

# ***Amen!***

## **with appendix on “Clapping”**

Reasonable and experienced Christian people subscribe to the notion that God’s Word is our rule of faith and practice, even regarding matters of the combined public worship of God’s people. Let me cite a simple statement concerning what is commonly referred to as the Regulative Principle:

Put simply, the regulative principle of worship states that the corporate worship of God is to be founded upon specific directions of Scripture. On the surface, it is difficult to see why anyone who values the authority of Scripture would find such a principle objectionable. Is not the whole of life itself to be lived according to the rule of Scripture? This is a principle dear to the hearts of all who call themselves biblical Christians. To suggest otherwise is to open the door to antinomianism and license.<sup>1</sup>

God’s Word should affect every congregation’s approach to the gathered worship of God’s people, including the use of the word “amen.”

During our Church’s Wednesday night Bible study, I teach a series on the Gospels titled ***The Life and Lessons of the Lord Jesus Christ***. In Mark 10.15 and Luke 18.17, the Lord Jesus Christ stated a principle for one and all to hear. Our Lord was very displeased with His disciples for hindering the access of the little children nearby and the adults who brought them to be blessed by Him. It is important to note that our Lord began His pronouncement of the vital principle related to the access we have to Him by starting with the word “verily,” or “amen.”

It is appropriate that we explore the doctrine related to the word “amen.” It is so important throughout the Bible and was used so frequently by the Savior to draw attention to extremely significant statements He made. I found it very interesting as a young preacher that no one in my first pastorate ever said “Amen” aloud during worship. I was not the only person who noticed this behavior at that time.

I have heard, on more than one occasion, in my previous pastorate, that people in the Church did not say “Amen” to anything unless they were explicitly asked to do so. I wondered to myself, “Why doesn’t anyone in this Church ever say ‘Amen’?” Months later, I noticed in an article that I read on the proper use of “amen” in Church that I found my answer. It suddenly dawned on me that maybe no one says “Amen” because they have never been instructed to do so. After all, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to a preacher named Timothy to teach him how “thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God.”<sup>2</sup>

I figured that if Timothy needed instruction on such things and he was a preacher, then maybe other folks needed instruction, too. I know I needed instruction. Therefore, I

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/regulative-principle-worship>

<sup>2</sup> First Timothy 3.15

decided to prepare and then preach a sermon titled “Amen.” I delivered that message to the current congregation in 1979, and again at the beginning of my second pastorate in 1985.

I believe that it is a message worth repeating from time to time. Why should this type of sermon be preached repeatedly? Three reasons: *First*, the frequency with which the word is used in God’s Word demands that it be adequately explained. *Second*, so folks will understand the reason why the Lord Jesus Christ made such effective use of the word. And *third*, just like at my first pastorate, I noticed that the word was seldom used by the second congregation I served. I thought perhaps the problem exists in other congregations as well. Hence, the reason for this pamphlet.

I like to be systematic in my preaching and writing, so the framework of this booklet is an outline addressing questions about the word “amen” and its proper use for the child of God.

### **First, WHEN IS THE WORD “AMEN” USED?**

Let’s look at the word “amen” as God has acted in the affairs of men and recorded in His Word.

First, we notice that the word “amen” was intended to be used in the past. It is important to note that when the children of Israel were given the Law of Moses, they were explicitly instructed, actually directed, to say “Amen.”<sup>3</sup> There are 22 separate verses in the Old Testament alone in which the word “amen” is used.<sup>4</sup> Significantly, 14 of those 22 verses were occasions in which the children of Israel were directed to say “Amen.”

Think about that for a moment. If 14 of the 22 Old Testament uses of the word “amen” are directives for God’s people to say “Amen,” then it behooves us to sit up in our chairs and take note of this word. Might this word prove to be a surprisingly important term in our vocabulary? I point this out because the word was not only used in the Old Testament, but also *mandated* on certain occasions.

Next, not only was the word “amen” supposed to be used by God’s people in the past, but it is also supposed to be used by God’s people in this present age. As far as God is concerned, you and I live in the Age of the Churches. Therefore, what was proper conduct for a Church congregation and a believer in the book of Acts is also appropriate for us. What was correct for Christians to *say* then is suitable for us to *say* now.

