What’s Wrong With Handclapping?

Intro: Change agents have always attacked the pure worship established by God. This has been seen from the beginning with Cain and his offering to God. Changes in worship do not find their origin in God—they are not authorized by Him. They, in fact, find their origin in man making it vain (Mat. 15:9 “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”).

I. ORIGIN OF HANDCLAPPING
   A. Pentecostal and emotional origins
   B. Entertainment
      1. We have been conditioned to be entertained.
      2. Movies and television has brought entertainment to a sophisticated art form.
      3. They hold our attention with little to no effort on our part.

II. SOME DEFENSES OF HANDCLAPPING
   A. It is authorized in the Old Testament.
      1. Psa. 47:1 “O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.”
      2. 2 Kings 11:12 “And he brought forth the king’s son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.”
      3. If handclapping is authorized by such, then everything else in the Old Testament is also.
         a. Animal sacrifices
         b. Polygamy
         c. Instrumental music, et al.
   B. There is no difference in handclapping and saying Amen.
      1. Amen means, “so be it” and is giving approval and agreement with what has been said.
      2. Clapping hands is to show approval of a person’s performance.
   C. It is a natural reaction to the joy we experience in worship.
      1. This might be true if we spontaneously threw our hands together once.
      2. This is not the case in clapping or applauding.

III. HANDCLAPPING ACCOMPANYING SINGING
   A. God authorized one specific type of music: Singing
      1. 1 Cor. 14:15 “What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”
      2. Eph. 5:19 “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”
      3. Col. 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
   B. Music
      1. There are two subcategories.
2. Vocal
   a. Communicable (a message)
      (1) A foreign Language.
      (2) One's mother tongue.
   b. Non-Communicable
      (1) Making sounds with our voice but those sounds not communicating a message.
      (2) Humming, whistling, making our voice sound like instruments of music, long sustained "Ah's" or "Oh's," etc.

3. Non-Vocal
   a. Mechanical (instrumental).
      (1) Brass (trumpets, trombones, tubas, etc.).
      (2) Woodwinds (clarinets, oboes, flutes, etc.).
      (3) Percussion (bass drum, snare drum, castanets, timpani, etc.).
      (4) Strings (violin, viola, cello, bass, etc.).
      (5) Electronic Synthesizers (electric piano, organ, etc.).
   b. Non-mechanical (instrumental).
      (1) Sounds that are humanly produced.
      (2) Snapping fingers, stomping feet, hand boning, clapping hands, etc.

4. Singing, what God authorized, is vocal music that communicates a message.

IV. HANDCLAPPING AS APPLAUSE

A. These take place at various times:
   1. Following sermons
   2. Following baptisms
   3. Sometimes other worship activities
   4. At certain announcements

B. Purpose of applause:
   1. The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines it as: “approval or praise expressed by clapping.”
   2. Clap is defined by the same dictionary as: “strike the palms of (one's hands) together repeatedly, typically in order to applaud...show approval of (a person or action) in this way.”
   3. It is to indicate personal approval.
      a. We applaud those who perform for us.
      b. It gives us a way to show what we think of the performance.
      c. It gives us the opportunity to show appreciation for what the performer has done—his talent.
   4. It is an expression of excitement.
      a. We are personally moved by what has taken place.
      b. It becomes an emotional release or outlet of joy.
   5. It is sometimes down to be courteous.
      a. This is often done by politicians and in academics.
      b. It is a demonstration of etiquette and not necessarily agreement.
C. **None of these are purposes of applause are authorized actions in our worship to God.**

1. Applause by its nature draws attention to the performer.
2. *Amen* draws attention to the message which exalts Christ.
3. Saying “Amen” is a God authorized act.
   a. 1 Cor. 14:16 “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?”
   b. We see *Amen* being used through both Testaments.
   c. It was used to convey an agreement with the truth being stated or affirmed the truthfulness of God’s Word.

Conclusion: Saying “Amen” is a God authorized act; applauding is not. Applauding gives approval to an entertaining performance and recognition of the performer’s talent. Amen emphasizes the content of the message rather than the person presenting the message. Its emphasis is to affirm the truthfulness of what has been stated. While those who applaud might have a zeal for God, it is not according to knowledge; Rom. 10:2-3 “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”