

Memphis School of Preaching
WORLD MISSIONS PROGRAM



Beginning January 23, 2012

If you can help support this program, please contact MSOP. Potential students please go to msop.org for more information.

NEWSLETTER FROM MEMPHIS SCHOOL OF PREACHING
Under the Oversight of the ELDERS
FOREST HILL CHURCH OF CHRIST
Bobby Liddell, Editor

INFORMATION ABOUT
MEMPHIS SCHOOL OF PREACHING

- Intensive, Two-year, Collegiate Program Of Strong Bible Emphasis
- 54 Courses, 164 Semester Hours, 2,960 Clock Hours In Classes
- Two Full Years Of Transferable College Credit
- Emphasis On Doctrinal Soundness, Christian Character, And Evangelistic Zeal
- Sound, Well-qualified, Dedicated Faculty
- Recognized For Educational Excellence In Preacher Preparation For Pulpit, Local Work, and World Evangelism
- Three Campaigns, Restoration Trip, Lectureships, And Other Opportunities For Growth And Service During Two Years
- Personal Direction From A Seasoned Faculty Experienced In All Facets Of Preaching
- Opportunities To Preach While In School
- Classes For Wives (Diplomas Awarded)
- Third Year Graduate Program
- State Of The Art Educational Facility On Fifteen Acre Campus
- Residence Halls, With Thirty-two Three Bedroom Apartments, On Campus
- N. B. Hardeman Library Building On Campus
- Established In 1966 – Oldest School Of Preaching East Of The Mississippi
- Located In Germantown – One Of Tennessee’s Best Cities In Which To Live And Work
- No Tuition Or Fees
- Scholarships And Housing Assistance Available
- Approved By Tennessee State Approving Agency For VA Benefits
- Accepting Applications Now
- Write, Call, Or Visit msop.org For Catalog And Application

Order Your Copy Of
THE BEHAVIOR OF FAITH
And Other
MSOP Lectureship Books

You will surely want to get a copy of the outstanding material covering the topic: “The Behavior Of Faith,” not only for yourself, but also for others who would benefit from it. Hurry, while supplies last.

To order “The Behavior Of Faith,” and other MSOP lectureship books, please call 1-800-782-8175, or contact tyromw@comcast.net.

The cost of the 2011 book is \$23 per book.

2011 CDs (searchable on your computer, with text from all MSOP lectureships, plus many other valuable volumes) are \$25 per CD.

Or, you can purchase the 2011 book and CD for \$30. Shipping and handling are extra. Please call for prices of other books.

YOKEFELLOW

Vol. 38, No. 10

October 2011

FOREST HILL ELDERS

Anthony D. Callahan
J. D. Crowe
Floyd M. Hayes
Gregory D. Mangrum
Harold D. Mangrum
Keith B. McAlister
Leonard Watson

DIRECTOR: MEMPHIS
SCHOOL OF PREACHING
Bobby Liddell

DIRECTOR EMERITUS
Curtis A. Cates

DEAN OF ACADEMICS
Keith A. Mosher, Sr.

DEAN OF PUBLIC
RELATIONS
Garland Elkins

ADMINISTRATIVE DEAN
Billy Bland

DEAN OF STUDENTS
Jerry L. Martin

DEAN OF ADMISSIONS
B. J. Clarke

ALUMNI LIAISON
Mike McDaniel

INSTRUCTORS
Dan Cates
Barry Grider
Gary Colley
Mike McDaniel

LIBRARIAN
Annette B. Cates

ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN
Jan Kuehn

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
Sherry Brown

FINANCIAL SECRETARY
Denise Martin

www.msop.org
office@msop.org
Office (901) 751-2242
Library (901) 751-7378

HAND-CLAPPING IN WORSHIP (II)

Curtis A. Cates

ARGUMENTS FOR CLAPPING

Many, varied, and even self-contradictory are the attempts to defend applause in worship. Let us examine each line of argument in light of God’s Word and of the necessity to do all by the authority of Christ.

First, some argue that hand clapping is merely a matter of culture and is therefore permitted. Flavil Yeakley wrote that in some contexts “clapping may simply be an expression of encouragement or it may be a nonverbal way of saying ‘I approve of what you are saying.’ ...In such a culture, I do not believe that clapping would be out of place in a religious service” (Yeakley, p. 4). It evidently is considered by some to be situational, according to one’s culture.

Yeakley stated it is not “necessarily wrong within itself,” but if some in the United States feel it is “totally out of place in a religious service,” it could “easily be a distraction and even a stumbling-block to others” (*Ibid.*). Kenyon stated that “hand clapping is probably the most popular innovation in the worship services of some churches of Christ. Popularity, however, does not make hand clapping right.” “‘Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil’ (Exo. 23:2),” culture or no culture (Kenyon, p. 15). “But, the youth want it!” Does that make it authorized by God? According to Yeakley, opposition to applause has to do with “the atmosphere or style of religious services. Some people are too concerned about style.” He further

accuses those in opposition to applause in worship as being “more concerned with matters of opinion than they are with matters of faith” and as thus making “laws where God has made no law” (Yeakley, p. 4). Gilpin stated, “It appears that this is just another way of arguing that ‘cultural equivalence’ equals Biblical equivalence” (Gilpin, p. 69).

