

The
Britnell/Miller Debate
On Smoking



PROPOSITION
***“THE SCRIPTURES TEACH THAT
A CHRISTIAN MAY SMOKE”***

Affirmative: Rolf L. Miller
Negative: Eugene Britnell

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First Affirmative

Rolf L. Miller

My purpose in this discussion is neither to promote smoking nor to raise an issue. Rather, my interest is truth and my intent is to expose any false teaching in an issue already raised by preachers proclaiming that smoking is sinful. The reason I attempt this expostulation by writing in the affirmative is that brother Britnell refuses to affirm his position that smoking is sinful, and declined oral debate on the subject.

Unless the penalty for sin has changed, this issue is as important as any other because either those who permit smoking, or those who teach that smoking is sinful, are in jeopardy. Besides, the issue is fomenting havoc in the church. Many congregations are supporting preaching which proclaims smoking as sinful, and yet the smokers in those congregations continue in fellowship undisciplined. Whether smoking is sinful or not, such inconsistency is rank hypocrisy! The continuance of this dissimulation will corrupt the church. If smoking is sinful, smokers ought to be disciplined. If smoking is not sinful, the mouths of those who teach it is sinful should be stopped.

Clearly, the issue must be dealt with. It has disrupted the church, and disturbed brethren long enough. Furthermore, if the Scriptures do teach that smoking is sinful, where did the idea that it is not sinful originate? Conversely, if the word does not teach that smoking is sinful, what initiated the doctrine that it is sinful? Certainly, if God's word is not the source of a doctrine, the mind of man must be the originator. But what is the thinking that allows the formulation of a teaching contrary to revealed truth? While there are insincere and dishonest teachers, I do not believe that can be said about many brethren who hold differing positions. It must be concluded then that an incorrect concept or erroneous reasoning is the underlying factor producing the false belief. Since such an element would affect the thinking on many subjects, and is thus capable of generating a multitude of corrupted doctrines, its unmasking becomes imperative. I therefore plead for serious unprejudiced study of the question.

Let me begin the affirmative by defining the proposition.

- By “**the Scriptures**” I mean: the revealed will of God preserved in the 66 books of the Bible.
- By “**teach**” I mean: make known.
- By “**Christian**” I mean: a baptized believer.
- By “**may**” I mean: permitted, at liberty to do.
- By “**smoke**” I mean: the use of tobacco, whether by chewing, sniffing, or smoking cigarettes, cigars, pipes.

DO THE SCRIPTURES PERMIT A CHRISTIAN TO USE TOBACCO?

It goes without saying that a Christian may do anything that is not sinful. Sin is the transgression of law (I John 3:4), and Christians are under the law of Christ (I Cor. 9:21), the New Testament (Heb. 9:15; 10:9-10). Thus, for an action to be sinful, a New Testament law must exist which that action would violate. If no law exists which that action would violate, there can be no transgression, and hence no sin (Rom. 4:15). Therefore a Christian may do anything against which there is no law of Christ.

Is there New Testament law against the use of tobacco? The apostles wrote so that when I read their words I might know what they knew (Eph. 3:3-4). Paul states in Romans 14:14, “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself.” “Nothing” means: no thing, not a thing, not anything. Paul knew, and thus I know, there is no thing, not a thing, not anything unclean of itself. I know therefore that *all* things of themselves are spiritually clean. As stated in verse 20, “All things indeed are pure.” “All things” includes tobacco, and hence I know that tobacco of itself is spiritually clean.

Jesus states in Mark 7:15, “There is nothing from outside a man, that entering into him can defile him.” I am thus persuaded by the Lord that nothing, not anything, not a thing from outside a man entering into him can spiritually defile him. Therefore *all* that from outside a man entering into him cannot spiritually defile him. As stated in verse 18, “. . . whatever thing from outside enters into the man, it cannot defile him.” All that which comes from outside a man includes tobacco, and thus I am persuaded by the Lord that tobacco, or the smoke thereof, entering into a man cannot of itself defile him spiritually.

Since tobacco is not unclean of itself, and tobacco entering into a man cannot of itself defile him, how can it be said that smoking as such is sinful? I am persuaded by the Lord that it cannot be said. If it is not sinful, how can one say a Christian is not permitted to smoke? Those who abide in what is known from what the apostles wrote cannot so say. I do not find any law of Christ condemning the use of tobacco as such. There being no law against it, there can be no transgression, and thus the use of tobacco as such is not sinful. Therefore the Scriptures permit a Christian to use tobacco, and the proposition is affirmed.

Now who will call unclean that which God says is clean? “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (I Peter 4:11). The oracles of God proclaim *all* things of themselves pure. Who then will dare call tobacco unclean? And who will teach that a thing defiles when the Lord says it cannot defile? “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ ... he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strife of words. . .” (I Tim. 6:3-4). The words of the Lord state there is not anything from outside of a man that entering into him can defile him. Who then will dare teach that tobacco entering a man of itself can defile him?

Clearly, whether or not a person uses tobacco is a matter God has left for each individual to decide for himself. Shall we then bind where God has not bound? Why then do you judge your brother? There is one lawgiver, and we all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Who then are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls: and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore; let us follow after the things which make for peace that the work of the Lord be not hindered. Let him that smokes then not despise him who does not smoke, and let not him who does not smoke judge him who does.

First Negative

Eugene Britnell

I never thought I would see the day when a gospel preacher would contend that the Scriptures teach that a Christian may use one of the most filthy, offensive, expensive, time-consuming, destructive, and enslaving drugs ever known or used by man! Tobacco has enslaved more people than any other one thing on earth, including alcohol. I never saw a drunkard who didn't smoke, but there are millions of smokers who do not drink.

Nicotine: "A poisonous alkaloid, C₁₀H₁₄N₂, the active principle of tobacco. In aqueous solution it is used as an insecticide." (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1960, page 566.) This is what concerns us in this study and we'll not forget it.

I appreciate the privilege of participating in this discussion with brother Miller. Few men have the courage to defend such a proposition. He calls for a "serious unprejudiced study" of the subject, but I hope that he will realize that under the circumstances it will be difficult for him to follow his own advice.

We do not need to waste space in discussing what I will or will not defend, or an oral debate. I thought that we settled that in our correspondence preparatory to this discussion. I hold no affirmative position on tobacco, and, therefore, feel no obligation to defend a negative proposition. Due to the distance between us, the fact that more people can read a debate than could attend, and other factors, I judged it expedient to have a written debate. He signed the proposition, so he has no right to complain.

I agree that this is a serious issue, and that there has been some inconsistency in our preaching and practice—as there has been on a number of other things. If by this discussion, we can come to a better understanding of the subject, perhaps we can cause those who are influenced by it to be more consistent.

We all know that the Bible does not mention tobacco, much less its use. Therefore, we must decide this issue by a proper application of relevant passages and principles in the Scriptures. Even in his first affirmative, I feel that my opponent has erred in his broad and general application of some Scriptures, and has over-simplified the

issue.

I accept his definition of the proposition with one exception. I am not primarily concerned with his various uses of tobacco in his definition of “smoke.” I don’t know what he intends to discuss, but my concern in this debate is with the practice of the average cigarette smoker who smokes from 10 to 40 per day. We could use much space in discussing the difference between a pipe and a cigarette, or chewing and sniffing, or just how many one may smoke daily, but I don’t intend to do so.

I agree that for a thing to be sinful some New Testament law must be violated. I intend to prove that smoking does violate several such laws and principles.

I can take the same Scriptures which brother Miller used to prove his proposition, make the same careless application of them, and justify the use of marijuana, heroin, glue sniffing, or the drinking of beer, wine and whiskey. As I said, he has over-simplified the issue and tried to finish his work with too little effort.

His argument is simply this:

- (a) The apostles revealed unto us the truth;
- (b) they revealed that nothing is unclean of itself and all things are pure;
- (c) tobacco is not unclean of itself;
- (d) therefore it may be made into cigarettes and Christians may smoke them.

