

## THE MATTER OF BEARDS

### IS IT A BIBLE QUESTION?

We have received the following communication, with the permission of the writer to insert it with remarks if we saw fit.

BRO. SMITH: Can you tell me what we may understand by the *image of God*, or *marring* his image? It is contended that by cutting the hair from the chin we *mar* the image of God.

Is not the position thus taken an assumed one? Should we be warranted in taking the position that Adam was created with hair on his chin? It may be; who knows? Would the Lord have required a man to shave under certain circumstances in order to be clean, if it had been a thing he had entirely disapproved? Lev. xiv, 9; Acts xxi, 24.

Among the Jews, to neglect to trim or dress the beard was an expression of deep mourning. Jer. xli, 5; xlvi, 37. If trimming the beard or hair is proper and not sinful, [2 Sam. xix, 24,] who will say how close it shall be trimmed?

The Jews had doubtless, in common with other Asiatic nations, several fashions in wearing their beard. If they could thus vary in their countenance and not meet a reproof, why should we be condemned in following the habits of another nation in this matter.

Respectfully yours,

Jackson Mich.

H. S. G.

REMARKS. We see no necessity of adding much to the above remarks. Believers in man's natural immortality will tell us that the image of God in which man is created is the immortal part. But as we find no such immortal part predicated of man in the Scriptures, we cannot receive this exposition. Others will tell us that the image is a moral one, and that it was in righteousness and holiness that man was made to resemble his Maker. But when it is said that man was made in a certain image, it is evidently implied that he might have been formed in some other image. But how could man have been otherwise than holy at his creation? His unrighteousness must of course be dependent on his subsequent actions. There is therefore no possibility of his being otherwise than without sin when he was created and commenced his career as a free moral agent. But man was placed on probation; he was liable to fall at any moment. God is not thus subject to any such contingency. There is no image here.

We understand therefore that when God said "Let us make man in our image after our *likeness*," he referred to his personal and visible form. Man was made not prone like the beasts, but walking upright; and in this respect and in his personal outline, we understand, he bears a resemblance to his Maker. "So God created man in his own image," says Gen. i, 27. "in the image of God created he him, *male* and *female* created he them." We now inquire, Was not the female in the sense of Gen. i, 26, 27, created as much in the image of God as the male was? Who will take it upon them to say she was not? And if

so, it will not take much to perceive that a beard is not a necessary feature of that image. The distinction of 1 Cor. xi, 7, seems to be in reference to authority and dominion, rather than form.

The expression, "mar the image of God," we do not find in the Scriptures. But even if we did, where is the testimony which shows that shaving or trimming the beard would mar that image, any more than cutting the hair, or pairing the nails. And before we can take the position that some do on this question, we not only want the Scripture testimony as above, but we must also see some propriety in superstitiously preserving one of these appendages more than the others.

We consider the quotations of our correspondent to the point as showing that the custom of shaving or trimming the beard was not obnoxious to the divine displeasure. We might add Num. viii, 7; Gen. xli, 14. On Lev. xix, 27, the Religious Encyclopedia thus speaks: "Moses forbade them (the Hebrews) to cut off entirely the angle or extremity of their beards; that is, to avoid the manner of the Egyptians, who left only a little tuft of beard at the extremity of their chins." Some, we are aware, will throw this aside as human testimony; but, we ask, can a more probable reason be given for that command? From the testimony of the Encyclopedia Americana we might infer that pride sometimes lay at the foundation of a luxuriant beard. It says, "The beards of different nations afford an interesting study. Some have hardly any, others a great profusion. The latter generally consider it a great ornament the former pluck it out; as, for instance, the American Indians." The Religious Encyclopedia continues: "Nothing has been more fluctuating in the different ages of the world, and countries, than the fashion of wearing the beard. Some have cultivated one part and some another; some have endeavored to extirpate it entirely, whilst others have almost idolized it. The revolutions of countries have scarcely been more famous than the revolutions of beards." "The Hebrews wore their beards but doubtless had in common with other Asiatic nations, several fashions in this, as in all other parts of dress."

We wish our position distinctly understood on this question. On the question itself, as some of our readers will recollect, we have taken the ground of neutrality: that is, we care not whether a man wears a beard or not. The Bible says nothing against it, and it says nothing for it. If a person thinks that health or convenience, one or both, demand the undisturbed development of his beard, we shall regard him no differently on that account from one who does not do this. Perhaps we ought to say however, in palliation of these remarks, that on the subject of making it a Bible matter, and regulating it by religious scruples, we are not neutral. Against such a course, since the Bible is silent thereon, we still feel as we have ever felt, earnestly and strenuously to protest.