Some put applause in the same category as laughter, thus not an act of worship; hand clapping is spontaneous, some attempt to affirm, and is therefore authorized (Yeakley, p. 4). Well, what about rolling in the aisles, or jumping benches, or shouting, or so-called speaking in tongues [jabbering]? Would that be a “spontaneous expression of emotion” and therefore not worship, therefore not unauthorized, therefore not condemned? If authorized during the singing, would it also be authorized during the Lord’s Supper, or the giving? But, what about the argument made on behalf of applause from Luke 6:23, “Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same manner did their fathers unto the prophets”? In answer, “We note, however, that ‘that day’ in this passage refers to the day (or to the time) of severe persecution and suffering in relationship to one’s seeking to accomplish the Lord’s work. The clapping of hands because a faithful Christian is being persecuted just does not seem to be appropriate” (Deaver, p. 7).

Non-Profit
U S POSTAGE
PAID
GERMANTOWN, TN
PERMIT #94

Yokefellow
Forest Hill Church of Christ
3950 Forest Hill Irene Road
Memphis, TN 38125
Address Service Requested

Second, some argue, “What would it hurt?”

The same excuse was used to defend introducing choirs, solos, and even mechanical instrumental music into the assemblies—all unauthorized (Col. 3:17). In addition, some people would add, “‘What you do in worship is not important, just so you worship.’ Is worship unregulated? May we worship in any way we choose?” (McCord, p. 7). Ask Cain, or Nadab and Abihu, or Ananias and Sapphira if it matters how a child of God worships (Gen. 4; Lev. 10; Acts 5; cf. Mat. 15:9; Col. 2:20-23; et al.). We better allow **objective truth**, the apostles’ doctrine, determine whether it would “hurt anything,” rather than using our own **subjective reasoning** (Jer. 10:23; Pro. 14:12; Job 28:28; Gal. 1:6-9; Mat. 4:4; John 12:48; Col. 2:8). What folly it is for one to argue, “You are getting excited over nothing,” when worship is prescribed by God!

Third, some argue worship is to be a “Holy Wow,” “raucous, spontaneous, unavoidable celebration,” “hubbub” (Cates, *Second*, pp. 45-48); **“We’re just being joyful!”** Roy Deaver wrote,

No passage teaches that “rejoicing” demands the clapping of the hands, and no passage authorizes the clapping of the hands in relationship to Christian worship, or in relationship to that which is sacred and divine. And, in the absence of Biblical authority, we insist that all such must be avoided and must be opposed (Deaver, p. 7).

Eddy Gilpin, quoting a sectarian, said, Perhaps this statement presents the modern mindset for the atmosphere of worship: “What wisdom is gleaned for worship planners from these prototype churches and their surveys of unchurched America? Keep the mood and tempo of worship upbeat. Resist the minor keys, they’re too somber. Discard ‘churchy’ anthems and hymns...Provide sermons with catchy ‘How to...’ titles. Encourage casual dress and informal ambiance. Drive the beat of worship with percussion, flourish of high notes and loud dynamics (no one feels compelled to clap after slow or soft music. ...We don’t allow any music in our church to which you couldn’t rollerskate. The new model for efficiency and friendliness and enthusiasm is Walt Disney World” — Alan Walworth, *Journal of the American Academy of Ministry*, 1992 (Gilpin, pp. 32-34).

It seems some congregations are rushing “head over heels” to imitate this type “excitement” in worship and this type appeal to the carnal spirit. One preacher put it that we must “rid ourselves of the ‘scandalous...spoiling of worship...dull and boring to ourselves and unattractive to non-Christians,’” as they charge (Cates, *Second*, p. 46).

Fourth, some argue that clapping the hands is not instrumental music and thus is not an addition to singing. God commands His people to sing. Some brethren attempt to say that since clapping involves not a mechanical instrument but rather human instruments [the physical hands], therefore it is not an addition and is therefore not forbidden. The same argument would in worship wrongfully permit whistling, shouting, yodeling, foot stomping, etc.

How is hand clapping used in modern worship settings? Mainly in two forms—accompaniment to the singing and for demonstration of approval or appreciation (applause). As an accompaniment to singing, it becomes a form of the music itself (Gilpin, p. 16).

Brother Gilpin quoted Webster thus: “‘An art of sound in time which expresses ideas and emotions in significant forms through the elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and color. ...Any sweet, pleasing or harmonious sounds or sound’ (‘Music,’ *Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary*).” He also quoted Collier’s definition of music: “‘Not all music is concerned with pitch; the rhythmic drum-beating, handclapping, or footstomping of many tribal peoples clearly lacks any well-defined pitch’ (‘Music,’ *Collier’s Encyclopedia*).”

Gilpin continued,

If used in this fashion it falls into one of two categories—instrumental or vocal. It is not vocal, therefore it is instrumental. There is only one type of music authorized in worship by God—vocal (and, particularly [specifically] singing).

