

Toward a Theology of Pipesmoking

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of the ultimate gifts of the Holy Ghost and brings its

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of God, which arguments are diligently supported

with unassailable proof texts and incontestable logic.

by Arthur D. Vunker

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TEXTS AND INCONTESTABLE LOGIC

by

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FORWARD

Light up your pipe! Sit in your most comfortable chair and let this genial young theologian instill in you some of his love for the stuff of God's good creation. His antique literary style is a cunning disguise for a wholesome modernity of outlook. A little verse by the eighteenth century Scottish poet Ralph Erskine, however, might remind us that the affirmation of the Old Creation in the celebration of the New is both as ancient and as modern as Christianity itself:

Smoking Spiritualized

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!

I owe this reference to the man who taught me that the warmth of a father's chest is inseparable from the aroma of a stout tobacco.

Walter J. Bartling
April 13, 1970

PREFACE

This all began innocently enough. I began smoking cigarettes when I was fifteen. My parents didn't like it. (Nor did the school authorities, but they didn't count either.) When I was seventeen I began smoking openly. My parents still didn't like it, but they knew how futile it was to say so. So, as I prepared to leave for college my mother (a shrewd old dear) proposed a compromise: "If I get you a good pipe, will you promise to quit cigarettes?" I promised, suspecting that I probably wouldn't. So Mom, the shrewd old dear, commissioned my father to pick me out a good pipe. He didn't. (I can't hold it against him. He's a phenomenal man. I've never really been able to match him. But with respect to pipes at least, I have been his teacher the last few years, and while he pretended to disagree with whatever I said, his taste in pipes and tobacco has improved greatly. But don't tell him I said so.) Anyhow, Dear old Dad chose me one of those dingbats with the metal stems and interchangeable bowls. Since then I've helped several young men get started with pipes. I'd never do them such a turn. A beginner should get a pound of pot (heavy pipe, not you-know-what). Still, it was a beginning. Dear old Dad also bought me some tobacco: a domestic blend, mostly burley, in a foil pouch with hunters and horses on the label. It was ghastly, although I didn't realize it then. And Dear old Dad told me how to break the pipe in slowly. I ignored his instructions and got what I deserved. But once Dear old Dad was safely out of town and I was safely alone in the dorm, I put my new pipe in a desk drawer and never saw it again until Christmas. Little did I then dream. . .

About a year later I bought a churchwarden. It was cheap and never did taste very good. It still doesn't. But it was a revelation to me: I had never considered that a pipe could be whimsical. I became a collector. My collection

was cheap, of course. I had never heard of tobacconists. I did all my shopping in drugstores. (That's where Dear old Dad had got my good pipe.) In other words, I was typical. But I began buying the most outlandish shapes I could find. Then, just before my junior year I was introduced in quick succession to cavendish, meerschaum and Friendly Tobacconists. My fate was sealed. And I was really hooked when, in 1966, I was given my block meerschaum.

In the fall of 1969 Les Weber (the younger) invited me to do some writing for *Spectrum*, the Concordia Seminary student paper. I wrote an occasional column, *Signs of the Times*, which still appears now and then. In that column I began the series, "Toward a Theology of Pipesmoking." This book is a collection of material from that series, with the addition of three new chapters and the appendices.

The column had unexpected results: I found myself smoking fewer cigarettes. That was a welcome development, so I began, with anti-cigarette polemic, deliberately to paint myself into a corner. Soon I had quit altogether. But later I became quite vain (not unusual for me), and thought I had conquered the nasty weeds completely and could safely indulge on occasion. Naturally I got rehooked. (The infernal things *are* addicting.) And naturally I got cordially hooted by my schoolmates. That was salutary. Just heed my example. Let him that thinketh he standeth. . .

Such vanity is nothing new for me. In fact I am still vain enough to have second thoughts about writing this paragraph. But I am told that integrity is a *sine qua non* of authorship, and I'm willing to try almost anything once. There is hardly an original thought in this book. I'm not really ashamed of that fact... I keep telling myself. There are a few creative geniuses granted to each generation, and I am not one of them. There was a time when I thought I was, but if I have learned anything in my twenty-five years, it is what talents I do not have. Whatever of substance is here, therefore, is shamelessly appro-

priated from the writings of better men than I. I can take some pride in being a disciple, although even in discipleship I lean heavily on G.K. Chesterton's epigram, "Whatever is worth doing is worth doing badly." For what a twenty-five year old's opinions are worth, I consider that the ultimate in human wisdom.

I must confess one error. In Chapter One I wrote that there is no other theological treatise on pipesmoking. I have since discovered that in the early 1600's, in reply to James I's *Counter-Blaste to Tobacco*, a group of Polish Jesuits wrote a book entitled *Antimisocapnos*. I have never seen the book, and even if I could my Latin is probably not up to the strain. But what a project for an enterprising graduate student! Why, a translation of this work would be a contribution to theological thought second only to the *Summae* and the Brief Statement! Any Latinist seeking a subject for his dissertation, here is your chance!

Thanks are due to Ray Horrel, Don Hinchey and others who persuaded me to collect the material for this volume, and to the Seminary Press for printing what I'm sure no reputable publisher would touch. Quotations are used by permission and are acknowledged *ad loc*. Thanks also go to Shrewd old Mom and Dear old Dad for getting me started on pipes -- not to mention getting me started. And many thanks indeed to Professor Walter Bartling, one of the brotherhood, for writing the forward.