Now let us try the same argument on something else:

- (a) There is nothing unclean of itself;
- (b) grain and grapes are not unclean of themselves;
- (c) therefore they may be made into whiskey, beer and wine and a Christian may drink them.

The two arguments stand or fall together. If one justifies smoking, the other justifies drinking.

The context of Romans 14:14 shows clearly that by “all things” Paul meant all foods, particularly all meats. He did not have reference to tobacco which poisons and destroys the body any more than he did marijuana or alcohol. Paul also said, “All things are lawful unto me” (I Cor. 6:12), but he did not mean that he could lie, kill or steal.

He said that tobacco of itself is spiritually clean. So is whiskey

— *when kept outside the body*. Grain, grapes and tobacco were all made of God and have a profitable use. It is the *abuse* that concerns me. Even tobacco has several good uses, including its use as a poison or insecticide for killing unwanted bugs. God never intended for man to roll it up, set it on fire, and filter it through his lungs and blood any more than He intended for man to convert grain and grapes into alcohol and take it into his body to damage it and cause him to do foolish and sinful things.

His use of Mark 7:15 is an inexcusable perversion of what the Lord meant. He was not speaking of tobacco, alcohol, or any such thing; rather, he was speaking of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in washing cups, pots, etc., and eating bread “with unwashen hands.” Try the same argument on whiskey. It is from outside a man, and enters into him. Can it defile him spiritually? Would Miller defend a Christian’s use of alcoholic beverages? If “all that from outside a man entering into him cannot spiritually defile him,” and alcohol is from outside a man and enters into him, why would it be wrong to drink it?

He said, “Since tobacco is not unclean of itself, and tobacco entering into a man cannot of itself defile him. . .” Wait! Stop right there. That last phrase is an assumption, and I deny it! Tobacco, when taken into the body, defiles the blood, brain, heart, influence and breath. I’ll furnish abundant proof of this before the discussion ends.

He would have us believe that smoking is in the realm of personal liberty — one may or may not smoke — and no one else has a right to speak. That is not true. Every Christian who believes that smoking is injurious to the health and influence of another is obligated to warn and teach others. In addition, smoke from the cigarettes of others does affect me. I know this from personal experience, and the scientists agree.

A recent newspaper headline read: “Smoking is no longer a private matter.” The article said, “Cigarette smoking is ceasing to be a personal thing. Medical findings are beginning to show that the smoke can also be harmful to nonsmoking persons nearby who have to breathe it.” “There is medical evidence now that the cigarette smoke trailing off the burning end of the cigarette is more harmful than the ingredients at the other end. The higher temperature produces more by-products of combustion which the smoker — and

nonsmoker — has to breathe.” (Arkansas Democrat, January 7, 1973.)

Brother Miller, if we could establish beyond doubt that smoking is harmful to the body, would you then agree that it is wrong for a Christian to smoke? Would you recommend that a young person start smoking? If so, why? If not, why not?

I have always believed that there is no sensible or Scriptural way to defend that which is nonsensical and unScriptural, and I am still convinced.

Second Affirmative

Rolf L. Miller

I am sorry brother Britnell feels the way he does about my being able to engage in serious unprejudiced study, and I pray that such is not true of him. I stated my intent in this discussion, and explained (not complained) why I was writing in the affirmative. My intent and interest have not changed.

Considering that Eugene claims to hold no affirmative position on tobacco, I appreciate his forthright opening paragraph which leaves no doubt as to his judgment in the matter. Of course the validity of it all is another matter, and I will deal with that aspect, as it pertains to the proposition, when he tries proving such.

Let us now examine brother Britnell's exegesis of my first affirmative — Eugene called it careless application of the Scriptures. I look first at his effort to eliminate tobacco from "all things" in Romans 14:14, 20. Eugene said the context shows that by "all things" Paul did not have reference to tobacco any more than he did alcohol, etc. I think he was a little careless here because verse 21 cites "wine" specially, and verse 17 refers to "drink."

Brother Britnell labeled my use of Mark 7:15 an inexcusable perversion and proceeded to deny that tobacco of itself entering into a man cannot defile him, stating that when tobacco is taken into the body it defiles the blood, brain, heart, etc. Eugene, do you think physical defilement is spiritual defilement? If you do not, why did you introduce physical defilement to contest a statement I made in reference to spiritual defilement? And then I would like to know your definition of "inexcusable perversion."

If you do think physical defilement is spiritual defilement, are you so without understanding? Do you not perceive that *whatever* thing from outside entering into the man, it *cannot* defile him? Physical things entering a man cannot of themselves spiritually defile the man because they enter not into the heart. Rather, it is the evil that comes out of a man's heart which spiritually defiles the man (Mark 7:18-23). This Jesus spoke to show why the traditional washings of the Jews were not valid, and hence why eating with unwashed hands (physical defilement) could not spiritually defile.

Sin proceeds from the mind of man (Jas. 1:14-15), and it is sin — the transgression of law — that defiles a man; not that which of itself enters a man from outside of him.

Brother Britnell reasoned: if a Christian may smoke because tobacco is from outside and clean of itself, he may also drink alcohol because it is from outside and clean of itself; they stand or fall together. Truth is a most valuable possession, and its discovery is indeed precious. Now I am sure Eugene believes a Christian may drink alcohol medicinally (I Tim. 5:23). Notice: if alcohol *of itself* defiled a man spiritually upon entering his body, it would defile him regardless of the circumstances under which it entered his body. But alcohol used medicinally does not defile the man. Therefore it is not the alcohol *of itself* entering the body that spiritually defiles one. As the Scriptures state: “there is nothing unclean **of itself**,” “all things indeed are pure;” “there is nothing from outside a man, that entering into him, can defile him.”

What then defiles the drunkard? As stated before, transgression of law — sin — is that which defiles a man, and drunkenness is a violation of law (Gal. 5:19-21). Is it the alcohol *of itself* entering the man that defiles the drunkard? No. The alcohol is clean of itself, and alcohol entering a man of itself cannot defile. It is alcohol entering the man under a circumstance God has legislated against that defiles.

Thus, since it is transgression of law that defiles a man, and not alcohol of itself entering a man, a Christian may drink alcohol under any circumstance against which God has not legislated; and the fact that God has legislated against most alcohol drinking circumstances does not change the rule.

That doing a thing under a circumstance God has legislated against is what defiles, rather than the thing *of itself*, is plainly seen in I Corinthians 10 regarding the eating of meats. First, consider verse 23: all things (of themselves) are lawful, but the circumstances under which a thing is done may forbid its doing — God’s word being that which determines such. Therefore eating meat of itself is lawful (verses 25, 26), and thus meat can be eaten under any circumstance which God has not legislated against — such as in verse 27. But verse 28 cites a circumstance under which the eating of meat is not lawful. Is it the eating of meat of itself that is unlawful? No, all things *of themselves* are lawful. It is the eating of meat under a

circumstance God has legislated against that is unlawful.

Brother Britnell may not recognize this principle. He cited I Corinthians 6:12, “all things are lawful unto me,” and then said Paul did not mean he could lie, kill, or steal. Certainly lying is not lawful, but lying is not a thing of itself. Lying is speaking an untruth to deceive —which is speaking under a circumstance forbidden by God. Stealing also is unlawful, but neither is stealing a thing of itself. Stealing is taking that which one has no right to take — which is taking under a circumstance forbidden by God. Now Eugene may have misspoke himself when he said he could not kill. Killing, like speaking or taking, is a thing of itself, and thus of itself killing is lawful. Otherwise, killing under any circumstance would be unlawful, and then a person could not even kill unwanted bugs — as Eugene said he could.

The conclusion regarding smoking is inescapable. Using tobacco *of itself* is not unlawful. If tobacco of itself was not lawful, it could not be used under any circumstance, not even as an insecticide. Therefore a Christian may use tobacco under any circumstance which God has not legislated against. Brother Britnell said the circumstance of tobacco use he was concerned with in this debate was that practiced by the average cigarette smoker, and he intended to prove such sinful. I eagerly await Eugene’s effort in this because I have found no New Testament legislation against the use of tobacco under the circumstance it is engaged in as such by the average cigarette smoker.