Are you surprised to learn the word “amen” is found 50 times in the New Testament?<sup>5</sup> All but two of the New Testament writers made use of the word, and in most New Testament epistles where it is found, it is the final word of that book. I have little doubt that the Jewish Christians of Paul’s day made frequent use of the word “amen” during their preaching and prayer, a practice certainly brought over from their synagogue worship.

However, the term was likely unfamiliar among the heathen Gentiles of that day. This

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<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 27.14-26

<sup>4</sup> Numbers 5.22; Deuteronomy 27.15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26; First Kings 1.36; First Chronicles 16.36; Nehemiah 5.13; 8.6; Psalm 31.13; 72.19; 89.52; 106.48; Jeremiah 28.6

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 6.13; 28.20; Mark 16.20; Luke 24.53; John 21.25; Romans 1.25; 9.5; 11.36; 15.33; 16.20, 24, 27; First Corinthians 14.16, 24; Second Corinthians 1.20; 13.14; Galatians 1.5; 6.18; Ephesians 3.21; 6.24; Philippians 4.20, 23; Colossians 4.18; First Thessalonians 5.28; Second Thessalonians 3.18; First Timothy 1.17; 6.16, 21; Second Timothy 4.18, 22; Titus 3.15; Philemon 25; Hebrews 13.21, 25; First Peter 4.11; 5.11, 14; Second Peter 3.18; First John 5.21, Second John 13; Revelation 1.6, 7, 18; 3.14; 5.14; 7.12; 19.4; 22.20-21

is why I think Paul and other New Testament writers used the word “amen” so much in their writings. I suggest they were introducing their Gentile converts to the proper use of the word “amen” through their example. This is also how I came to use the term “amen” after I received Christ and started attending Church. My experiences over the years persuade me that the proper use of the term is most widely practiced in the Southern states or among people who first began attending Church there.

What surprised me when I first preached this message (and is still a source of some consternation now) is the large number of people who have been in Church for years (even those with Southern backgrounds) who still do not use the term. The problem may be a lack of exposure to the word “amen.” If this is the case, I hope this booklet will address the issue so that God will use believers to influence new converts in the proper use of the term “amen.”

“Amen” was used in the past. It is supposed to be used in the present. We also see that the saints will use “amen” in the future. The word “amen” is found four times in Revelation, chapters one and three. However, it is in Revelation chapter seven that it is revealed to us that the word “amen” will be used by an innumerable multitude of folks who have gone to Heaven and whose worship of the Son of God in Heaven will include the proper use of the word. Revelation 7.9 12:

- <sup>9</sup> After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;
- <sup>10</sup> And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.
- <sup>11</sup> And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,
- <sup>12</sup> Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

This great multitude of saints are Church Age believers who will be in Heaven. Their conduct in worship helps us to recognize that saying the word “amen” aloud, in the appropriate manner and at the relevant time, is a proper form of worship to be rendered to God by those who comprise the bride of Christ. We also see that the elders and four creatures that fall before the throne of God praise Him and cry out “Amen” as they continually worship the Lord God Almighty (Revelation 5.14; 19.4).

Therefore, we see that the proper use of “amen” is not just a nice commodity that the preacher would like to have said during his preaching. But it is more than that. Saying “Amen” should be seen as something that God has elevated to a place of significance in worship. He has revealed to us that it is His will that the word be voiced. He has made space in His Word to show its right and proper use in the past, present, and future.

## **WE KNOW WHEN THE WORD “AMEN” WAS USED. BUT WHY IS THE WORD “AMEN” TO BE USED?**

There are several reasons why God wants His people to say “Amen” during public worship.

First, saying “Amen” helps involve more people in worship. We know that instruction

is given in God's Word about the proper execution of a worship service. Passages such as James 3.1, First Timothy 2, and First Corinthians 14 make it clear that God desires only those few who are equipped, qualified, and called to preach the Word of God.

The same kind of situation existed in Old Testament times with the nation of Israel. Little has changed in the essentials of worshiping God. God did not want everyone to preach, either then or now. Nor did He want everyone to sit idly and doze off while the preacher delivers his sermon. This is why God implemented this plan that enables **everyone** to participate in the worship of the one true and living God.

