to have discovered a form of self-medication that regulates them.

Of course, this explanation for the stubbornness of smokers is not as satisfying as what Washington prefers to believe: mass seduction by the wicked tobacco companies and their irresistible advertising. Nor would it justify huge rescue operations by heroic politicians and bureaucrats.

Beyond its behavioral effects, smoking seems also to offer subtler health rewards to balance against its undisputed risks:

* **Parkinson’s disease.** The frequency of this degenerative disorder of the nervous system among smokers appears to be half the rate among nonsmokers – an effect recognized by the Surgeon General as long ago as 1964.

* **Alzheimer’s disease.** Similarly, the frequency of this degenerative mental disorder has recently been found to be as much as 50% less among smokers than among nonsmokers – for example, by the 11 studies reviewed in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* in 1991.

* **Endometrial cancer.** There is extensive and long-standing evidence that this disease of the womb occurs as much as 50% less among smokers – as documented by, for example, a *New England Journal of Medicine* article back in 1985. The triggering mechanism appears to be a reduction in estrogen levels.

* **Prostate cancer.** Conversely, smoking seems to raise estrogen levels in men and may be responsible for what appears to be a 50% lower rate of prostate cancer among smokers, although this needs corroboration.

* **Osteoarthritis.** This degenerative disorder of bone and cartilage is up to five times less likely to occur among heavy smokers – as documented, for example, by the federal government’s first Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

* **Colon cancer, ulcerative colitis.** These diseases of the bowel seem to be about 30% and 50% less frequent among smokers – documented, for example, by articles in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1981 and 1983, respectively.

Other benefits that have been suggested for smoking: lower rates of sarcoidosis and allergic alveolitis, both lung disorders, and possibly even acne. Smokers are also lighter – ironic, because obesity is a leading cause of the cardiovascular disease that smoking is also supposed to exacerbate. So you could quit smoking and still die of a heart attack because of the weight you put on.

None of these health benefits is enough to persuade doctors to recommend occasional cigarettes, in the way that some now occasionally recommend a glass of wine.

But consider this theoretical possibility: Should 60-year-olds take up smoking because its protection against Alzheimer's is more immediate than its potential damage to the lungs, which won't show up for 30 years if at all?

A theoretical possibility – and likely to remain theoretical. Research into possible benefits of tobacco and nicotine is widely reported to be stymied by the absolutist moral fervor of the antismoking campaign.

Under the Carter Administration, the federal government abandoned its research into safer cigarettes in favor of an attack on all smoking. No effort is made to encourage smokers to switch to pipes and cigars, although their users' lung cancer and heart disease rates are five to ten times lower (somewhat offset by minor increases in mouth and throat cancers). There is no current support for studies of the marginal increase in danger for each cigarette smoked, although it appears the human system can clear the effects of three to five of the (much stronger) pre-1960 cigarettes, if dispersed across a day, with relatively little risk.

Instead, the extirpation of smoking has become another "moral equivalent of war" – as President Carter called the energy crisis in the 1970s, and as price and wage controls were viewed earlier. There is no role for tradeoffs, risk-reward calculations or free choice.

Why don't tobacco companies point out the potential offsetting rewards of smoking? Besides the usual corporate cowardice and bureaucratic inertia, the answer may be another, typically American, disease—lawyers. Directing the companies' defense, they apparently veto any

suggestion that smoking has benefits for fear of liability suits and of the possible regulatory implications if nicotine is seen as a drug.

Which leaves smokers defenseless against a second typically American disease: the epidemic of power-hungry puritanical bigots.

=====end of Forbes article=====

+++++

MORE ON THE HEALTH BENEFITS FROM SMOKING CIGARS

[The following material is copied, *verbatim*, from a booklet written by Dr. William Campbell Douglass II, MD, entitled, *BRAIN BOOSTERS: Healing the Secret Causes of Memory Loss*, copyright 1998, published by Second Opinion Publishing, Inc., Atlanta, GA. The quotation is from pp. 35-40. To order the whole booklet, call 1-800-728-2288.]

Nicotine Is Getting New Respect

Where do you suppose the name "nicotinic acid" (vitamin B3) came from? – B3 was discovered in the tobacco plant.

A recent study, reported in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, concludes that nicotine may alleviate the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. Another report, published in the journal *Biochemistry*, went even further in suggesting that nicotine could actually prevent this brain-destroying disease. The research was partly funded by the Philip Morris Company (I thought you should know.)