The proposition is thus affirmed: tobacco of itself entering a man cannot spiritually defile him, and since no law of God prohibits the average smoker’s use of tobacco as such, no sin, and hence no spiritual defilement results therefrom.

In closing, brother Britnell asked would I recommend smoking to young people. I know not how answering this question will establish whether or not a thing is sinful — my opinion is no more binding than Eugene’s — but I recommend smoking no more than I recommend chewing fingernails. Eugene also asked would I agree smoking was wrong if he proved smoking harmful to the body. If Eugene first proves that harming the body is sinful, then I would agree that anything harmful to the body is sinful. If harming the body is not sinful, proving that smoking harms the body would prove nothing as far as this debate is concerned. Is it a sin to harm

the physical body?

Second Negative

Eugene Britnell

Before we continue, we may as well set the record straight concerning a fact which is pertinent to this discussion: brother Miller is a smoker. The reader will now be in better position to understand why he feels obligated to defend the practice, and why it will be difficult for him to consider the subject honestly, factually and objectively.

He evidently can't understand the meaning of an affirmative position. I hold no affirmative position on tobacco! I do not smoke; I do not encourage it; I do not defend it. That sounds negative to me. To illustrate, I hold no affirmative position on instrumental music in worship. I do not play an instrument in worship, and I do not defend its use. I believe that such is wrong, and that is a negative position.

My argument on Romans 14 stands. The verses upon which he based his argument (14 and 20) have reference to meat. Verse 15 proves that. I deny that "all things" in verse 20 includes tobacco (as Rolf said in his first affirmative) for Paul is speaking of what one eats, not what he smokes! Rolf doesn't need to mention verse 21, for it condemns doing anything "whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" and many Christians are offended because others, especially gospel preachers, smoke. If he will follow Paul's admonition, he will stop smoking immediately!

He may not recognize it, but he is advocating the doctrine of some of the Baptists concerning the body and spirit of man. When they teach that a child of God cannot so sin as to be lost, we call attention to the fact that they sin (Rom. 6:23) and it is possible to die without requesting or receiving forgiveness. They seek to escape this conclusion by contending that it is the body that sins but the spirit is not responsible for it. They teach that one may be defiled physically and remain pure spiritually. In like manner, Miller divides man and contends that one may defile the body without affecting the spirit. He wanted to know if I think physical defilement is spiritual defilement. Yes, I certainly do! A Christian cannot defile his body without being affected spiritually. Anything that is done to or by the body originates in the mind or spirit. Does he believe that a

Christian may deliberately defile or destroy the physical body and be innocent in the sight of God? If he does, let him explain Romans 12:1; I Corinthians 6:19, 20 and I Thessalonians 5:23.

Several of Rolf's arguments or statements are simply quibbles. When I mentioned killing, I had reference to exactly what the Bible does — killing a person, not a bug. And his use of I Timothy 5:23 is an evasion of the real issue. The social drinker uses that verse to justify his drinking and Rolf uses it to justify smoking. One argument is as good as the other.

I would not use alcohol "of itself" or by itself even for medicinal purposes. When it is used, it is as a preservative or to dilute the actual medicine and never of the quality or quantity that harms or affects one physically.

In view of his arguments, I don't see how Rolf can condemn what is commonly called "social drinking." And I mentioned the use of marijuana, but he said nothing about it. Again I must say that in view of his argument, how can he condemn the smoking of marijuana? Maybe he will tell us about these.

His whole argument is that there isn't *anything* that enters the body from outside that can defile a man. My position is that *anything* which enters the body that is harmful to the body, the influence, or causes one to violate certain Scriptural principles such as temperance, thereby defiles the person spiritually — be it nicotine, alcohol, marijuana, heroin, or whatever.

He says that it is the "evil that comes out of a man's heart which spiritually defiles the man" and I'm sure that by "heart" he refers to the mind — the Bible heart. All right. Anything which a man takes into or does with his body emanates from and is directed by the mind; therefore, the deeds of the body defile one spiritually. No doubt about it!

He says that it is sin that defiles a man. That's right, and I maintain that it is sinful to harm the body, become intemperate, damage one's influence and waste money.

He says that using tobacco *of itself* is not unlawful. Then he said that "if tobacco use of itself was not lawful," it could not be used even as an insecticide. It seems to me that he is mixing his laws. Is he speaking of laws of God or the laws of the land? Certainly God's law does not regulate the use of tobacco as an insecticide.

Unless he recommends chewing fingernails, he has admitted —

although somewhat reluctantly and indirectly — that he does not recommend smoking. Why not, brother Miller? Since you do it and try to defend it, why can't you recommend it? I would recommend it, or I would stop practicing it and trying to defend it. I don't recommend chewing fingernails, and I don't chew mine! I am consistent. Are you?

He said, "If harming the body is not sinful, proving that smoking harms the body would prove nothing as far as this debate is concerned." That's right; or at least it would remove my primary objection. But if it is possible to prove anything, I intend to prove that smoking harms the body. I can start on it now. The current issue (May, 1973) of SCIENCE DIGEST says:

"The United States Surgeon General's office maintains that eight out of ten lung cancer deaths in the United States today are caused by smoking . . . Among men who smoke less than a pack a day, the death rate is 40 percent higher than the rate for non-smokers. The rate is 70 percent higher for men who smoke one half to one pack a day; 90 percent higher for those who smoke one to two packs a day and 120 percent higher for those who smoke two or more packs a day."

Brother Miller will probably say that the Surgeon General and other doctors don't know what they are talking about. If he doesn't, so far as I recall he will be the first smoker I ever talked with who didn't dispute their findings. But, dear reader, remember that this doesn't matter with him. If I could prove beyond doubt that by smoking a pack of cigarettes a Christian would not live two weeks that wouldn't bother him. According to him, it is all right to commit suicide if one does so by taking into his body that which is "clean of itself" for nothing that enters the body can defile one spiritually.

Rolf, please do me a favor. I used to smoke, so I know all about it. I haven't smoked a cigarette in about 25 years. I have felt better, saved a lot of time and annoyance to myself and others, will live longer, and have or have otherwise used at least \$4,000.00 that I would not have had. Now tell me what I have missed that I should have had or enjoyed all of that time. Please tell me! Did I make a mistake by quitting? In view of all the advantages of not smoking, unless I have missed something worthwhile by quitting then you

and all smokers should join me. As I now feel, you couldn't pay me enough to get me to smoke. So please tell me what I have missed. Surely you are not going to continue to practice and defend something that you cannot recommend.

The answer to your last question ["Is it a sin to harm the physical body?"] is, absolutely!

Third Affirmative

Rolf L. Miller

Brother Britnell's questioning of motive, honesty, and objectivity is no more pertinent to this discussion than is whether or not people who chew their fingernails recommend such: neither has a thing to do with proving whether smoking is sinful or not. What is pertinent to this debate is what the Scriptures teach. But alas! Eugene does not smoke, feels better, and boasts that he will live longer (James 4:13-15 notwithstanding); so it is sinful to smoke? What people recommend, and what Eugene maintains, feels, and thinks I will say or do does not prove what the Scriptures teach!

Brother Britnell says his argument on Romans 14 stands. Where, Eugene? You argued that the context does not refer to tobacco any more than it does alcohol, etc.; but the context *does* refer to alcohol (verses 17, 21). You argued that Paul is speaking of what one eats, not what one smokes; yet the apostle also speaks of what one drinks, and *all* things. You deny that "all things" in verse 20 includes tobacco; but say smokers should quit because of verse 21. How about that, readers? Eugene has been saying the context does not include tobacco, yet says verse 21 teaches that tobacco users should quit immediately. Eugene, if the "anything" in verse 21 includes smoking, why does the "all things" in verse 20 not include it? Where is your consistency here, Eugene?