Art Yunker
St. Louis
Misericordias Domini, 1970

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TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF PIPESMOKING

CHAPTER ONE

DOGMATICS

I. HERESIES REFUTED:

- A. that smoking involves risk, and should simply be avoided
- B. that the pipe is merely a high-church way of doing to the body what cigarettes accomplish more efficiently
- C. that pipesmoking is bourgeois and has no place in relevant theology
- D. that pipesmoking is materialistic self-indulgence
- E. that a pipe is merely a furnace to consume tobacco
- F. that one pipe is as good as another as long as it's sincere

II. TRUTHS AFFIRMED:

- A. that pipesmoking is a divine idea
- B. that meerschaum is the most sublime of the creatures of God
- C. that pipes are to be treated with reverence
- D. that pipe collecting is part of the *Imago Dei*
- E. that Romans 8:19-25 applies to pipes
- F. that we shall smoke in heaven

Why a theology of pipesmoking? (a) Because there isn't one already, as far as I can tell. (b) Because one is needed. (c) Because the pipes compel it, *viz.* the following prooftext from Thackeray:

The pipe draws wisdom from the lips of the philosopher and shuts up the mouth of the foolish; it generates a style of conversation contemplative, thoughtful, benevolent and unaffected.

(Which doesn't prove much, really, but it's impolite to begin without a proof-text.)

I. Heresies Refuted

- A. that smoking involves risk and should simply be avoided

Ridiculous! That smoking involves some risk is obvious enough, but let us consider for a moment what risk it really is. The danger of lung cancer, mouth cancer, heart disease and respiratory trouble to pipesmokers is called

by the Surgeon General, "not statistically significant." Sing for joy, you lovers of pipes! Wail, you slaves of cigarettes!

"Wait a minute," you say. "Are you saying that there is *no* risk involved in pipes after all?" No, there is indeed risk. The Surgeon General's report mentions the appearance of certain non-malignant alterations of mouth and nose which disappear after smoking is stopped. And there is plenty of risk if you are stupid enough to smoke with an open sore in your mouth. And then, if you are occasionally intemperate (and who of us is not?), then you risk having your tongue swell like a Zeppelin, and your palate taste like the Great Sewers of Paris.

But it's absurd simply to avoid risks. That is a course proposed only by fanatics, like the prohibitionists of the last generation. I know their kind! They warn against pepperoni pizza too, because it can cause tummy trouble. And they suggest that we all join them in their happy state of *ataraxia*, where nobody gives a damn about anything.

But let's not be silly. All loves are inconvenient. What are the risks of smoking (pipes, that is), compared to the risks of courtship and marriage? or compared to the risks of ordination and of faithfulness to a vocation? or compared to the risk that is faith? All life -- at least all life that is worth a hill of beans -- involves risk. To stop taking risks is to stop being a man.

B. that the pipe is merely a high-church way of doing to the body what cigarettes accomplish more efficiently

This heresy is taught by the fanatics, who would abolish smoking altogether, and by cigarette smokers who seek to justify themselves. While there may be forgiveness for such error, the job of the True Believers is to enlighten the Infidels.

Therefore, O Infidel, hearken to your enlightenment: pipesmoke, which should never be inhaled, is simply unable to provide the kind of stimulation which a cigarette affords. The inhalation of cigarette smoke promotes the absorption of nicotine, an addicting (!) drug. (Nicotine does not cause cancer! It's the other garbage in cigarettes that does that. The only moral question involving nicotine is whether addiction is evil *per se*.) Nicotine can act, at various times, as a stimulant or a tranquilizer. It is effective only when inhaled.

A pipe, on the other hand, is designed for sensory gratification. If anyone claims cigarettes gratify the senses, he is either ignorant or lying. They irritate the senses. It's only the kick from the drug that makes the irritation tolerable. When the cigarette gets too beastly (toward the butt end), it is discarded. Then, when the craving hits, another cigarette is lit. But a pipe's primary appeal is esthetic: the bouquet of the tobacco smoke, the tactile stimulation of hand and mouth, and the appeal of attractive lines and infinite varieties of grain, in which a knowledgeable lover delights.

Contrary to the Puritan mind, there is nothing sinful about sensory gratification. One mark of distinction between man and the beasts is that man not only receives sensory data, but creates his own. And some of those creations are wondrous indeed!

Let me give you fair warning: when the fanatics have finished doing us out of our pipes, they will resume their attacks on wine and love-making, and probably start in on music, warm baths and garlic. (Of course, garlic *can* be sinful if taken in preparation for a visit to the dentist, or before a session of courting and sparking -- but then, so can a pipe.)

Cast out, therefore, the bondswoman and her son. This world is dehumanizing enough without letting the Puritans do us out of one of the last marks of our manhood. To smoke a pipe is to cling defiantly to the glory of man, to our dominion over the beasts of the field.

C. that pipesmoking is bourgeois and has no place in relevant theology

On the contrary, it is cigarette smoking that is bourgeois. The principal mark of bourgeoisie is manipulation. The bourgeois mind approaches people and things with the question, "How can I use him, her or it?" When this is done in business it is evil enough, but in encounters with people or with God it can be devastating. And the bourgeois mind extends also to things. That is why the cigarette was invented. It is useful, convenient, uncomplicated. You simply light it, get the kick you were after, and discard it (preferably where it will singe your hostess' coffee table, burn a hole in her carpet, or start a forest fire). No entanglements. It's rather like the Playboy ideal: don't get emotionally involved, and then there won't be any hurt feelings when you break it off. Nice and platonic. Ugh!

