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THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Shaving
A harmless fashion?



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
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Shaving— A Harmless Fashion?

“In an awe-inspiring way I am wonderfully made!”
—Psalms 139:14

SONGS: 54, 125

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Do the scriptures help us to understand Jehovah’s feelings towards shaving?

How does my appearance affect others’ opinion of the message I preach?

Did our Exemplar Jesus Christ wear a beard?

WHEN Jehovah God created man and woman, he wisely gave them each unique physical characteristics. (Genesis 1:27) While Eve possessed feminine beauty, the Creator saw fit to endow Adam with a muscular build, along with facial hair. In the generations since, many cultures have regarded a beard as an evidence of manly dignity.* What about today? In the light of modern trends, is this a gift to be esteemed lightly?—James 1:17.

² In personal grooming matters, such as growing or shaving one’s beard, Jehovah has granted humans freedom to decide for themselves. Also, he has given them godly guidance, and thinking ability to make such decisions wisely. Certainly, a true Christian will not leave such important decisions to personal preference, nor to the ever-changing fashions of Satan’s world.

—Isaiah 17:9; 1 John 5:19.

*In this article, we refer to those with facial hair in the masculine sense, although the principles apply regardless of gender.

HOW DOES JEHOVAH FEEL?

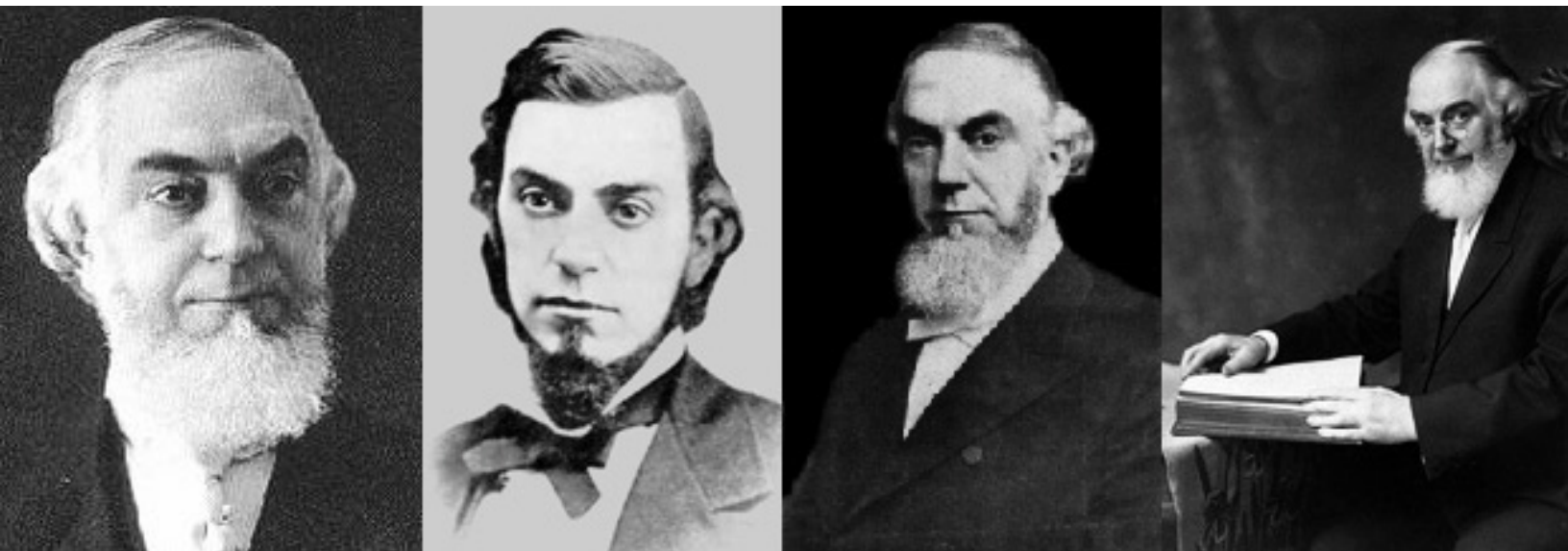
³ Do the scriptures help us understand Jehovah's feelings toward shaving? Consider: most biblical references to shaving or plucking the beard illustrate calamity, mourning, grief, or shame. (Ezra 9:3; Isaiah 7:20; 15:2; Jeremiah 48:37; Ezekiel 5:1) Men from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria expressed their distress over Jerusalem's destruction by shaving their beards. (Jeremiah 41:5) Hanun humiliated David's men by forcibly shaving their beards, an insult that led to war. —2 Samuel 10:4.

In contrast, the fullness of a beard is associated with goodness and pleasantness. "Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like fine oil poured on the head that runs down the beard, Aaron's beard, and runs down onto the collar of his garments."
—Psalm 133:1, 2.

⁴ God's law to his people Israel prohibited the cutting off of the sidelocks and beards, equal in importance to the prohibitions against eating blood and practicing magic. (Leviticus 19:26, 27; 21:5) This set them apart from the surrounding pagans, for whom shaving, eating blood, and magic were common religious practices. Jeremiah describes the opposers of Jehovah, who were in line for His adverse judgement, as "those with hair clipped at the temples."
—Jeremiah 9:26; 25:23; 49:32.

Admittedly, true Christians today are not bound by the tenants of the Mosaic Law, but neither are they inclined to ignore pointed indications that are found in God's Word. This includes that shaving of beards is linked to pagans, and to shameful, grievous circumstances. Hence, the Scriptures clearly place shaving of beards in a negative light, a fact that sincere Christians do not disregard.

Charles Taze Russell, the founder of modern day Jehovah's Witnesses, provided a fine example of using his God-given thinking ability and bible-trained conscience when deciding whether or not to wear a beard.





In modern times, a well-groomed beard has become a **dignified style among respected business and civic leaders**. On the other hand, a shaved, effeminate face often represents pious evangelicals, or even those who advocate sexual fluidity.

(See paragraph 6)

ADORN THE TEACHING OF GOD

⁵ True Christians put a high priority on the effectiveness of their ministry. So one does well to consider, “How does my appearance affect others’ opinion of the message I preach?”—2 Corinthians 6:3.

A beardless male face has, at various times, been associated with certain sub-cultures. For example, ancient Middle Eastern monuments and inscriptions show men with beards, except for eunuchs, who were mainly depicted beardless. In the 11th century C.E., the clean-shaven armies of William of Normandy were mistaken for “holy men”, or priests of Christendom, by the spies of Harold the Saxon of Hastings. And in the 1800’s, shaving became an obsession for flamboyant aristocratic dandies, following the lead of George Bryan ‘Beau’ Brummell.

⁶ Similarly, in modern times, a neatly trimmed beard has become a dignified style among respected business and civic leaders. On the other hand, a shaved, effeminate face often represents pious evangelicals, or even those who advocate sexual fluidity. So, when we share the good news with others, what impression does our appearance give? Surely, we desire that nothing about us personally detract from the good news. —Titus 2:10. Did our Exemplar, Jesus, wear a beard? Certainly it was a custom strictly held by the Jews. Like all other Jews, Jesus was under obligation to keep the whole Law, including the prohibition on shaving the beard. (Galatians 4:4) Since the Roman custom was beardlessness, if Jesus had been shaven, he would have been challenged as being either a eunuch or a Roman! Can we improve upon his design? Never may that be so!