Brother Britnell can say what he will, Scripture still says there is *nothing* unclean of itself and *all things* are pure. Certainly a Christian should not do anything, including eating meat or smoking, whereby such would induce or entice his brother, who thinks it is wrong, to do such and thereby violate his faith in the matter ("stumble," "offend," "weak" defined by Thayer, p. 548, 576, 80). (Notice that "offend" does not mean simply doing something another does not like; it means causing one to sin by violating his faith, Romans 14:23; and a gospel preacher should know that.) Does this mean a Christian may not smoke? No more than it means he may not eat meat! Eating meat is lawful of itself, but to eat under a circumstance forbidden by God is sin. (The principle of Romans 14:21, 23 is applied to First Corinthians 10:23-29.) This does not mean that

one has to give up all eating meat: it means he must not eat under those circumstances. So it is with smoking, or anything, and thus one may eat meat, smoke, or anything under any circumstance God has not legislated against.

Now Eugene, the readers can determine who is quibbling and evading the issues. You, not I, brought up killing, alcohol, etc., in rebuttal, and I showed those things fit the principle that all things *of themselves* are lawful. Your denial still requires explaining how one could kill under any circumstance (Acts 25:11 & Romans 13:1-4), if killing *of itself* is unlawful. (And I am surprised that a gospel preacher would say the Bible's reference to killing is limited to killing people, Luke 15:27 & Acts 10:13.) Explain also how alcohol could be used medicinally, even as a preservative or diluted, if alcohol is unclean *of itself*. And if you think God has made tobacco use *of itself* unlawful, explain how God's law does not regulate its use under any circumstance.

Eugene asks how I judge "social drinking" wrong. Simply, the use of alcohol under the circumstance of "social drinking" is forbidden in I Peter 4:3. As for marijuana and heroin, there is no legislation against their use medicinally, but to use them for intoxication violates First Thessalonians 5:5-7

Now I no more contend that the body can sin without affecting one spiritually than do I teach that suicide is lawful. Certainly deeds done in the body can defile spiritually, but *only* when those deeds are transgressions of God's law because sin is the only thing which defiles spiritually (Mark 7:20-23). Brother Britnell thinks physical defilement is spiritual defilement — is sin, and maintains that anything which harms the physical body is sinful. The only problem with Eugene's position is that it denies the teaching of the Lord! Jesus says, "There is nothing from outside a man, that entering into him, can defile him" (Mark 7:15). The Lord says nothing — no thing, not a thing, and Eugene says tobacco. Yes, readers, Eugene says tobacco will do what Jesus said nothing from outside can do! Eugene, "Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from outside enter into the man, it cannot defile him" (Mark 7:18)? Eugene's denial of what the Lord says is his problem in this debate. He also rejects the medical advice given by inspiration in I Timothy 5:23, boldly saying, "I would not" do it, and that while not hesitating to cite the Surgeon General. Eugene, you can have the Surgeon Gen-

eral; I will stick with the Great Physician!

Does my brother see physical uncleanness condemned in I Corinthians 6:19-20; I Thess. 5:23 and Romans 12:1? In that order we find our bodies the property of God, and therefore we should glorify God in our bodies by keeping ourselves from sin. This is accomplished by setting our bodies apart to God's service, living according to God's will, and not using our bodies in ways that transgress the law of God. Eugene, where is material uncleanness condemned in these passages?

Brother Britnell's argument is this: it is sinful to harm the body; smoking harms the body; thus smoking is sinful. But Eugene has not proved his first premise. He assumes it, and says it, but where are the Scriptures that teach it? I realize he has a strong affirmative opinion against smoking, but Eugene does not happen to be the lawgiver. So it is not enough for him to say it. Therefore I again point out: until Eugene *proves* that harming the physical body is sinful, his proving smoking harms the body proves nothing in this debate.

However, since brother Britnell boasts his consistency, and does maintain that harming the body is sinful, I wonder if, in addition to smoking, he also classifies as sinful: drinking coffee, tea, and Coke, eating high cholesterol foods such as bacon and eggs, being overweight, getting sunburned, and lack of sleep? Do you Eugene? If not, why not? All these things harm the body! Also, do you condone Christians working in coal mines and smog areas? If so, why? Coal dust and smog are very harmful. Furthermore Eugene, if harming the body is sinful, should the church not get dietitians and physical education instructors to set up diets and exercise programs for each member lest they harm their bodies and sin by improper eating activities? If not, why not?

Reader, it is easy to see where brother Britnell's position will lead him: exactly where denominationalists have already gone! As pointed out in the introduction of this debate, a false concept will give rise to many erroneous doctrines.

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink" (Romans 14:17). Our primary concern is not to be how things affect our physical bodies, but rather the health of our souls (Matt. 4:4; 6:25; 10:28). "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after tradition of men, after rudiments of the world, and not after

Christ. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (touch not, taste not, handle not; which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men” (Colossians 2:8, 20-22)?

Third Negative

Eugene Britnell

Much of what brother Miller says in his third affirmative has been answered, and some of it isn't worth the space required to comment on it.

In his column of August 14, 1973, Dr. Walter C. Alvarez said:

“Federal estimates indicate from 30 to 40 per cent of high school students are now smoking. This saddens me, because on the average, smoking shortens a person's life by eight years; and as everyone should know by now, it tends to cause lung cancer, emphysema and several other diseases.

“If youngsters would only remember how terribly difficult it is for many people to stop smoking, once they have been at it a while, they would realize how much better it is never to begin a habit that is likely to be a lifelong curse.”

Rolf should correct the doctor. Everyone doesn't know that smoking causes cancer and is a curse. Rolf doesn't know that. He doesn't see how anything from outside can harm a person. Perhaps many young people would not take up the “lifelong curse” if Rolf and many other professed Christians would stop encouraging it by their practice and arguments. I'm certainly doing all that I can to discourage them.

A subheading of an article entitled, “Nicotine: Profile of Peril” in the September, 1973, *Reader's Digest* says, “It attacks the lungs, the heart, and the brain. It has killed more people than the great epidemics of typhoid, tuberculosis and yellow fever.” That is a quote from a 1971 report from Britain's Royal College of Physicians. Consider these statements from the article:

“Clearly, nicotine is a dangerous substance. At a seminar on addiction, habituation and the pharmacology of tobacco, held during the 34-nation First World Conference on Smoking and Health in September 1967, there was general concurrence that presumed action of nicotine ‘would link smoking

dependence with other major forms of dependence, such as heroin and alcohol.’

“Although most smokers of the 1.5 billion cigarettes lighted each day in this country don’t realize it, the stimulus they inhale is a volatile, poisonous alkaloid chemically known as C₁₀H₁₄N₂ and pharmacologically categorized as an organic nerve drug so powerful that a one-drop injection would cause instant death. In fact, it is believed that the drug action of nicotine is a primary cause of more deaths each year than are caused by that most frightening of hard drugs, heroin.”

The article also points out that the agents and pollutants from cigarette smoking causes 360,000 known deaths a year — an average of 1000 a day. And to think that a gospel preacher would defend such a practice and try to prove it by the Bible! I’d just as soon try to defend suicide. In fact, that’s what it is. It’s just plain stupid!

I shall make another effort to get Rolf to see the truth on Romans 14:14 and Mark 7:15. His whole argument is that since there is nothing unclean of itself and nothing from outside can defile a person, it is *impossible* to take anything into the physical body which would be sinful or cause one to be spiritually defiled. If that isn’t his argument, he hasn’t made one. But when I asked about alcohol, marijuana and heroin, he said they were wrong because they violate God’s law concerning drunkenness. That’s right, but what he doesn’t seem to see is that they are from outside and *included in his application* of Romans 14:14. If it is a sin to get drunk, then that which enters the body from outside becomes unclean and can be sinful. Otherwise, a man could get as drunk as a sick owl and it would not be wrong, for that which made him drunk was from outside and not unclean of itself. I want all to get this point: alcohol, which is clean of itself, when taken into the body — at least in excessive amounts — *causes* one to sin and thereby *becomes* unclean and forbidden. I challenge Rolf to deny that! But if it is the *cause* of the sin, how can it continue to be clean? He has perverted the passages and all but admitted it!

I have already agreed that tobacco, like alcohol, is not unclean of itself — when kept outside the body. But, like alcohol, when it en-

ters the body it *causes* one to violate other divine laws and thus the clean becomes unclean by causing one to sin.