I have to admit, there are bourgeois pipesmokers. But they have their reward. They use their pipes without care, and the pipes' revenge is swift and sure. The smoker gets a noxious gurgle and the most obscene tastes and smells. Why? Because he has set out to use something which simply refuses to be used! People who approach their pipes in such fashion ought to go back to cigarettes -- it would be more honest -- and more safe. Because pipes are solid, intractable pieces of materiality, and they must be approached on their own terms. If you come at them with the intention of *using* them -- well, hell hath no fury.

On my wall hangs a framed reminder:

Some men prefer their women like cigarettes -- just so many, slim and trim in a case, waiting in a row to be selected, set afire, and when the flame has died -- discarded. More fastidious men prefer their women like cigars -- the brand is better, they last longer, but they too are set aside when the fire has died. But real men -- real men prefer their women like pipes. They knock them gently and care for them always. No man shares his pipes!

D. that pipesmoking is materialistic self-indulgence

Materialistic it is! Praise to the Lord!

I think I hear you. I think I understand your hangup: I've had it too. If you have heard the sermons I have heard during the last fifteen years or so, materialism is a bad word to you. For as long as I can remember, preachers have railed against me for being a materialist. And, good boy that I was, I sat there and felt deliciously guilty about my materialism. I was twenty-one before I learned that I had never been a materialist, that no one I knew had ever been a materialist, and that unless the preachers were fantastically lucky, they had never met a real live materialist.

"Hold on," you say. "Materialism is the disease of our age. Our culture is full of it. Look at the mass consumption, the mindless waste, the careless and unthinking use of things. If that isn't materialism, what is it?"

What it is, I reply, is not materialism at all, but rather a very sneaky form of spiritualism. (I would say "spirituality," but that is generally considered a virtue and I don't want to make schput of it, even though in some forms it can be overdone. I realize also that "spiritualism" conjures up notions of spooks and ouija boards. Just bear in mind that I'm not picking fights with ghosts. Still, "spiritualism" is a pejorative word for us, and it deserves to be. So I use it here.)

Spiritualism is less than Christian. It snuck in from the Christian lunatic

fringe. But the dogmas of the Incarnation (that God considered materiality desirable enough to take it upon himself in the womb of Our Lady) and of the Resurrection of the Body should show where God stands on the matter. He is a materialist. Christ certainly is. Undeserved as his reputation as a glutton and winebibber surely was, it had some foundation in fact. He was evidently enjoying himself.

But we are so alienated from reality that we can sit, surrounded by more things than emperors ever dreamed, and not give a damn. Delight is practically unknown these days. The world, if it matters at all, is considered worthy only of manipulation -- or worse. *This is my first and my last saying, that it had been better not to have given the earth unto Adam, or else, when it was given to him, to have restrained him from sinning. O thou Adam, what hast thou done? for though it was thou that sinned, thou art not fallen alone, but we all that come of thee. For what profit is it unto us, if there be promised us an immortal time, whereas we have done the works that bring death? And that we should be shewed a paradise, whose fruit endureth forever, wherein is security and medicine, since we shall not enter into it? (For we have walked in unpleasant places.)* If there is any hope for us at all, it must lie in a revival of Christian materialism. And, if the ecologists are right, it better happen soon. Somehow things must again come to matter to us -- on their own terms.

Enter therefore the pipe as a sign of hope. If the last few pages settled anything, it was that pipes have one great virtue: the ability to force a would-be manipulator to respect their own uniqueness and materiality. There is no way simply to use a pipe without being viciously punished. And so a pipe may be our teacher as we struggle to learn again to care about the world.

That, of course, is law. The pipe is our pedagogue to lead us -- potentially. Is there also a way to say "pipe" in a gospel mode? I think so. For (again potentially), a pipe is a creature so gracious that it takes a hard man indeed not to respond with care.

E. that a pipe is merely a furnace to consume tobacco

This is another piece of the heresy of manipulation. Why can't men see that the pipe considers itself a creature in its own right? After all, it is the pipe itself which punishes the uncaring smoker, and this ought to alert us to something which is fairly obvious: a pipe does not merely hold tobacco. It interacts with the tobacco to bring forth something entirely new and different: Pipesmoke, tobacco smoke glorified, *Smoke in Excelsis*.

With one or two demonic exceptions. There is on the market today a pipe with an upper case definite article, made of graphite, the product of our space-age technology, requiring almost no care at all. I own one through no fault of my own. Dear old Dad smoked it a while and then with a straight face bestowed it on me. The bowl is deservedly full of cobwebs. It really *is* merely a furnace to consume tobacco. It has no porosity. It doesn't interact with tobacco. It just sits there. Really, all it is, is reusable cigarette paper. It's a model of indifference, a triumph of lovelessness. It doesn't even taste very good.

Actually I overstate my case. Such a pipe does testify to the care of technicians and die makers. But it is *dangerous to faith and morals*. Excellence has already taken enough of a beating in this age. These space-age pipes with the upper case article simply compound the damage. They demand no care. They are too easy. They have no character. They call forth neither love nor hate. *So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.* One puff from that abomination and I start spuing.