What is the method by which everyone can participate in the preaching of God's Word and in the proper worship of God at a public meeting? It is not by having everyone take a turn teaching the Bible or playing a musical instrument. Instead, it is by correctly and in a timely fashion using the word "amen."

Second, the word "amen" used during public worship *will convey the truth*. Are there not always members in the congregation who are respected and esteemed for their private study of God's Word and their knowledge of the Truth? They are recognized in the Church by those who have typically been members for more than a few months as theologically sound. These members read and study the Bible and acknowledge sound, historical orthodoxy. It is their reaction to what God's preacher says that will drive home essential truths into the hearts of the congregation.

I remember when I was a young Christian. And a member of a small Church in the Los Angeles area, I sat close to the front of the auditorium so I could get the "drippings" from the altar. After attending that Church for only a few months, I noticed that almost everyone in the Church would watch my reaction whenever the preacher said something they had never heard before.

I never disputed or disagreed with anything my pastor ever preached, but was from the beginning a serious student of God's Word. I discovered that when the right person acknowledges the preacher's words with a good, strong "amen," it might as well be carved in stone. The people in the Church house will accept it as accurate, frequently without ever consciously realizing what thought processes or outside influences went into their decision to accept or reject what is said.

Given that much that goes on in one's mind is just below the surface of consciousness, and may be in the realm of the almost unconscious, a good "Amen" can also be beneficial for new Christians or visitors. Resulting from the frequency and strength of the "Amens" that they hear, and who they hear them from, new Christians and visitors gain some understanding of the importance of the truth that the preacher has just conveyed.

By the way, ladies, please consider the propriety of your saying "Amen" while sitting next to your husband. Exercise your judgment concerning whether or not he or someone else might think you are usurping authority over him. Let him say "Amen" if he is sitting next to you. However, if you sit away from your husband so you can be in a better position to minister to visiting women, then saying "Amen" appropriately is entirely proper. It may not be an issue with your husband or anyone else, no matter where you sit. That is your call.

The last reason the word "amen" might be used is to influence God's people to do right. How many times are the words of a preacher spoken with no effect because no "amen" follows to reinforce his pronouncement? When the preacher or teacher declares that Jesus Christ is God, and no "Amen" follows, it may be erroneously surmised by visitors

that what was just said must not have been particularly important to those sitting in the auditorium.

As well, a new convert who hears the preacher say, “God expects everyone to be a witness for Jesus Christ. Come to evangelism,” and then there is dead air, may conclude that evangelism must not be vital. However, evangelism is critical! Do not rob others of the joy of representing Christ by your silence, even if you do not have that joy in your own heart. Say “Amen” when an “amen” is called for. It will influence God’s people to believe right and to do right.

**“PREACHER, I UNDERSTAND, NOW, THAT THE WORD ‘AMEN’ IS TO BE USED, AND I AM BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND ITS USEFULNESS. BUT WHERE IS THE WORD ‘AMEN’ TO BE UTTERED?”**

The word “amen” is to be used in private communion with God. When the Lord Jesus was asked to teach His disciples to pray, He did so by giving them the model prayer recorded in Matthew 6.9-13. We know from verse 7 that this exact prayer was not given to be recited over and over, as a religionist or some mindless zombie would try to do.

The Lord Jesus indicated that only the heathen vainly repeat prayers over and over again. For the child of God, prayer is honest communication with our Father in Heaven. The Christian knows that his Father hears his prayers and answers them. However, when this communication, this prayer, this pleading with God and asking of Him is finished, it is to be concluded with “amen.”

“Amen” is such an important word. It is a word used to strongly affirm what has been stated, with the Lord Jesus Himself being the ultimate “Amen,” Revelation 3.14.<sup>6</sup> “Amen” is the seal stamped on the letter you have just mailed to Heaven. It shows that you are confident that you have been heard, and the matter of concern that caused you to pray and ask of God has now been given over to more capable hands than your own. Close your prayers with “Amen.”

However, do not just say “Amen” when no one is around. Voice the word when others hear you, as well. “Amen” is a word that should be used in public worship. When Ezra opened the Book of the Law to preach in Nehemiah 8.6, the people all stood. Then, when he blessed God, they all said “Amen, Amen.”<sup>7</sup> “Amen” is a word that should be used in public worship.