I can name at least five laws of God which are violated by addiction to tobacco:

- (a) It harms the physical body. This has been clearly established — and it is sinful.
- (b) It is a waste of money. (Isaiah 55:2; I Corinthians 4:2.)
- (c) It is offensive to others and an infringement of their rights. (Matt. 7:12; Rom. 13:10.)
- (d) It damages one's influence and causes some to stumble, (cf. Romans 14:13, 21.)
- (e) It causes one to become intemperate. (I Corinthians 9:27; 2 Peter 1:6.)

He wants me to harmonize my use of “all things” in Romans 14:20 and “any thing” of verse 21. No problem. When I said, “I deny that ‘all things’ in verse 20 includes tobacco,” I was speaking of Paul's primary argument. The problems of that day and the warnings given concerned days and meats. Read the chapter. I have stated from the beginning that tobacco of itself is not unclean any more than is alcohol. The “any thing” of verse 21 should cause the smoker to quit and any Christian to stop any thing which causes one to offend. Consider Paul's course of conduct (I Cor. 8:13). Rolf calls attention to the apostle speaking of what one drinks, yet he has admitted that drinking can be sinful (third affirmative, fifth paragraph) so down goes his dogmatic and unlimited use of “all things.”

Rolf, please understand this: There is nothing unclean of itself. God made all things and nothing is inherently evil or unclean (I Tim. 4:4). I am concerned about *abuse*, whether it be tobacco, alcohol, meats or anything else. When you admit that there is anything which, when taken into the body, can cause one to sin (and you have) you surrender your position on Romans 14, and the basis of my objection is proved valid.

Well, I knew the Cokes were coming. I've never argued with a smoker yet who didn't try to find other “parallels” to justify his practice. Rolf has quite a list, including coal dust. There's a lot of difference in a man running some risk while doing what God has commanded (Eph. 4:28; I Tim. 5:8) and in deliberately and needlessly spending what he has earned to clog up his lungs and impair his health. I try to abstain from the things which he mentioned. Is it

wrong for a Christian to be consistent? It's wrong to be addicted to anything! When a man reaches the point that he cannot go through Bible classes and the worship service without going out in the front of the building and drinking tea, coffee or coke, eating some cholesterol and inhaling some coal dust, he has become sinfully addicted. But after all, the Government hasn't placed a warning on cokes, tea and coffee like it has on you know what. These things are not parallel to nicotine.

Yes, I believe that I Corinthians 6:19, 20, I Thessalonians 5:23 and Romans 12:1 teach that it is sinful to defile the body. Your own comments prove that to be true. It is absurd to teach that a Christian may deliberately defile his body and remain free from sin in so doing.

I'll accept both the Surgeon General and the Great Physician. The Surgeon General knows that smoking is harmful, and I can't possibly imagine the Great Physician walking around with a cigarette in his mouth!

Fourth Affirmative

Rolf L. Miller

According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the Scriptures are sufficient to making the man of God complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. Eugene, are the Scriptures sufficient for you to establish your position? Why then do you rely on the Surgeon General *addition* to the Great Physician? Yes, readers, he cites his imaginations, what the Surgeon General and other men maintain, and concludes that smoking is sinful. He says, "It (smoking) harms the physical body. This has been clearly established — and it is sinful." Note the lack of Scripture on that point! Think of it: a gospel preacher appealing to the opinions of men!

Shall I leave the sure word of God to wrangle and slosh around in the muddle of men's opinions and statistical pragmatics? Would such wallowing "clearly establish" anything? Look at that *Reader's Digest* article again. It speaks of that which is "believed" and "presumed" about the action of nicotine, and page 78 of that article talks about the "possible explanation" and what it "may" do. "Believed," "presumed," "possible explanation," "may"? Sounds like a text book effort to "prove" another theory to me.

Thirty-nine of the forty-nine medical authorities and statisticians who testified before the Senate and House Committees on Commerce in 1965 (after the Surgeon General's Report) disagreed vigorously with that report and charged its findings were distorted. The fact is, medical science still does not know the *cause* of cancer. How then can smoking be labeled a cause? Dr. Terry (the Surgeon General who made the report) conceded, "The chronic toxicity of nicotine is very low and probably does not represent an important health hazard." A Dr. Berkson (Mayo Clinic) said, "All relevant available facts considered, I think it very doubtful that smoking causes lung cancer." A Dr. Burford (chief of chest surgery, Washington University School of Medicine) added, "I do not believe that smoking is responsible for any shortening of life." And the supposed statistical association between smoking and cancer does not prove anything either. On the contrary, a look at those figures raises many questions such as: if smoking causes cancer, why do female

smokers contract less lung cancer than male smokers; and why has the disease not increased at the same rate as has cigarette consumption? The same can be arrayed against suppositions linking smoking with coronary disease. Other factors need examining such as: heredity, emotional stress, air pollution, etc. (Source: *True*, a Fawcett publication, January 1968.)

On it could go: Eugene citing his men, I mine, and when finished, the matter would be as clearly established as hogwash! We are to use God's word to establish right and wrong, not the opinions of men. Notice that nothing but Scripture had to be used in dealing with alcohol. If Eugene cannot do the same with smoking, he forfeits the proposition!

In "another effort" Eugene charges that I have perverted passages. Readers, you judge it. Paul says he knew "there is nothing unclean of itself" (Rom. 14:14). Jesus says, "There is nothing from outside a man, entering into him can defile him" (Mark 7:15). Eugene says, "Tobacco, like alcohol, is unclean of itself — when kept outside the body." Readers, who will you believe: Jesus and Paul, or Eugene?

Brother Britnell, do you not see that it is the doing of things *under circumstances forbidden by God* which defiles, and not things of themselves entering into a man? Yes, it is a sin to go out and get drunk. But that which enters the body from outside does not become unclean. It is the act under a forbidden circumstance that is unclean. His *transgressing God's law*, his *sin*, is what defiles him — not that which entered his body. I asked Eugene to explain how alcohol could be used medicinally if alcohol of itself entering a man defiled him. (Not worth answering, Eugene?) If you had tried to explain this matter, you would not still be contending that a thing of itself becomes unclean when it enters a man. And by the way, brother, I have never said that things taken into the body can cause sin. (Why did you say I said that, brother?) Sin is caused by lust (James 1:14-15). Sin results when one fulfills a lust unlawfully — abuses God's law.

Believing what the Scriptures say: tobacco is not unclean of itself, and tobacco entering into a man cannot of itself defile him spiritually. Therefore, it cannot be said that smoking is sinful unless a law of God is produced prohibiting such. Eugene says he can name at least five laws against smoking, and listed five points. Well, he

cited no law but himself on No. 1.

On No. 2 we have Eugene's opinion that smoking is wasteful. (I think buying big cars is wasteful. Does that make it sinful for you big car buyers?)

As to No. 3, I agree there are circumstances under which a smoker should not smoke out of deference to a nonsmoker. But that does not outlaw smoking under other circumstances.

As to No. 4, certainly a Christian should not smoke in a circumstance where his smoking would cause another to smoke in violation of his faith. But again, this does not demand giving up smoking entirely. The principle is clearly established in I Corinthians 10:23-33. All meat eating is not outlawed just because there are circumstances under which meat should not be eaten.

As to No. 5, I have never known a smoker (let alone the average smoker) whose smoking was uncontrollable — who could not abstain under any circumstance requiring such, including Bible studies and worship.

I also note that Eugene thinks smoking is “stupid” and suicide. Well, Eugene is entitled to his opinion, but so am I; and I think it is stupid for a man to contend that smokers smoke for the purpose and intent of taking their own lives.

The proposition is reaffirmed. The Scriptures do not forbid smoking per se, and thus the Christian is permitted to smoke under any circumstance that God has not legislated against.