To a lesser degree, the same goes for those modern pipes with disposable filters or fancy, intricate, oh-so-scientific plumbing inside, that are supposed to relieve us of the need for fussing with our pipes. They make life much more efficient and sanitary -- and sterile. Insofar as such pipes are briar and can interact with tobacco they are not beyond hope. And since we can still fuss over the finish and polish them up, I suppose they are redeemable. But they, too, are dangerous, for they threaten to rob us of our need to fuss, to care about the matter at hand. If we use them at all, we must exercise caution.

Sooner or later some enterprising jackass is going to come up with a disposable pipe which can be discarded when it becomes dirty or inconvenient. When that happens we must be prepared to inform him that it is no pipe at all. And if he refuses to repent, as he probably will, and a heresy trial becomes necessary, so be it. The faith must be defended. Remember, I told you so. *Hora novissima, tempora pessima sunt. Vigilemus!*

F. that one pipe is as good as another as long as it's sincere

This error, another aspect of the heresy of manipulation, is the ruling spirit of our age. What matters today is not what things *are*, but how useful they may be. All the real differences between things are written off as merely superficial -- subjective judgments, and therefore not to be taken seriously. The Greatest Theologian in the Whole Wide World writes:

Modern man's alienation stems, not from the incidental advances in his technology, but from a philosophy which has turned him into a metaphysical freak: he is the last, inexplicably substantial being in an otherwise relative world. No *thing* keeps him company. . . . Having forsaken the concrete individuality of things -- having made care about differences philosophically disreputable --* we are left only with diagrams of reality to keep us going.

* Robert Farrar Capon, *An Offering of Unoles: the Priesthood of Adam and the Shape of the World* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p. 167.

Did you think that concern for excellence had just disappeared by accident? No indeed; we are victims, you and I, of a hideous plot! And unless we are on our guard, the Spirit of This Age will con us out of our few remaining connections with reality -- including our pipes.

When a sane man looks at his pipe collection, things are put into their proper perspective. Because there is a real difference between pipes, a difference based upon concrete canons of judgment and not just on subjective whim. A meerschaum is different from a \$20 briar, and a \$20 briar is different from a \$1.98 briar. And not just difference, in fact: the meerschaum is *better* than the \$20 briar is *better* than the cheapy. Only the hopelessly perverse could possibly deny it.

Trouble is, I know some men with a passion for excellence in all other matters, who have been conned out of it with respect to their pipes. Such men are to be pitied -- and helped, for they are not beyond cure. They should be provided (perhaps at government expense) with a good meerschaum and a fine briar. With such therapy no man could stay bereft of reason for long. Someone once said, "There is something about a pipe that can make a man stable in mind."

II. Truths Affirmed

A. that pipesmoking is a divine idea

What else? We should hardly have thought of it by ourselves. God makes tobacco. That much is obvious. It wouldn't be here had the Creator not thought it a good idea, and had he not taken the trouble to provide us with it.

Witness also the fact that Indian legends declared that the first brave smoked the first pipe under the inspiration of God. Witness also the fact that the infidel Turks had meerschaum for centuries and never did anything with it more exciting than to carve it into beads and cute little toy elephants. It took the Christian, Karl Kowates, to discover meerschaum's true purpose -- surely the greatest discovery by a Hungarian since the creation.

It was C.S. Lewis, I think, who made the profound observation that Hell has never yet been able to invent a single pleasure. Only God can create pleasures. So far the best Hell has been able to do is to pervert a few of them. (Of course, we all know what the perversion of tobacco is, don't we?)

How did this perversion, the cigarette, get started? I think we can trace it to a reductionism, which considered that the purpose of smoking was to obtain the effects of nicotine in the system. After all, nicotine does have its effects, and at times they can be pleasant. But the fact is that no sane man has a consuming interest in nicotine. It's colorless, tasteless, and highly toxic. And it is by no means the principal ingredient in tobacco smoke. It is only one member of a large committee. It is only effective when inhaled, which is when the rest of the ingredients lose their opportunity to titillate the senses. We talked about this earlier in I-B. Anyone who wants the bare effects of nicotine will never get them from a pipe. True pleasures are more complex than that. Perhaps that's why Heaven has maintained its monopoly on pleasures all this time. Hell always has been reductionist. It was reductionism that brought about the down-

fall of Lucifer, and he hasn't changed since. He always was too practical to comprehend the divine *sensus lusus*.

Out then with the reductionists and their perversions! And up with good, honest pipesmoke, an eloquent witness to the whimsy of our Creator, at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore.

B. that meerschaum is the most sublime of the creatures of God

Meerschaum, less romantically hydrous magnesium silicate, still less romantically $H_4Mg_2Si_3O_{10}$, was originally supposed to be petrified sea foam. Hence the name. With this age's genius for debunking worthwhile notions, it is now declared to be fossilized sea creatures. It is mined in Asia Minor.

So what makes it so superlatively superlative? For one thing its weight, or rather its lack of weight. There was a reason for thinking it was sea foam. It's amazingly light.

And what makes that sublime? Porosity. The meerschaum is an alembic like no other. It absorbs and distills, to return aromas and flavors a thousandfold in its old age. And here lies the real sublimity. Someone recently asked me if I weren't biting off more than I could chew, with such sweeping exclusions of God's other sublime creatures -- such as women. But not counting the utter selflessness of its giving, and the awesome quality of its forgiveness, meerschaum's chief grace is its aging.