The Psalms are spiritual songs and poems. Some were first written to be sung during worship time at the Temple. In Psalm 106, the psalmist instructs the people to say “Amen” and “Praise ye the LORD” at the close of the Psalm.<sup>8</sup> In First Corinthians 14, Paul expressed concern that those present in public worship would not know when to say “Amen.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, when the word “amen” is shouted out in Heaven, it is as a public act of worship.

These examples should serve to show us that we should not be shy about saying “Amen” in the house of God, or anywhere else, for that matter. Amen? Do you want to

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<sup>6</sup> Bauer, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), pages 53-54.

<sup>7</sup> Nehemiah 8.6

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 106.48

<sup>9</sup> First Corinthians 14.16

declare yourself to a room full of strangers (and inform them of the language they choose to use)? Respond to what someone says by saying, “Amen.” Want to make sure others know where you stand? Let them hear you say “Amen.” Want to learn how to let others at work know there is a Christian in the crowd? Say “Amen” in an appropriate way and at a proper time.

**YOU NOW KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS WORD “AMEN” THAN MOST FOLKS KNOW. MORE THAN MANY PREACHERS, FOR THAT MATTER. HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE THING REMAINING. JUST HOW IS THE WORD “AMEN” USED?**

There are four distinct situations wherein the word “amen” is to be used by those who would worship God in spirit and in truth.

First, say “Amen” to testify to the righteousness of God’s judgments. In Numbers chapter five, we have God’s ordinance for women who were suspected by their husbands of committing adultery but whose husbands did not have conclusive proof.<sup>10</sup> Those of you familiar with the chapter will remember that the wife was to be brought by her husband to the priest, who then mixed a concoction for her to drink.<sup>11</sup> The priest would then pronounce a curse upon the woman should she be guilty of adultery, as her husband suspected. The curse was that her belly would swell, her thigh rot, and she would die for sinning by committing adultery.<sup>12</sup>

To show that she agreed with such a judgment for the sin of adultery, the woman was instructed to say “Amen” and then to drink the potion.<sup>13</sup> If she were innocent, nothing would happen. However, if she were guilty, the curse would be fulfilled, and she would die an agonizing death. The point I want to make is that the woman said, “Amen, Amen.” Her “amens” were a public declaration of her innocence and her acceptance of God’s righteous judgment in the matter.

In Nehemiah chapter five, we have the account of the Jews charging interest on loans to their countrymen. Nehemiah challenged them to stop their sinful practices and told them that their behavior was against God’s Law and was sinful.<sup>14</sup> Were those Jewish men angered, like many so-called Christians become when they are told that what they are doing is sinful and contrary to the will of God? No. They all shouted “Amen,” and obeyed God.<sup>15</sup>

Christian, you should decide right now that when you are pegged for sinful behavior, you will demonstrate the character needed to respond in kind by saying “Amen,” and then obey God. Amen?

Second, say “Amen” *to praise God for all His blessings*. When King David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, there was great joy and praise of God. First Chronicles 16.36 records that David praised God, and the people responded with “Amen,” then praised the LORD themselves. In like manner, when one of us praises our God, the rest of us

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<sup>10</sup> Numbers 5.11-29

<sup>11</sup> Numbers 5.17

<sup>12</sup> Numbers 5.19-22a

<sup>13</sup> Numbers 5.22b

<sup>14</sup> Nehemiah 5.6-13a

<sup>15</sup> Nehemiah 5.13b

ought to join in with a hearty “Amen,” and praise the LORD right along with him. Amen? I love it when women in our Church do that.

Third, say “Amen” in response to public prayer. In Nehemiah 8.6, the prophet Ezra was preparing to teach and preach the Word of God to the children of Israel who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile. Before he began to read the Word of God, we are told that “Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God.”

What was the people’s response? What did they do without any apparent provocation or prompt? The Bible tells us that “all the people answered Amen, Amen, with lifting their hands.” The people were familiar enough with the Bible to know what God wanted them to do at that point, and they did it. When one for all blesses God, all can join in that blessing to God by saying “Amen, Amen” and lifting their hands. I think it ought to be done without the preacher saying, “And all God’s people said ....” Don’t you agree?