Eugene thinks he has “no problem” regarding his remarks on Romans 14. Well, Eugene said the context did not have reference to tobacco any more than it did alcohol. But the context does refer to alcohol, and hence to tobacco by Eugene's own reasoning. He denied that “all things” included tobacco while saying “any thing” does include it. (Eugene, are you now saying “all things” does include tobacco?) This is not Eugene's only problem. He has boldly asserted that physical defilement is spiritual defilement. When asked to show us wherein the Scriptures condemns material uncleanness, he said he believes it, thinks it absurd to teach otherwise, and then had the affrontery to say *my* comments prove it. (Eugene, do you think the readers cannot read?) If anything is absurd, it is thinking that one can dirty the soul by getting his physical body dirty!

Now, readers, look at this. Eugene says it is sinful to harm the

physical body, but says it is different if a man is working. Can you believe it? It is alright to sin as long as it is done to provide for the family. Shall we sin that good may come? God forbid! (Is this what you call consistency, Eugene?) And telling us that he tries to abstain from Cokes, coffee, etc., does not answer whether or not he also classifies them as sinful. (Do you Eugene?) And if Eugene thinks caffeine is not parallel to nicotine, he needs to consult a good medical dictionary under poisons. As for government warnings, are they our standard? They are not consistent either. Ever seen a warning on a whiskey bottle? And what about the church getting dietitians and physical education instructors, Eugene? Your position demands warning members against *all* things that harm the physical body! Such is the consequence of claiming it is sinful to harm the physical man. No comment, Eugene?

Fourth Negative

Eugene Britnell

As I look back over what we have written, I see some need for clarification by each of us. I want to make sure that you understand me. I have no desire to accept or advocate an unreasonable or untenable position on anything.

I realize that universals are dangerous. I do not believe that every person who has smoked a cigarette has endangered his health or sinned. I've known people who lived to old age and smoked for many years. That doesn't prove that smoking is not harmful; it only proves how much some human bodies can endure. And you have no way of knowing, until it is too late, whether you have a body which can endure the harmful effects of smoking. One doctor compared this risk to playing Russian roulette, and only a fool would do that.

We need to distinguish between habit and addiction. Habits are not necessarily sinful. I've tried to form the habit of brushing my teeth, removing the key from the ignition, and locking my automobile when I leave it. But *addiction* is dependence, and that is wrong.

Brother Miller, do you approve of elders in the church smoking? If not, tell us why. If you do, please explain the meaning of "temperate" in Titus 1:8.

Speaking of elders who smoke, I would like to quote from brother Tom Medlock of Ada, Oklahoma, who had served as an elder and was dying with lung cancer when he wrote a booklet entitled, "What Smoking Has Done For Me." He said:

"Yes, I was an elder in the church of our Lord. And at the same time I was a heavy smoker. I taught regularly an adult Bible class and stood as an example for many others to see and follow. Oh, you elders of God's flock — I appeal to you! Get rid of your cigarettes so you will set the right example for His holy people. Don't tell them what to do and what not to do to avoid bringing reproach on the church then inhale that unsightly poison before them! I appeal as one who was an elder. My effort shall not have been in vain if you throw away your cigarettes. The young

people *watch* you and *ignore the preacher*. [It seems that in some cases they can watch the preacher smoke also. E.B.] They have been taught enough to know that the elders have the oversight of the preacher and the rest of the congregation. When he is up in the pulpit preaching his heart out on purity — what do you suppose they think when they see you with smoke pouring out of your face? They weigh the odds; the elders are older — they know better. The preacher is young; he has much to learn. He's not to be taken seriously. Elder, friend, by your example you nullify everything you hire your young preachers to preach. Do you realize this?

“Be men enough to stop your smoking. Let it be a sacrifice — didn't Jesus continually talk about sacrificing and denying self to follow him? And you expect the congregation to follow you! My fellow-elders, smoking has cost me my life; why let it cost you yours because of your unwillingness to give up nicotine poisoning?”

In his third affirmative, he implied that I violated James 4:13-15 by believing that I will live longer by not smoking. Brother Miller, do you believe that you will live longer by not being an alcoholic? If so, are you violating those verses? Of course not!

He mentions my appeal to “the opinions of men.” I am debating this issue on the basis of Scriptural principles and relevant facts and statistics. When showing the evils and dangers of alcohol, I not only appeal to the Bible but also the facts and opinions of knowledgeable men. In many things we must rely upon facts and statistics.

Rolf is so blinded by smoke and affected by nicotine that he completely missed the truth of the *Reader's Digest* article to which I referred. All that he could see was a few words and phrases — and he misunderstood or misrepresented them. The word “presumed” was used, not on whether nicotine was harmful, but on whether the action of nicotine “would link smoking dependence with other major forms of dependence, *such as heroin and alcohol*.” The words “possible explanation” were used, not in doubt of the harm of nicotine, but concerning how it may “chemically interact in such a way as to open the door to a whole battery of cancer-producing agents,

poisons and lung-pollutants in cigarette smoke.”

There is no doubt that nicotine is harmful. Scientists are uncertain in some areas as to how it works or all of the ways in which it may work. To misunderstand the article, or deny the harmful effects of nicotine, one must be ignorant of the facts or prejudiced.

But why does Miller waste his space in discussing the dangers of smoking? Since he denies that it is sinful to harm the body, if I could prove that the average smoker would shorten his life by at least five years it would not concern him. But, dear reader, suicide is wrong, whether it takes twenty seconds or twenty years!

He asked about female smokers and the relation of lung cancer with cigarette consumption. For your information, lung cancer among women is showing an alarming increase, and lung cancer is related to cigarette consumption — even the number smoked daily by an individual. Until recent years, lung cancer was practically unknown among women, but they have “come a long way” with their cigarettes and are catching up with men in all smoking-related diseases.

His reply to my five laws of God which are violated by addiction to tobacco was very weak. But after all, it is difficult to refute plain and simple truth. Read them again.

1. He says this is my opinion. In view of the evidence, his statement is absurd.

2. Does he think that two wrongs make a right? Evidently he does; but it isn't so.

3. He agrees that there is much truth in this argument. Does he act accordingly? Or is he like the majority of smokers who don't care what you think about it or how it affects you?

4. He agrees with me — at least in part — on this one. Yes, smoking is harmful to one's influence. Everyone knows that it is worldly (it certainly isn't spiritual) and an indication of weakness. Rolf, smoking has hurt your influence as a gospel preacher, and you will have to account for it! Paul was willing to give up a practice *entirely* when it became offensive to others (I Cor. 8:13). How many smokers are willing to follow this example?

5. His experience here is certainly different from mine. Nine out of ten smokers whom I have talked with have told me, “I would quit if I could.” Even in those things which are lawful, the apostle Paul said, “I will not be brought under the power of any.” (I Cor. 6:12.)

Though *all* things are in *our* power, we must not be brought under *their* power. Millions of smokers are under the power of nicotine. There is no doubt about it, for they admit it!

WHY DOES ANYONE WANT TO BEGIN SMOKING? What sensible reason could be given? Someone answers, "I enjoy it." That is not true! No one enjoys the first few and they usually make people sick. The only pleasure there is comes in replenishing the dying nicotine in the addicted body. Does the heroin addict *enjoy* the needles each day? Certainly not, but he enjoys the effect of them. Without addiction, there would be no pleasure.

Brief answers: Yes, the government is inconsistent. No, the church doesn't need dietitians; it needs teaching on "righteousness, *temperance* and the judgment to come."

Brother Miller, I've asked you before and you didn't answer, so you have one more chance: Do you recommend that people smoke? If not, why not? If yes, WHY? Since you practice and defend it, you must think there is something good about it. Your proposition says that the Scriptures teach that a Christian may smoke, and the Scriptures do not teach man to do anything that is of no value to him. We want a clear answer to these questions.

Fifth Affirmative

Rolf L. Miller

My brother says he has no desire to advocate an unreasonable or untenable position; but he then says he appeals not only to the Bible, but also to opinions of men. Also, he signed the negative of my position, and thus his position is: the Scriptures teach that a Christian *may not* smoke. Yet, he now states he does not believe that every person who has smoked a cigarette has sinned. Readers, that is what I believe: a Christian *may* smoke. But if Eugene believes that people can smoke without sinning, how can he reasonably assert that tobacco becomes unclean upon entering a man and defiles him? Indeed, is it sensible to point to smoking as harmful to the body, claim it is sinful to harm the body, and ***then say some can smoke without sinning?*** Was it not Eugene who said he did not believe one could sensibly or Scripturally defend that which is nonsensical and unScriptural? Such is the consequence of thinking of men above that which is written (I Cor. 4:6).

