

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

IS THE ACT OF CLAPPING (APPLAUSE) AUTHORIZED IN THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH?

David P. Brown

As an authorized act of worship, or in any other connection or setting, applause (the clapping of the hands to show agreement or approval) is not mentioned in the New Testament. Webster defines “clap” as: “to strike together so as to produce a sharp percussive noise; to strike (the hands) together repeatedly usually in applause.” (*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, G. & C. Merriam Co., Springfield, MA, p. 153). “Clap” is found nine times in the Old Testament (2 Kin. 11:12; Psa. 47:1). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, p. 665 informs us that in the previous cases the clapping of the hands is “an emphatic expression of joy;” usually having to do with victories in battle. However, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* informs us that such clapping is never referred to as an act of worship.

That certain well-meaning brethren in recent years have introduced clapping into the worship of the church of Christ proves only one thing at best—that certain well-meaning brethren did it. Indeed, THAT IS ALL IT PROVES! However, over the years, well-meaning brethren have caused all manner of problems in the Lord’s body because they did not know or did not care to seek the authority of God’s Word for their beliefs and practices.

The question is, where is the New Testament authority for the practice of hand clapping or applause in the worship of God’s church? And the answer to the preceding question is this—there is no New Testament authority for it. Since we are to have New Testament authority for all we believe and practice (Col. 3:17) we ask, where is the direct statement, example, or implication authorizing it? The answer is this—there is no direct statement, no example, or no implication found in the New Testament authorizing hand clapping, stomping the feet, snapping fingers, clicking one’s dentures, whistling, cracking one’s knuckles, snorting, grunting, booing, squealing, humming and such like actions any more than there is for the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church. The previous answer satisfies everyone who loves the good Word of Christ, which Word manifests the Will of Christ on all matters religious and is the standard by which all men will be blessed or condemned eternally on the great Judgment Day (John 12:48). Frankly, what anyone else does or does not do in or out of the church regarding applause, et al., proves nothing other than the fact that they are willing to participate in, advocate, and defend that for which they have no New Testament authority to do.

“Amen” is found 126 times in the New Testament. It is employed to signify what was said or done as being reliable and true, valid, and certain [Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 1, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.,

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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**Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Editorial ...

J. D. TANT: THREE STAGES OF RELIGION

J. D. Tant, writing in the *Gospel Advocate*, January 5, 1928 (as cited in *J. D. Tant – Texas Preacher*, p. 413), said:

I have just closed out my year's work with twelve protracted meetings, four debates, and preaching done at eight other points, most of which was done at my own charges, and five months spent working on the farm and helping to support my family.

I find that there are three stages in all religious movements: The first is the fighting stage, when people are few and humble, and lean on God for support. At that stage they all fight and try to overthrow the teachings of men, as the Jews did as recorded in Deut. 7.

The second stage is the stage of greatness; we become strong and respected and want fine houses (church buildings—*Editor*) and big schools like the sects around us. The Jews reached that stage when they rejected God and wanted a king, to be like other people.

The third stage is the age of compromise, when we don't want the differences between the church of Christ and the denominations debated, for fear we will hurt someone's feelings. I fear the church of Christ is in the third stage today, and will be followed by spiritual death if some change does not come.

[EDITORIAL COMMENT: Your editor thinks that the late brother Tant was correct in his view of the state of the church in general in 1928. Over the intervening years (almost a century now) error has made all manner of inroads into the Lord's church. In approximately the last fifty years, worldliness and denominational errors of every description have entered into and torn the body of Christ asunder. Disdain for New Testament doctrine is running rampant in the church and brethren are willfully ignorant of Bible knowledge. Together, the foregoing departures from the truth have created a compromising spirit among many members of Christ's church. Thus, many seek to identify with and fellowship the denominations founded and sustained by the commandments and doctrines of men. Thus, we live in a time where the brethren in many churches care little to nothing about the doctrine of Christ. However, they do care greatly about having their own way in about everything from

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Contending For The Faith—January/2025

Spring Church Of Christ

Contending For The Faith Lectureship



Things Helpful To Becoming & Being A Christian

February 22, 2025

9:00 AM: *Integrity* (Psalms 26) – Jonathan West

10:00 AM: *Ahab, The Accuser* (1 Kings 16:29-33) – Jack Stephens

11:00 AM: *Courage* (Psalms 27) – Jose Gamez

LUNCH PROVIDED BY THE SPRING CONGREGATION

1:30 PM: *Kinds Of Fear* – Bruce Stulting

2:30 PM: *Let Brotherly Love Continue* (Hebrews 13:1) – Eric Paluka

3:30 PM: *OPEN FORUM* (All speakers)

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1964, p. 338 and Colin Brown, ed., *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975, p. 99]. A strongly said “Amen” is sufficient for Christians to signify their approval of anything done or said in the worship assembly of the church. Indeed, why would a child of God desire to say or do anything more? Surely it would only be because of one’s ignorance of or out-right rebellion against the authority of the Scriptures (God’s Will). To engage in the same would cause one to go beyond saying “Amen”—a dignified and honorable expression of public approval of, or agreement with anything done in the worship assemblies of the Lord’s church. This would include all other sacred matters, such as expressing one’s approval of a penitent believing person’s baptism into Christ for the remission of sins (1 Cor. 14:16).

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(“Editorial” ... continued from page 2)

their personal likes and dislikes to excusing their family members from being amenable to the doctrine of Christ. Favoritism and “respect of persons” abound on every hand.

Although they may not teach certain errors, many churches remain in fellowship with brethren who do teach error—the colleges operated by the brethren and other schools routinely do so and from those false teachers said churches will not be parted.

In January of 2025, the Lord’s church is experiencing the terrible results of almost 100 years of a steady departure of the church from the authority of the New Testament either through some members binding on the church what God has not bound in His Word, or in more recent years by doctrines that have loosed brethren from what the New Testament binds on them. The “binders” choke the church and thereby hinder it from doing all God authorizes it to do and the false doctrines of the “loosers” destroy the church by turning it into just another man-made denominational outfit. The “binders” and “loosers” should be exposed, refuted, rebuked, and if they refuse to repent, marked publicly for what they are. The foregoing being done, the fellowship of faithful Christians ought to be withdrawn from them. Let it be clearly understood that we do not love anyone as our Lord does when we ignore, embrace, and encourage spiritually weak and even apostate church members in whatever departure from the truth they find themselves engaged and in whatever brotherhood project they are found.—DPB]