The final situation in which one should say “Amen” is *to bring fervor to the worship of God*. I don’t know how many times I’ve noticed that a good “Amen” will completely turn the complexion of a preaching service around, even though it does not usually happen where I serve because so few people ever say “Amen.”

However, when the word “amen” is used appropriately, it affects the preacher, the lost people present, and God’s people. It can serve to unite a Church around the truth that is being preached, around Christ, Who is being exalted, or God Who is being praised. It creates a oneness of spirit that is needed in every congregation. It also encourages close attention to God’s Word. The one who says “Amen” will want to make sure it is appropriate to do so. Amen? How embarrassing it would be for someone to say a loud “Amen” at the wrong time. Amen?

I encourage you to say “Amen” when it is appropriate during the preaching of God’s Word. I believe people are emotional, physical, and spiritual beings, and sometimes God’s people need to rejoice and speak their piece without interrupting the preaching in any way. This can be done by uttering “Amen” at the appropriate time.

We hear testimonies from time to time when I serve as pastor. I know that saying “Amen” can be a great encouragement when someone is testifying to God working in their life. It is a way others can support, bolster, and encourage someone by saying “Amen” to express one’s agreement and recognition of what is being testified. Saying “Amen” is needed in Christ’s Church to show conviction, concern, joy, and to say, “Job well done!”

I pray God will turn loose many good “Amen” men and women to be a blessing in many congregations. Men and women who will be humble enough to allow their pastor to coach them as they learn the skill and discernment of helping the preacher deliver his message from God’s Word in this way.

I also pray that parents will have enough courage and wisdom to warm up the britches of their kids who misinterpret our public responsiveness to the preaching of God’s Word as a time to be frivolous and irresponsible.

Amen?

## APPENDIX

### “CLAPPING”

I cannot think of any Christian who denies God’s right to be worshiped as He prescribes in His Word. What most Christians disagree about is the failure to consider that God might regulate His worship through His people in Scripture. Or that God would give varying amounts of spiritual illumination related to the meaning and application of passages concerning worship.

For example, I have heard it said by men called the “Worship Pastor” that dancing is entirely appropriate when worshiping God, citing the passage Second Samuel 6.16, which records David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant. However, David was leading a procession while leaping and dancing and was not then actually engaged in prescribed worship. Thus, it isn’t accurate to suggest that because he danced before the Ark of the Covenant in a procession, there is a place for dancing in Christian worship in the assembly.

Granted, there are times when congregations gather for reasons other than worship. Sometimes we gather for fellowship, such as on the Church’s anniversary. At other times, we gather for purely evangelistic endeavors to present the unsearchable riches of Christ to the lost, such as during an evangelistic crusade (unfortunately referred to by too many as a “Revival”). In these gatherings, the most important are those for worship, even when the presence of unsaved people is a distinct possibility. (First Corinthians 14)

When you are worshiping God, what are some of the guidelines for decorum and propriety? We have seen the guidance provided in Scripture for the proper use of the word “amen” by God’s people during worship. It is a means by which the saints can participate in the preaching without interrupting, but rather reinforcing and agreeing with what is declared.

However, there is an increasing tendency in congregations to respond to preaching that seems to have its origin outside Christianity, in the theater, and as a means of expressing approval for a performance. I refer, of course, to applause. We see it after a singer completes a song. We see it following a dramatic performance, such as a Christmas play. It has even found its way into Christian assemblies as a means of expressing approval and agreement. However, is applause appropriate in worship?

Pastors will sometimes apologize for their people when applause interrupts a sermon (saying “Amen” never interrupts a sermon) by suggesting, “That’s just our way of doing it.” However, is that explanation appropriate in light of God’s Word? I suggest that we consider every verse in God’s Word in which reference is made to applause (clapping) to find the answer to that question.

Job 27:23 “Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.”

שֶׁפַּח - Also found in Lamentations 2.15 and Isaiah 2.6, this is a gesture of mocking. Therefore, this could not be an example in God’s Word to justify clapping during worship.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See footnote for Job 27.23 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 724.



Psalm 47:1 “<<To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.>> O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.”