Few women age gracefully. To be sure, they may, as they mature, show remarkable inward development, which quite compensates for the deterioration of the outside. But with a meerschaum even the exterior increases in loveliness as it gradually changes color from creamy white with tones of pink, to light yellow, to sherry red, to brown, to dark brown, to an eventual black. *Tota pulchra es, amica mea, et macula non est in te.*

Sublimity of any sort is hard to come by in this evil age. The sublimity of which meerschaum is capable should not be taken lightly. If you don't own one (and are a pipesmoker), get one by all means. But don't be in a rush about it. It takes a lot of experience to be worthy of such a pipe. I know. I received mine prematurely and mistreated it horribly. Fortunately it was too gracious to hold a grudge, but I never smoke it without a twinge of guilt. But then, if you wait too long to get a meerschaum, you may not live long enough to really enjoy its maturity. So I guess my final word must be, Sin Boldly.

Whenever you see a meerschaum, reverence it -- not in *latreia*, of course, for that belongs only to God, but with the *hyperdulia* we reserve for the most sublime of his creatures. It is more faithful than you ever will be.

C. that pipes are to be treated with reverence

What I am talking about here is "good" high-church. Not the orchid underwear stuff against which so many Protestants rebel, but the behavior which follows naturally from a sober appraisal of just what great mysteries these are with which we have to do. A lot of Protestants rebel against that, too, mistaking it for "bad" high-church. That's unfortunate. Guilt by association is always poor logic.

It is possible, in other words, for the same action to be either good because it proceeds from reverence, or bad because it proceeds from affectation. I should think it would take a pansy to miss the difference.

We shall see, in the chapter on ethics, that some smoking techniques (which many would call high-church) are ethically determined. There are some others which are not precisely necessary, but which are called forth by the reverence a pipe demands. For instance:

Rubrics governing the treatment of briar pipes:

1. Before filling, remove the pipe cleaner from the stem, look into the bowl, blow through the stem and knock the bowl gently in the palm of your hand to dislodge any particles which may block the draft.
2. While you smoke, rub the bowl occasionally along the side of your nose. Briar has an affinity for your natural oils.

(They'd only go to waste otherwise; why not put them to constructive use?)

Rubrics governing the treatment of meerschaum pipes:

1. Same as 1 above.
2. Do not touch warm meerschaum. Meerschaum does not have an affinity for your natural oils. They stain the pipe and retard the proper coloring.
3. Do not lay a warm pipe on a cold surface (like a marble table) or it may crack. Meerschaum is especially delicate in this regard.

Other rubrics appear in the chapter on liturgics. These make the point.

Of course it's possible to overdo the high-church. For instance, I know some people who are so stuffy that they won't smoke a pipe in the bathtub. I admit, it took me a while to get over my own hangup about the propriety of that sort of thing. But it was a concern for my own dignity, not for the pipe. Once I got used to how ludicrous I looked (silly bit of vanity that: consulting a mirror to discover how you appear when no one else will ever see you anyhow) all naked and flabby with a pipe in my face, I discovered that one of life's greatest pleasures is to be able to settle down in a warm bath, with a good book, a toddy and a pipe.

You can't overdo reverence, but you can become affected. Avoid that. God invented pipesmoking. Nothing could be more natural. Keep it that way.

D. that pipe collecting is part of the *Imago Dei*

(I use the term not in the strict Lutheran sense, but in its wider, more Catholic meaning: that man tends, never mind how darkly, to mirror the personality of his Creator.)

Properly speaking, a pipe on the dealer's shelf is no pipe at all. It is a piece of carved burl of the white heath. Or it is a carved piece of hydrous magnesium silicate boiled in beeswax. But it is only potentially a pipe. It is only when I behold this piece of potentiality, detect its possibilities for greatness, and by the fiat of the checkbook call it forth from nonbeing, that it becomes a pipe. I place it in my collection. I pronounce it Good.

Of course, it is not precisely necessary that I make this piece of potentiality a pipe. I already have several adequate pipes -- thirty-eight at last count. I don't *need* another. In fact, were you to ask my father, he would tell you I have too damn many pipes. And in a way he's right. Anyhow this new acquisition is unnecessary.

And here is the clue to the *imago* business: *unnecessary!* Capon suggests that all the pictures of drudges slaving away on watches are nowhere near as good an analogy for God as one child blowing soap bubbles through his fingers. That's the secret, you see: God collects unnecessary things too. There were plenty of reusable designs for snowflakes: why invent zillions more just for this winter? Or what about you? God didn't make you because he needed you. There were already adequate people here before you. You and I are part of his collection -- for no reason -- just because he likes the idea -- like that Larsen virgin I've been eyeing all year, or the Andreas Bauer meerschaum I'm drooling over.

I'll let you in on a secret. Sooner or later I'm going to own that Andreas Bauer. And the Larsen. Of course they're both fantastically expensive. And yes, there will always be things I need more. It will give my father and his kind another chance to tell me how impractical I am. *Why was not all this sold, and the money given to the poor?* But I shall have them.

To be sure, too much of that sort of thing is what fiscal disasters are made of. But it's part of our nature. And I wouldn't want to give it up entirely. It's too much fun. So, within reasonable limits of prudence I steadfastly refuse to be practical. Why should I be? God isn't. And I shall continue collecting. Why shouldn't I? God evidently thinks it's a good idea.