At Case Western Reserve University, chemist Michael Zagorski created a laboratory model of the brain's chemistry, and found that when nicotine was mixed with key brain chemicals, it stopped early development of sheet-

like structures in the brain that indicate deterioration. This deterioration leads to “amyloid plaque,” which is characteristic of what is seen in the brains of Alzheimer’s cases. If this inhibition of plaque formation with nicotine proves effective in the living patient, it will be an unprecedented breakthrough in a disease that is now essentially hopeless.

Zagorski says we might prevent the ravages of Alzheimer’s if we started taking a nicotine-like drug around age 40. And you don’t have to smoke cigars or a daily pack of Camel Lights to get the protective effect. Individuals might be able to use smoking cessation patches, which contain nicotine, to slow the loss of memory. The idea is that a continuous dose of nicotine would stimulate key locations in the brain called receptors.

The Georgetown researchers say that the patch has proven very safe in a small study of Alzheimer’s patients. Since the patch is free of the toxic chemicals found in smoke, and because the nicotine is given in low doses, there is little risk of individuals becoming addicted to the drug.

Action to take: If you have a strong family history of Alzheimer’s disease, you should consider using the nicotine patch. This therapy is not proven, but it is safe and it’s always better to prevent something than to attempt a cure later. We don’t know if Alzheimer’s is a hereditary disease or from aluminum poisoning (I suspect the latter). Since we don’t know, I would go with the patch if the disease seems to run in your family (i.e., father, mother, or sibling).

[Ref: *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, October 22, 1996; *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 1964; *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1981; *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1983 and 1985; *Forbes*, July 4, 1994.]

++++
Dr. William Campbell Douglass II, MD, voted “Doctor of the Year” by The National Health Federation, wrote a well footnoted, 390 page book, entitled, *The Health Benefits of Tobacco: The Surprising Therapeutic Effects of Moderate Smoking and Second Hand Smoke: A Smoker’s Paradox* [Rhino Publishing, S.A., World Trade Center, Republic of Panama, 2004]. This book can be found at: <http://www.rhinopublish.com/>.

In this book, Dr. Douglass marshals scientific study after scientific study showing the *health benefits of smoking in moderation*. He says, “It has been known for over ten years that passive smoking does not cause lung cancer. The UN has suppressed this sensational information because this falsehood is the only effective weapon they have to bludgeon smokers into quitting” [p. 154].

Dr. Douglass also writes, “One study, *funded by the National Cancer Institute*, found that nonsmokers have *no increased risk of lung cancer* as a result of exposure to secondhand smoke during childhood, in the workplace or from living with a pack-a-day smoker for as many as 40 years” [p. 157].

He later writes, “Another study, conducted by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and funded by the World Health Organization, similarly concluded that secondhand smoke poses no significant health risk” [p. 157].

Many more resources on the health benefits attributed to smoking in moderation can be found in Dr. Douglass’ book as well.

++++
Smoking Spiritualized: in Two Parts

A Poem by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

<http://homepage.mac.com/shanerosenthal/reformationink/re-smoke.htm>

The electronic edition of this article was scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal for *Reformation Ink*. It is in the public domain and may be freely copied and distributed. What follows is the introduction to this work as it appears in *The Practical Works of Ralph Erskine*, Vol. 10, 1778.

The following poem, the second Part of which was written by Mr. Erskine, is here inserted, to fill up this Page, as a proper Subject of Meditation to Smokers of Tobacco.

Smoking Spiritualized: In Two Parts.

The first Part being an old Meditation upon *Smoking Tobacco*; the second, a new Addition to it, or Improvement of it.

Part One: The Law

THIS Indian weed now wither'd quite,
Tho' green at noon, cut down at night,
Shows thy decay;
All flesh is hay.
Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

The pipe, so lily-like and weak,
Does thus thy mortal state bespeak
Thou art ev'n such,
Gone with a touch.
Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

And when the smoke ascends on high,
Then thou behold'st the vanity
Of worldly stuff,
Gone with a puff.
Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

And when the pipe grows foul within,
Think on thy soul defil'd with sin;
For then the fire,
It does require.
Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

And seest the ashes cast away;
Then to thyself thou mayest say,
That to the dust
Return thou must.
Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

Part Two: The Gospel

WAS this small plant for thee cut down!
So was the Plant of great renown;
Which mercy sends
For nobler ends.
Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

Doth juice medicinal proceed
From such a naughty foreign weed?
Then what's the power
Of Jesse's flower?
Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

The promise, like the pipe, inlays,
And by the mouth of faith conveys
What virtue flows
From Sharon's rose.
Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

In vain th' unlighted pipe you blow;
Your pains in outward means are so,
Till heav'nly fire
The heart inspire.
Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

The smoke, like burning incense, tow'rs;
So should a praying heart of yours,
With ardent cries,
Surmount the skies.
Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

+++++

E-mail, received 7/3/99 from Rev. Jack Sawyer, then a minister at Covenant Presbyterian Church (OPC), Forest, Mississippi, later became Pastor of Pineville OPC, Pineville, LA.