תקע - Found more than 60 times in the Hebrew scriptures, the word refers to thrusting (such as a weapon), driving (such as a tent peg), or clapping (such as one’s hands in victory).<sup>17</sup> Though the psalm exhorts the people to clap (and also to shout), it is presumptuous to think this was to be done during worship. I agree with Mr. Spurgeon that the occasion of the psalm was the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Obededom to Mount Zion or some other notable victory.<sup>18</sup>

Psalm 98:8 “Let the floods clap *their* hands: let the hills be joyful together.”

מחא - This word is found in only two other verses, Isaiah 55.12 and Ezekiel 25.6. It is obvious that this is a type of poetry that has no bearing on worship.

Isaiah 55:12 “For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.”

The same word is used in the same way as in Psalm 98.8. This verse has no bearing on worship, as it refers to trees of the field clapping their hands.

Lamentations 2:15 “All that pass by clap *their* hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, *saying*, Is this the city that *men* call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?”

This is the same Hebrew word we looked at in Job 27.23, which appears in a total of 10 Old Testament verses. Here we see the Gentiles predicted to pass by the defeated Jewish people, clapping their hands at them, hissing and wagging their heads at them, and making snide comments about Jerusalem. This is not clapping during worship.

Nahum 3:19 “*There is* no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?”

Using the same word found in Psalm 47.1 to describe the Jewish people’s victory celebration, the word here describes the celebration by Nineveh’s enemies as they celebrate the city’s destruction in fulfillment of Nahum’s prediction.

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<sup>17</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver & Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew And English Lexicon*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), page 1075.

<sup>18</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury Of David, Volume I*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), page 352.

“Because worship is an inherent, inborn characteristic of man, God prescribes the way we should worship ... God not only prescribes whom we should worship (himself) but also how we should worship.”<sup>19</sup> “E. C. Dargan observed that the English word ‘worship’ is simply a contraction for ‘worthship’ and denotes the giving of suitable honor to whom it is due.”<sup>20</sup>

Is it unreasonable for Christians committed to honoring God in worship to engage in a style of worship that God’s Word informs? Hardly. Therefore, the propriety of applause or clapping in worship, while not expressly forbidden in God’s Word, is never encouraged as a practice during worship. The reasons are apparent.

*First*, clapping is not worshipful. It is celebratory and exaltational. It is also a response not provoked by knowledge but by ignorance, not by spirituality but by worldliness. It follows the example of the entertainment industry and its followers, not of God’s Word and God’s people. Understand that I am not suggesting a powerful political speech or an outstanding dramatic performance should not be met with a great round of applause at the end. However, I speak to the matter of worship and not performance.

*Second*, clapping is defined as “to show pleasure at or approval of by clapping the hands.”<sup>21</sup> However, this is what saying “Amen” is supposed to accomplish. Therefore, why would someone substitute clapping for saying “Amen” when that is the God-ordained expression of approval, pleasure, or agreement?

*Finally*, clapping interrupts in a way that saying “Amen” does not. Speakers cannot continue speaking when an audience or congregation is clapping, as this interrupts the flow of thought. When a preacher is exercising spiritual leadership, is it appropriate for the congregation (which is supposed to be following his leadership) to dictate when he is to stop speaking? No. Yet this happens when clapping but saying “Amen” never does.

What should a pastor do whose people already clap to show approval or agreement? I would suggest caution and slowness to change. Individual believers usually have more immediate and pressing concerns than whether to clap while worshiping. However, Christian worship is profoundly important and is rightly ordered by God’s Word. Therefore, I would suggest the pastor stop clapping if he was once in the habit of doing so. Over time, I would suggest that the pastor begin to encroach on those few seconds of pause that allow for clapping, and gradually crowd out the congregation’s clapping.

Suppose this is done while teaching and encouraging the people to participate in worship in a Scriptural manner, by saying “Amen” when appropriate. In that case, the congregation can be gradually weaned from inappropriate expressions and encouraged to use the proper expression of agreement, approval, and celebration in corporate worship.

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<sup>19</sup> Ernest C. Reisinger & D. Matthew Allen, *Worship: The Regulative Principle and the Biblical Practice of Accommodation*, (Cape Coral, Florida: Founders Press, 2001), page 15.

<sup>20</sup> Cited in Reisinger & Allen, page 16.

<sup>21</sup> *Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1996), page 3.