E. that Romans 8:19-25 applies to pipes

I have the feeling I'm losing my audience. You begin to suspect me of fanaticism. You consider the multitudes who couldn't stick with a pipe, and you wonder how much of the truth I'm not telling.

I am no fanatic. Pipes are not easy to love. They are inconvenient -- even dangerous. The defection of the many is a tragedy, to be sure, but it is no sin. Pipes are frustrating. It's a rare individual indeed who gets beyond the frustration to the delight that lies in wait for him. But this, after all, is true of all our encounters. The woes our pipes inflict upon us are not their fault. They are a sign of our fallenness, a fallenness in which our pipes as well are caught, subjected with us to vanity in hope.

But what a hope it is! The joys the pipe now offers to him who endures are but a shadow of what is to come when our bodies are set free. Imagine! Tobacco without carcinogens. Unlimited smokes without dragon mouth. Why, the very thought makes the mind boggle!

But it is still only a hope. The inconvenience remains. Our pipes and we groan in travail together. There is no Easter without Lent. The white heath is redeemed only by the wood of the cross. $H_4Mg_2Si_3O_{10}$ is saved by the earth in which its Maker was buried. Our pipes and we are rescued, not by avoiding the Passion, but by embracing it. Deliverance comes in vanity. The meaning of it all becomes apparent in absurdity.

Perhaps that is the ultimate truth about pipesmoking -- and about all the loves to which we commit ourselves. All the neat little meanings we attach to our lives and our loves turn out in the end to have been false. Only the absurdity remains. The wise man lights his pipe in fear and trembling. Who knows whether this is the smoke that will finally undo him? Who knows if perhaps this pipe will begin the murderous reproduction of cells gone mad? God knows, but he isn't telling. We commit ourselves in darkness and ignorance. We never discover, until it is too late, the meaning of what we have done. That is the way it has always been. And that is the way it will always be -- until our bodies are set free with all creation, to fill a new earth with new smells, and to treat our new bodies to tastes, new and yet wondrously familiar.

F. that we shall smoke in heaven

We generally concede that God made the world for joy. What we too frequently forget is that he holds the world in being for joy *now*, and that he will consummate it for the same reason.

O ye fire and heat, bless ye the Lord; O ye coal and ash, bless ye the Lord.

O ye white heath and rosewood, bless ye the Lord; O ye porcelains and clays, bless ye the Lord.

O ye corncob and calabash, bless ye the Lord; O ye meerschaums, bless ye the Lord.

O ye churchwardens, bless ye the Lord; O ye cutties and nose-warmers, bless ye the Lord.

O ye compauls and bulldogs, bless ye the Lord; O ye Canadians, bless ye the Lord.

Oh, let Israel bless the Lord: praise him and magnify him forever.

O ye Cavendish and Virginia, bless ye the Lord; O ye Djubec and Latakia, bless ye the Lord.

O ye Savinelli and Bari, bless ye the Lord; O ye Larsen and Andreas Bauer, bless ye the Lord.

Bless we the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost: praise him and magnify him forever.

Blessed art thou, O Lord, in the firmament of heaven: and above all to be praised and glorified and highly exalted forever.

There you are. The delights for which our God created us are even more varied and wonderful than that. What counts is that we catch the goodness in God's good gifts.

One final word: Lucifer wasn't booted out of heaven for nothing. He was told to take his reductionism and his perversions, and to go spread them around where they would be appreciated. Heaven has no use for such things. So cigarette smokers will have to learn, if not here, then there, how to enjoy a pipe. They will be expected to check their weeds at the door.

It is true that only those who steadfastly refuse the joys of heaven will live eternally without them. Part of the divine courtesy is that a place is prepared where men who cling defiantly to their pet sins will be allowed to keep them. But only pipes will be permitted in heaven. All cigarettes will be shipped off to the other place. There will be chainsmoking and gnashing of teeth.

This is most certainly true.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY

I. MARTYROLOGY

II. HAGIOLOGY

Smoking has from the beginning been an occasion of controversy, and many have been called upon to suffer for their attachment to the custom. In subtle fashion pipesmokers are still persecuted today. It is gauche, for instance, to smoke a pipe in the presence of the queen of England (Prime Minister Wilson notwithstanding). Likewise it would not be wise to light a pipe at a fancy dinner at the White House. In Monte Carlo you can be ejected from the gaming rooms for smoking a pipe. There has always been, in short, an anti-tobacco prejudice.

One of the earliest examples is to be found in the writings of Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes, a historian who served with Columbus and then spent several years among the Indians. In his *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* he wrote,

Among other evil practices, the Indians have one especially harmful, the inhaling of a certain kind of smoke which they call tobacco in order to produce a kind of stupor.

The tobaccophobes have resorted to all kinds of tactics to punish smokers, ranging from social ostracism to execution. Some examples follow.

I. Martyrology

As far as we can discover, the earliest European advocate of smoking to suffer for his opinions was Pliny the Elder. Pliny was a physician in Pompeii,

and for chronic cough he prescribed the inhalation of coltsfoot *per arundo* (through a reed. Hence our recommendation that each seminary ought to have a chair of *arundology*). Pliny's idea never caught on. Rather the gods, who seem to have disliked such notions, reduced Pliny to ashes in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D.