Dear All,

Spurgeon's theological credibility was destroyed by the use of cigars. Thankfully doctor Machen spared us in the OPC of that sad legacy. He only gave them away but did not smoke them (or inhale them either). Witness this quote from the Stonehouse biography.

“The fellows are in my room now on the last Sunday night, smoking the cigars and eating the oranges which it has been the greatest delight I ever had to provide whenever possible. My idea of delight is a Princeton room full of

fellows smoking. When I think what a wonderful aid tobacco is to friendship and Christian patience I have sometimes regretted that I never began to smoke....”

No photos to my knowledge dispute this testimony.

JS

+++++

E-mail from: V E Hathaway

Date: Saturday, July 03, 1999 10:15 AM

Re: Spurgeon's use of cigars. I have seen a photo of Spurgeon which in some older versions show him holding a cigar altered in such a way that that portion of the photo is blurred or the cigar is replaced with a pair of glasses.

Vaughn Hathaway

+++++

As a rather interesting aside, some kind old lady once asked Spurgeon if he thought that smoking cigars was harmful. “Anything is harmful if taken to excess,” replied Spurgeon. “Well then, what would you consider excessive?” she persisted. “I believe that if I got to the point to where I was smoking two at once that would definitely be over the line,” retorted the inimitable Spurgeon.

+++++

E-mail to OPC list from Ruling Elder, John Muether:

Date: 05/23/2000 8:57:07 AM Eastern Daylight Time

Brothers,

I have been lurking on this list for a while, but when the chimney of the Presbytery of the South, Jeff Boer, lauded the health benefits of smoking, I could be silent no longer. Jeff referred to the benefits to the body of smoking, and rightly so, as the context of his comments was alternative medicine. Still, all of the benefits that he cited (none of which I care to challenge) do not provide the best

case for smoking, which is the benefits it provides not to the body but to the soul.

Smoking enhances conviviality and sociability, which are necessary conditions for Christian fellowship and thoughtful theological reflection. Can anyone doubt that the character of G.A. [General Assembly – JKB] debate would be elevated were it conducted in a smoke-filled room? The reason is simple: smoking affords the opportunity for one to form an opinion before he offers an opinion. The virtues of tobacco even persuaded Machen, a non-smoker, who delighted in feeding the nicotine habit of his Princeton Seminary classmates. Perhaps the lapsed Lutheran, Garrison Keillor, said it best when he suggested that “nonsmokers may live longer, but they live dumber.”

For more on the benefits of smoking to Reformed spirituality, I would suggest that you check out the *Nicotine Theological Journal*. If you are interested, drop me an email – I might know where to find a copy or two.

John Muether
Ruling Elder
Moderate Smoker
Muether.1@opc.org

+++++

Spurgeon’s Example as a Cigar Smoker

[William Williams, Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Personal Reminiscences (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.), 30-32. Quoted from <http://www.spurgeon.org/misc/cigars.htm>]

While Mr. Spurgeon was living at Nightingale Lane, Clapham, an excursion was one day organised by one of the young men’s classes at the Tabernacle. The brake with the

excursionists was to call for the President on their way to mid-Surrey.

It was a beautiful early morning, and the men arrived in high spirits, pipes and cigars alight, and looking forward to a day of unrestrained enjoyment. Mr. Spurgeon was ready waiting at the gate. He jumped up to the box-seat reserved for him, and looking round with an expression of astonishment, exclaimed: “What, gentlemen! Are you not ashamed to be smoking so early?”

Here was a damper! Dismay was on every face. Pipes and cigars one by one failed and dropped out of sight.

When all had disappeared, out came the President’s cigar-case. He lit up and smoked away serenely.

The men looked at him astonished. “I thought you said you objected to smoking, Mr. Spurgeon?” one ventured.

“Oh no, I did not say I objected. I asked if they were not ashamed, and it appears they were, for they have all put their pipes away.”

Amid laughter the pipes reappeared, and with puffs of smoke the party went on merrily.

+++++

From Dr. William Campbell Douglass II, MD, editor of *Real Health*. Taken from his e-mail newsletter: *Daily Dose*

November 1, 2002

As I was finishing up last months issue of *Real Health*, my pal Nick, a newly minted Utah cowboy, sent me some blockbuster information about another scientific breakthrough on the health benefits of nicotine, the main ingredient in my favorite herb, tobacco.

The product is called “Angiogenix” and is a nicotine-based treatment that appears to grow new blood vessels in

the heart. It can be taken orally and, the company says, is non-addicting.