Brother Britnell says I am blinded; but Jesus is my judge, and He said it was vain to teach precepts of men for doctrine, those doing so being blind leaders of the blind (Matt. 15:9, 14). As for the *Reader's Digest* article: the point missed, Eugene, is that God's word is our judge (John 12:48) — not the presumptions of men.

Eugene says addiction is dependence and is therefore wrong. (Brother, where did you get that?) The fact is that *any* habit regularly practiced — applied habitually — is addiction (see a good dictionary). The only time a habit — and thus addiction — is wrong is when the practice violates God's laws (see I Corinthians 16:15-16).

Brother Britnell says the practice of smoking violates five laws of God, my reply to which he said was weak. If anything lacks strength it is a position which advocates that smoking violates laws of God, and yet says not every one who has smoked has sinned. However, look at his No. 1 again. What *law of God* is cited? ***None!*** Where are the Scriptures which teach that dirtying the body dirties the soul? There are none! The plain and simple truth is that all we have on this matter is Britnell's laws.

As to No. 2, unless he thinks it is sinful to buy big cars (or any luxuries), what sense does his answer make? No, two wrongs do not make a right; but Eugene's opinions do not make others' opinions wrong!

As to No. 3, yes I do act accordingly, and teach others to do so. Those who so control themselves violate no law of God; and by the way, that is "temperance."

As to No. 4, I did not say smoking harms influence; nor am I accountable to Eugene's pronouncements. But what does he mean by "harm" and "hurt" influence? Surely he does not have reference to the negative opinions others have toward us; for regardless of what we do, someone will view it with depreciation. John came neither eating or drinking, and they said he had a devil; Jesus came both eating and drinking, and they said he was a glutton and wine-bibber (Matthew 11:18-19).

Eugene cites Romans 14:13 and 21 for his point. To "offend" means to cause one to act in violation of his conscience (see 3rd aff.). It is the "offended," Eugene, who are weak (I Cor. 8:7-13), and if my pipe (or meat, tea, etc.) causes my brother to smoke (eat, etc.) in violation of his conscience, I will not smoke (or eat, etc.). So where is the transgression? As for smoking not being spiritual, neither is uncircumcision (or coffee, etc.); but that does not make it sinful.

As to No. 5, of course a smoker who is intemperate and admits it condemns himself (I John 3:20) — just as one who says it is sinful to harm the body, and then does things (anything, Eugene) which harms the body condemns himself. But again, I know of no smoker who cannot abstain under any circumstances requiring such.

Now to equate smoking with heroin addiction (or alcoholism) is as absurd as saying a thing is suicide because group statistics show it shortens life. The heroin habit is so fierce that addicts have committed grievous crimes for a "fix." Ever heard of smokers doing such for a smoke? (And smoking can hardly be likened to the pitiful results of alcoholism.) As for suicide, is sky diving, auto racing, etc. suicide because statistics show it reduces life expectancy?

Now to recommendations. Is it sinful to practice and defend that which one does not recommend? Eugene boldly states, "the Scriptures do not teach a man to do anything that is of no value to him." (Oh, Really?) Readers, kindly turn to Galatians 5:6. Now, may a

man remain uncircumcised? Is there any value in it? (Will Eugene accept his doctors on this?) Can the uncircumcised practice and defend it without recommending it?

Uncircumcision is allowed because God gave no commandment for or against it. Neither has He for or against smoking. That puts smoking in the same category as uncircumcision, and just as the latter can be practiced and defended without recommendation, so also can smoking. My answer then is: I allow it, just as I do uncircumcision, chewing fingernails, drinking coffee, and every other thing God has said nothing for or against. And if some man comes along saying it is not allowed, he ought not be given “place by subjection, no, not for an hour” (Galatians 2:3-5). Opinion binders are to be rejected (Titus 3:10)!

Let me make an appeal. Spiritual defilement is the only defilement for which God will destroy, and is that for which God sent His Son: Christ’s blood through baptism washes away spiritual filth — not physical (I Peter 3:21). To teach that physical dirt can defile the soul, and thus subject one to the wrath of God, is to teach that Christ died in vain because his blood does not cleanse physical defilement, and one so defiled could not therefore be saved. That kind of teaching does reproach Christ!

Let us then plead for pure spirits — not washed hands. Let us concern people about *how* they live — not with how long. Yes, the church does need teaching on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. So let us speak the oracles of God (I Peter 4:11) — not the opinions of men. Instruction in righteousness is completely furnished by the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) —and my brother needs to learn that!

Readers, no appeal to concepts of men has to be made in establishing spiritual matters because we have been given all that which pertains unto “life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). Looking into that by which we will be judged, no law of Christ against smoking per se is found. Indeed, nothing from outside, of itself entering into a man, can defile him (Mark 7:15). Since sin is the transgression of law (I John 3:4), and since no transgression can occur when there is no law (Rom. 4:15), smoking per se is not sinful. However, all things, which of themselves are lawful, may not be done under circumstances God has legislated against (as seen in I Cor. 10:23-28). Therefore, the Christian is at liberty to smoke under any circum-

stance not otherwise forbidden by God.

But let the smoker beware: there are times when he is not at liberty to smoke — courtesy being one often overlooked. Smokers are not to “despise” — to make of no account — the nonsmoker, just as the nonsmoker is not to “judge” — condemn, discriminate against — the smoker (Rom. 14:3). In these things, brethren, let us not destroy the work of God.

I will make my closing remarks in the short rebuttal Eugene has allowed me after his last article.

Fifth Negative

Eugene Britnell

From what I have observed through the years, I am convinced that at least 95% of the gospel preachers in the church oppose smoking and believe that it is wrong for a Christian to smoke. Are they all wrong? I see many articles and tracts in opposition to smoking.

Brother A.G. Hobbs has probably produced more tracts than any man in the church. He has a tract entitled “What About Tobacco?” which has a circulation of approximately 125,000 copies. He makes six basic points of opposition to tobacco:

1. The user stands self- convicted.
2. It is questionable.
3. It enslaves the user.
4. It tramples on the rights of others.
5. It is a stumblingblock.
6. It is a bad example.

He uses many Scriptures which I have used in this debate (such as I Cor. 6:12, 19, 20) and also denies that Mark 7:15 and Romans 14 justify smoking. He gives the following impressive quotation from the eminent Albert Barnes concerning I Corinthians 6:12:

“I will not be subdued by it; I will not become the *slave* of it. Of *any*. Of any custom or habit, no matter what it is. This is Paul’s rule; the rule of an independent mind. The principle was, that even admitting that certain things were in themselves right, yet his grand purpose was *not to be the slave of habit*; not to be subdued by any practice that might corrupt his mind, fetter his energies, or destroy his freedom as a man and as a Christian. Many a Christian and Christian minister *is a slave*; for he is completely under the power of some habit that destroys his usefulness and happiness. He is the SLAVE of indolence, or carelessness, or the SLAVE of some VILE HABIT, as the use of tobacco or wine. He has not independence enough to break the cords that bind him; and the

consequence is, that life is passed in indolence or self-indulgence, and time, and strength, and property wasted, and religion blighted, and souls ruined. The man that has not enough courage and firmness to act in this rule should doubt his piety. If he is a voluntary slave to some idle and mischievous habit, how can he be a Christian? If he does not love his Savior and the souls of men enough to break off such habits which he knows are doing him injury, how is he fit to be a minister of the self-denying Redeemer?" (Quoted by permission — and AMEN! E.B.)

In the *Sower* of March 1973, I published this sign which appears on all cigarettes [Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.], with the following statements: "America's Most Ignored Danger Signal! If the Government placed a similar warning on some food product, smokers would not eat a bite of it. Why the difference? They are addicted to nicotine!"