The greatest of all martyrs for the pipe was Sir Walter Raleigh, who popularized pipesmoking in England. Sir Walter was a real missionary, and made many converts in the court of Queen Elizabeth I. He even persuaded Her Majesty to try a pipe herself. Apparently once was enough. But by the end of Elizabeth's reign smoking was so popular that there were even schools of the pipe, where professors trained their pupils in such esoterica as inhaling smoke through the nostrils. In order to graduate one had to master the art of blowing smoke rings.

On one occasion at court Sir Walter began to fill his pipe. Observing the disapproving look on the queen's face, he wagered that she could not measure the weight of the smoke in his pipe. The queen took the wager, but not one of her court scientists could figure a way of weighing the smoke. So Sir Walter asked for the most delicate scales available, and weighed the pipe filled and unlit. He then smoked it, and weighed the pipe with the ashes still in. Said he, the difference between the first weight and the second was the weight of that which had gone forth in the air, namely the smoke. Queen Elizabeth paid up, saying that she had seen many alchemists convert gold to smoke, but that Raleigh was the first ever to convert smoke to gold.

But the day finally came when Elizabeth died. She was succeeded by James I. One of the first things James did when he became king was to issue a tract, *Counter-Blaste to Tobacco*, in which he fumed,

Stinking and unsavourie. . . . Shall we, I say, without blushing, abase ourselves so farre as to imitate those beastly Indians? Why doe we not as well imitate them in

walking naked as they doe? Yea, why doe we not denie God
and adore the devil as they doe?

He advised every husband to kick the habit and avoid polluting his wife's "sweet breathe," and so deliver her from a "perpetuall stinking torment." And, James concluded thunderously, pipesmoking was

a custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmfull to the braine, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black stinking fume thereof, neerest resembling the horrible Stigian smoke of the pit that is bottomlesse.

James fortunately went on to greater literary accomplishments later in his reign.

At any rate, James disliked Raleigh, who smoked incessantly. His Majesty found an excuse to imprison Raleigh for conspiracy. Later Raleigh was released, and given command of a fleet to discover the land of El Dorado. He was warned not to engage the Spanish in battle, but he got caught in a fight anyhow. When the smoke cleared, Raleigh's own son lay dead on the decks. King James showed his sympathy by signing Raleigh's death warrant. But Sir Walter had the last word. Before he went to the block he insisted on smoking one last pipe.

Meanwhile the controversy raged elsewhere. In the early 1600's one writer in London declared, "Four people have died from tobacco within a week. One of them voided a bushel of soot." In 1612 the Emperor of China forbade the planting or use of tobacco. In 1634 the Czar published an edict providing that "for the first offense, smokers shall be whipped; for the second, executed."

The Greek Orthodox Church declared that tobacco had intoxicated Noah, and issued an edict against smoking. Pope Urban VIII promised immediate excommunication to any Catholic who smoked. (Up to then priests had been saying Mass with their pipes in their mouths.)

The Emperor Ferdinand III was also opposed to tobacco, and under pressure from him smoking was banned in Cologne, Bavaria, Munich and Stuttgart. In May

of 1653 smoking was forbidden in Saxony because a barn had burned down there. The clergy began a persecution of smokers in Zurich. The Swiss National Assembly followed suit and edicts were published in Berne, Lucerne, Unterwalden, Fribourg and Soleure. Police in Vienna had orders to fire on anyone seen smoking.

Surely the most piteous of all the martyrs were the unknowns who died under Sultan Murad the Cruel in Turkey. Murad used to enjoy prowling the city after dark and lurking in the corners of coffee houses. If any man was unlucky enough to be seen smoking, his mutilated body would be found in front of the coffee house the next morning. Smokers would be hanged with a pipe through the nose and a bag of tobacco around the neck. (We aren't told whether the pipe was lit or whether the tobacco was coarse or ribbon cut.) Murad even had the noses and ears of Persian ambassadors cut off, and sent them home with their dispatches nailed to their wounds. On the battlefield he enjoyed catching soldiers smoking. He would have them beheaded, hanged, quartered, or he would crush their hands and feet and leave them helpless between the lines.

Then suddenly governments the world over hit upon a beautiful idea: why ban tobacco when you can tax it? Prohibitions were lifted everywhere. The age of persecution was over.

II. Hagiology

First mention, of course, goes to the unknown Indian who started the whole business. Second mention goes to the sailors who served under Columbus, who discovered the Indians and their customs. (Of course there is some debate here, as to whether the Vikings may not have discovered the Indians' smoking before Columbus did. But the only record of the Vikings' journey into the American north country has suffered from exposure to the elements and has become an utter rune.)

During the reign of King James I of England, His Majesty convened an assembly to hear arguments about tobacco and to judge the debate.

Many learned men, who knew where their bread was buttered, held forth at length on the evil effects of the foul weed, and the king nodded with approval. Then a Doctor Cheynall stepped forward, pipe in mouth, and delivered a witty speech in defense of tobacco. He convulsed the audience, and even the king laughed. It took enormous courage. Cheynall fortunately escaped the fate of Raleigh, and remained in the king's good graces. After the debate, however, James reiterated his own opinions from the *Counter-Blaste* and the assembly all agreed that smoking was a dreadful custom.

In the early 1700's Pope Benedict XIII revoked the edict excommunicating smokers. He was an avid pipesman himself. And he permitted clergy and laity alike to take snuff in St. Peter's.