The company, located in Texas, is called Endovasc Ltd., Inc. (I didn't know you could be both "limited" and "incorporated," but that's Texas.) Established in 1996, they think big, move fast, and have an impressive record for a young company. The fact that the company has been able to get this potential blockbuster drug all the way to Phase III trials (which means it's well on its way to FDA approval) without incurring any significant debt, in near record time indicates that they are very savvy indeed.

It seems Endovasc believes that nutraceutical nicotine-based drinks, fitness bars, or capsules combined with high protein complexes could become super stars among nonprescription products. And these products could produce positive cash flow even sooner than you'd expect because they are not subject to the FDA approval process.

I'll keep you posted on this perky little company and its fascinating products, both pharmaceutical and nutraceutical. Being old fashioned, I prefer to smoke three cigars a day to get my nicotine ration, but not everyone would agree with that.

+++++

Here's the story that Dr. Douglass cites, from UPI, the United Press International:

Heart drug could help muscle growth

From the Science & Technology Desk, Published 8/13/2002 4:45 PM

MONTGOMERY, Texas, Aug. 13 (UPI) – The maker of a nicotine-based drug to help heart patients announced it has filed a patent application to develop its product into an

alternative treatment to build muscle mass, potentially replacing dangerous steroids and crash diet regimens.

Endovasc Ltd. said its drug, Angiogenix, which is designed to grow new blood vessels in patients with blocked arteries, also could be developed into a treatment that could strengthen the atrophied muscles of stroke victims.

"We know the drug is a robust recruiter of not only blood vessels but stem cells," Dr. David Summers, Endovasc chief executive officer, told United Press International. "Stem cells in animals have the capability of morphing into different kind of tissue."

Further testing could develop a nicotine-based drink or patch that would help athletes enhance muscle mass during workouts, Summers said. Such a treatment could provide a safer approach to muscle enhancement, as anabolic steroids have been linked to heart and liver damage after long-term use. Anabolic steroids have been banned in international athletic competitions after athletes were caught using the drugs to enhance strength and speed.

Summers said the levels of nicotine in Angiogenix and other nicotine-based drugs are not harmful to heart muscle.

The discovery of the potential new treatment took place during animal tests conducted earlier this year to determine the effectiveness of Angiogenix in repairing damaged blood vessels, he said. Researchers at Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif., performed the tests. The animals regrew blood vessels in blood-starved areas of their legs. The tests also showed a four-fold increase in the migration of stem cells in the animals, and these stem cells were capable of developing into muscle and cartilage, he said.

Dr. John Cooke, director of Stanford's vascular biology laboratory, invented the Angiogenix treatment for use in treating damaged heart tissue, a discovery he said nobody expected. "It was totally counterintuitive," he told UPI, referring to the nicotine experiments.

Researchers had expected nicotine would hurt the growth of new vessels, but the tests showed low doses of nicotine stimulated this growth, Cooke explained, adding although he has not seen any data showing the drug has applications for muscle development, the company did discuss the concept with him.

During tests at Columbia University, the drug helped improve blood flow in animals after the researchers artificially induced ischemia in the animals. Cardiac ischemia is a condition caused by a lack of blood supply to the heart. By growing new blood vessels in the heart, Angiogenix can help patients battle against cardiovascular disease, and possibly prevent significant damage to the heart muscle.

According to a statement, Endovasc officials said they hope to begin testing Angiogenix for use in repairing damaged hearts by the fourth quarter of this year with about 75 patients at the Arizona Heart Institute in Phoenix and possibly the Texas Heart Institute in Houston.

Company officials are hoping to gain approval of the drug as a nutraceutical – a food or beverage with health applications – within the next few months, which would allow Angiogenix to be developed as a drink, patch or other over-the-counter product for use in building muscle mass.

Dr. Charles Murray, associate professor of pathology at the University of Washington in Seattle, said the idea of using nicotine for this type of therapy seems unusual, at least on the surface.

"It seems very strange to me," Murray told UPI. "You can imagine that Philip Morris would be very happy to hear something like this." However, he agreed nicotine could help develop skeletal muscle. "It is possible growing muscle in the presence of nicotine will have an effect like more frequent usage," he said.

(Reported by David Jones, UPI Science News, in Newark, N.J.)

Copyright © 2002 United Press International

+++++

J. S. Bach quote:

*"Thus o'er my pipe in contemplation
Of such things - I can constantly
Indulge in fruitful meditation,
And so, puffing contentedly,
On land, at sea, at home, abroad,
I smoke my pipe and worship God."*

- **Johann Sebastian Bach** – 1725

+++++

Dr. Jeffrey K. Boer

DrBoer@aol.com