On April 28, 1973, I heard Dr. Alton Ochsner, Jr., of New Orleans, address the Arkansas Heart Association. He has published a lengthy article in the March-April 1971 "*American Scientist*" wherein we find this statement: "For the American male, ages 35 - 65, who smokes a pack or more of cigarettes per day, tobacco is an environmental hazard equal to all other hazards of life combined." No Christian should try to defend such practice.

Isn't it pathetic how weak some people are? You see men and women — even Christians who are made in the image of God and whose bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19) walking around with smoke pouring out of their faces. And think of the tobacco money which should have been spent for food, clothing and shelter for children and others who don't have the necessities of life. You would not believe the amount of *welfare* money that is spent for tobacco. I have even known of people buying tobacco while accepting relief from the church! Do you approve of that, Rolf? My, how we need to teach people to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11). Addiction to nicotine is a fleshly lust!

Well, he doesn't know the difference between habit and addiction, and wants me to see a good dictionary. I have before me

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. The word "dependence" or the idea of addiction is not found in the definition of *habit*. But on *addiction*, it says, "State of being addicted, especially to drugs." That includes the smoker and his nicotine! One may have a harmless habit, but to become addicted is to become dependent and intemperate. I still want him to define *temperance* (which is demanded in the Bible) and talk about it.

My five laws of God which are violated by the nicotine addict still stand. And when he talks about "any circumstance not forbidden by God" — that's the point. Such a practice is forbidden by God because it violates commands and principles from God. No doubt about it! And any sensible person knows the difference between smoking a cigarette and addiction.

He thinks that I have misunderstood and misrepresented him on sins of the body and spiritual defilement. In his third affirmative he said that he did not believe that the body can sin without affecting one spiritually. Neither do I. Question: Is it possible for one to defile the body? If so, doesn't that cause one to be defiled spiritually?

He said, "Our primary concern is not to be how things affect our physical bodies. . ." Now, dear reader, think about that — and think seriously. Contrast that with these statements from the apostle Paul: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your *bodies* a living sacrifice (not a burnt and smoked offering – E.B.), holy, acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1). "But I keep under my *body*, and bring it into subjection" (I Cor. 9:27). Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the *flesh* and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

And I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and *body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:23). (Emphasis mine – E.B.) It seems that Paul was very concerned about the body, but such concerns my opponent very little.

He said that my position demands warning members against *all* things that harm the physical body. Exactly! He said that if I proved that harming the body was sinful, he would agree that any thing harmful to the body is sinful. (1) Paul teaches that it is sinful to harm the body. (If not, please explain the above Scriptures.) (2) There is abundant evidence that nicotine harms the body. (3) Therefore,

smoking which harms the body is sinful!

Why all the excitement about circumcision? All I said was that the Scriptures do not teach man to do anything that is of no value. That is still true. Even that which is permissible becomes sinful when it violates other principles of divine truth (Galatians 2:3; 5:3).

He keeps saying that the Lord says *nothing* (Mark 7:15) and I say tobacco. Well, Rolf says alcohol, so it seems we are in the same boat. Neither alcohol nor tobacco are unclean of themselves, but when a Christian becomes addicted to either he sins. How simple that is!

Yes, I can equate heroin, alcohol and tobacco. Tobacco isn't as strong, but it can be as deadly. Rolf, would heroin addiction be right if one didn't commit "grievous crimes"?

I understand First Peter 3:21. No, physical dirt cannot defile the soul, but physical sin and defilement can. How can one be guilty of "spiritual filth" that doesn't involve the body?

I'm to make a brief comment following his one-page rebuttal, but I want to say some things now while he has opportunity to reply. Rolf, since you smoke and defend it, I ask again, *do you recommend it?* If so, why? If no, why? Are you *consistent?* Can you name **one** good thing about smoking? If so, what is it? It is my sincere belief that your feeble effort to defend such a senseless, filthy, destructive, offensive and expensive practice is motivated more by addiction than by conviction. Thousands will read this — even after you and I are gone — so you have one more chance to admit that which you surely know; warn people of the foolishness and dangers involved; and make a sensible and consistent plea for righteousness and temperance in view of the judgment to come (Acts 24:25).

Affirmative Rebuttal

Rolf L. Miller

I am truly sorry that Eugene believes my effort feeble, lacking conviction. I humbly submit that it affirms the proposition. To Eugene's last article, please see 5th affirmative, par. 14. As for "one good thing about smoking," I enjoy it; and more cannot be said about many things we do. Many lusts can be fulfilled lawfully, as in marriage. For recommendations, see 2nd affirmative, par. 13, 3rd affirmative, par. 1, and 5th affirmative, par. 11 & 12. As to what I said about alcohol, see 2nd affirmative, par. 6 & 7; and that does not put us in the same boat!

Look up "habit." Drug habits (addiction) is referred to. Also "addict" and read: "to apply habitually." Man applies habitually — addicts himself — to many things, even to the ministry of the saints (I Cor. 16:13). Sinful? Not unless it violates God's law! Eugene says his five laws against smoking still stand. Do they? See 5th affirmative, par. 4 - 9.

As to Hobbs' six points: (1 & 2) smokers I know do not question it; thus, they are not self-convicted; (4) see 5th affirmative, par. 16; (5) see 3rd affirmative, par. 3, and 5th aff., par. 8; (6) chewing fingernails is a "bad" example too, but evil? That is the question! As to (3) enslaves, he quoted Barnes on I Corinthians 6:12. Truth? The verse teaches us not to allow things to overpower us *to sin*. (*We are* to be servants, slaves, under the power of Christ.) Thus, smokers who do not allow their smoking to overpower them to the violating of God's law are not enslaved, overpowered to sin, servants of sin (study Romans 6:12-18). Incidentally, to so control one's self is temperance: that defines it.

Is it sin to harm the body? Read the passages in context, and see 3rd affirmative, par. 7. Eugene admitted: "physical dirt cannot defile the soul." How then can he say dirt harming the body is sin? There is only one sin against the body: fornication (I Cor. 6:18), not smoking! Paul's very concern was spiritual health — "exercise thyself rather unto godliness" — not physical fitness — "bodily exercise profits little" (I Tim. 4:7-8). But alas, Eugene proposes warning against all body harming. (Enter diet and exercise programs in the

church?)

Speaking more than the oracles of God is the foolishness needing turning from. Eugene now cites his observation (certainly not mine) and asks: “Are they all wrong?” Indeed! Denominationalists use the same sophistry asking: “Are all the great scholars (such as Barnes) wrong?” If it takes *today's* evidence to prove what is sin, what about yesterday? Tomorrow? At the judgment, today’s evidence will pass away with the world, leaving nothing but the word to judge. Readers, rest your faith upon God’s unchanging word; it is all we need!

Negative Rebuttal

Eugene Britnell

The honest and intelligent reader must know that I have defended the safe, sensible and Scriptural position in this debate. Brother Miller's approach has been unreasonable, unscientific, unrealistic, unfair to those who may be influenced to become addicted, and unscriptural. He based his position upon two verses — Romans 14:14 and Mark 7:15. If they justify addiction to one drug (nicotine), they justify addiction to any and all drugs. If not, why not?

He left many questions and arguments unanswered. For example, he said nothing about an elder smoking and the meaning of Titus 1:8. He surely recognizes that for an elder to be addicted to nicotine is a violation of the verse. But *temperance* is also *demanded* of every Christian (2 Peter 1:6). Addiction to any drug is a lack of temperance or self-control.

He finally named the “one good thing” about smoking — he enjoys it! That same argument would justify adultery. And I am sorry that he waited so long to introduce First Corinthians 6:18. It does not prove his position or deny mine. Space does not permit a clear and complete explanation.

To you who smoke: You may joke about it now and refuse to give serious consideration to the facts, but when time is running out and you are struggling to live in a diseased body racked with pain through extended abuse, Oh! How you will wish for the years which you have cut from your life. Then, you WILL be concerned about “how long” you live! Please stop while there may be time and opportunity for correction.

(This debate was first published in 1975. Second printing in 1980.)