Nor should we forget our own C.F.W. Walther. William Goerss tells of the time when Walther, who always had a pipe in his mouth, was escorting a candidate to his new charge in Ontario, as was his custom. They journeyed by sleigh to Buffalo. (In Buffalo there was a Pastor Grabau, with whom Walther was in controversy over the doctrine of the ministry. Walther felt obliged to commune at Grabau's church to demonstrate the efficacy of the sacrament, even when administered by an unworthy priest. But that's another story.) Walther and the seminarian then continued on to Canada. Along the way their horse bolted, and threw Walther and the young man from the sleigh. When the candidate came to, Dr. Walther was nowhere to be found. He might have stayed buried forever (for nothing ever melts in Ontario), but for his pipe, which melted a spot in the snow. Walther was dug up, and lived to fight in the *Gnadenwahllehrstreit* and to do other interesting things.

Other famous pipesmokers were Rachel Jackson, Prince Albert, and Gandalf.

CHAPTER THREE

ETHICS

- I. RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COSMOS
- II. CHOICE OF TOBACCO
- III. TREATMENT OF THE PIPE
- IV. SMOKING TECHNIQUE
- V. RESPONSIBILITY TO THE NEIGHBOR
- VI. PASTORAL ETHICS

To this day the sentiments of the *Counter-Blaste* are invoked by a disgusted segment of the population. And I think we must face the fact that even if James overdid it a bit, he had a point. We have to admit that there are smokers who ignore the ethical demands of the pipe, and so invite such denunciations. It is because of them that the pipe is blasphemed among the heathen. So the next chapter is directed to pipesmokers themselves. Others are welcome to read, but they must remember that they are eavesdropping on an intramural conversation.

The point to be made is that various relationships (to the pipe itself, to the cosmos, to one's own body, to the neighbor, and to God) will determine, among other things, the choice of tobacco, the treatment of the pipe, the techniques of smoking, and the occasions on which an ethical man will choose to smoke or to abstain from smoking.

I might mention in passing that I hold the cigarette responsible for the advent of unethical smoking into the life of the race. More on that later.

I. Responsibility to the Cosmos

Pipesmoking, like every other gift of God, has enormous consequences for body and soul. It also has cosmic implications. That isn't to say we should avoid the problem altogether by simply not smoking. We shot that canard in Chapter One, I-A. Rather, like every other gift of God, pipesmoking is a stewardship; what matters is that the steward know what he is about.

The simple fact is that smoking can cause environmental pollution. I don't mean air pollution from the tobacco smoke. That's no problem. Tobacco smoke dissipates rapidly and does not upset anything. (Corruption of the air in a closed room is another matter, but it belongs under offenses against the neighbor.) I do mean pollution of the earth. Here pipesmokers are rarely as guilty as cigarette users. How can a smoker of filter cigarettes justify corrupting the land with his old filters? They are synthetic and do not decompose readily. They are full of poisons and may be eaten by small animals and birds. Not to mention the unsightly mess! People who drop filters on the ground ought to be incarcerated in a walled, paved enclosure where they can litter to their hearts' content without offending our sensibilities or corrupting God's good earth. Write your congressman!

This doesn't absolve pipesmokers of their responsibility for the environment. The most obvious problem here is that smoking is a fire hazard. The pipe isn't as dangerous as other means of smoking, since the fire is contained. Still, the ethical smoker will be careful (1) to be sure his pipe is completely out before he empties it. That is obvious. Not quite so obvious is (2) that an ethical man will not smoke outdoors on a windy day or indoors in a draft without precautions to prevent sparks from blowing out and doing damage. All good pipeshops carry wind caps. If your store doesn't, complain to the manager. And if you don't own a wind cap you are neglecting your responsibility. Repent.

The dottle which is left after your smoke decomposes rapidly. You may empty it on the ground, as long as the fire is absolutely out.

II. Choice of Tobacco

The ethical pipesmoker will not smoke aromatic tobacco. I should think this would be dictated as much by enlightened self-interest as by anything else: aromatic tobaccos contain more carcinogens. Besides, the aromatic additives tend to burn hotter and are more likely to irritate one's insides.

Beyond that, respect for the pipe suggests that the smoker cultivate a taste for plain tobacco. Aromatics (unless they are outlandishly expensive) are generally produced by impregnating tobacco with glycerine and other stuff. As combustion occurs (so I'm told) the glycerine converts to glucose. The result, besides the hotter burning, is that the pipe's porosity is obstructed by the residue. What had been a nicely absorbant piece of briar becomes (Horrors! see page 7) merely a furnace to consume tobacco. The pipe never mellows. It always smokes rough. And when absorption is prevented, juices collect in the heel of the pipe, resulting in foul odors, eloquent gurgles and disgusting feedback. If a man wants that kind of thing, let him get one of those space-age plastic jobs with the upper case article to start with, instead of corrupting an innocent piece of briar, which someone with taste could season into loveliness.

Further, an ethical pipesmoker will stick to plain tobacco because it is less objectionable to the neighbor. Oh, I know the aromatics attract more compliments. But note that the compliments always seem to come early in the encounter, when the victim catches his first whiff of the stuff. Later, as the room fills with smoke, the poor wretch will regret having said those nice things. Aromatic smoke is denser than the straight stuff, and in sufficient quantities it can be overwhelming.