Citing Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, he then observed, “Thus, when used as an accompaniment to singing it is an addition to what God said and is, therefore, condemned by God” (*Ibid.*, pp. 16-22). One Biblical scholar astutely asked what the difference is between striking live skin [clapping the hands] and striking dead skin [hitting a drum covered with animal hide].

Fifth, some argue that inasmuch as hand clapping took place in the Old Testament, it is thus authorized in the New Testament. Brother Glenn Colley wrote,

There are nine instances of clapping in the King James translation of the Bible (II Kings 11:12; Job 27:23; 34:37; Psa. 47:1; 98:8; Isa. 55:12; Lam. 2:15; Ezek. 25:6; Nahum 3:19). All of them are in the Old Testament. None of them is done during worship to God. Most occurrences show God’s enemies clapping. Two symbolically show floods and trees clapping. David encouraged Israel to clap their hands while they shouted to God in their excitements over military triumph (Psa. 47:1) (Colley, pp. 594-595).

Also, may we never forget that the Law of Moses was fulfilled by Christ, taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross (Rom. 7:4; Col. 2:14-17). The door of access to God through Judaism was “nailed” shut; we are “under law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21).

Sixth, some argue that clapping is simply the equivalent to saying “Amen” in our culture, thus is approved. “But there is one slight difference: saying, ‘Amen’ is authorized in Scripture: ‘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?’ —I Cor. 14:16” (Duncan, p. 3). In other words, during the time of spiritual gifts [speaking in a foreign language one had not studied, with no interpreter present], how could the hearer “Amen” the song, prayer, or message if he failed to understand it? This verse implies that giving reverent approval with the word “Amen” is authorized—BUT, where is hand clapping authorized? “...even if it is the ‘cultural equivalent’ of saying ‘Amen,’ it still must pass the test of being Scripturally equivalent” (Gilpin, p. 38). Brother Gilpin observes further, “The Greek word translated ‘Amen’ is found 188 times in Scripture (also translated ‘verily’). Not once will the text tolerate the word ‘applause’ as a suitable substitute for the word” (*Ibid.*, p. 39).

Seventh, some argue that since clapping is not explicitly forbidden in worship, it is therefore permissible. Besides, they “like it.” Evidently Nadab and Abihu liked “strange fire,” but they offered fire God “had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them” (Lev. 10:1-2). Had He explicitly said, “Thou shalt not use campfire fire, or some other fire?” No! But, He had told them expressly what fire to use. We can understand that principle when it comes to a physician’s prescribing a specific medicine; he does not have to say to the pharmacist, “Now, do not use this, or that, or something else.” The same is truth with God; He said sing, etc.; He did not say “clap.” I liked my mother’s fried chicken and gravy, but chicken and gravy are unauthorized in the Lord’s Supper. Though not by Him explicitly forbidden, it is forbidden because He specified what to use—unleavened bread and fruit of the vine.

Eighth, some argue that hand clapping is perfectly in order and appropriate at a baptism. The baptism of a precious soul into Jesus Christ is truly a wonderful, emotional occasion, as when the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized and went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:26-39). We express sincere love and appreciation to the new Christian; we offer up our prayers to God in thanksgiving and on his or her

behalf. However, is it not also appropriate for us to remember and to thank the Lord that He gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross and to shed His precious blood so that we can be cleansed? We generally do not hand clap at a death or a funeral. Should we applaud that Christ was brutally murdered on the cross? “It is not an occasion for our entertainment, but an occasion of solemnity and dignity which is worthy of all seriousness.” Citing Romans 6:3-4, Eddy Gilpin further wrote, “Thus, it would seem just as appropriate to clap at a baptism as it would be at the Lord’s Supper or to applaud the crucifixion of Christ—If not, why not? ...Although it is a happy occasion, it is also a very serious occasion” (*Ibid.*, pp. 42-46).

CONCLUSION

The Word of God is clear; we are “not to go beyond the things which are written” (1 Cor. 4:6). Brother Tom Holland wrote,

“There is a sacredness of worship that must not be sacrificed on altars of superficial spirituality, fads of the day, emotion-rousing handclapping, and entertainment oriented quartets and choirs. The profound dignity of worship should not be sacrificed to shallow, sensational displays of drama” (Quoted by Gilpin, p. 36).

LIST OF WORKS CITED

- Brown, John. “The Bell Choir,” *Firm Foundation* (September 1995), p. 10.
- Cates, Curtis A. *Worship: Heaven’s Imperative Or Man’s Innovations?* Olive Branch, MS: Cates Publications, 1993.
- Cates, Curtis A. *The Second Incarnation: A Pattern for Apostasy.* Olive Branch, MS: Cates Publications, 1992.
- Colley, Glenn. “Clapping, Shouting, Dancing In Worship,” *God Hath Spoken, Affirming Truth and Reproving Error.* Memphis, TN: Memphis School of Preaching, 1999.
- Deaver, Roy. “Questions: Bible Answers,” *Firm Foundation* (October 28, 1986), p. 7.
- Duncan, Bobby. “Let God Do the Clapping,” *Standing in the Gap* (January 25, 1998), pp. 2-3.
- Gilpin, Eddy. *Is Applause Appropriate?* (Unpublished sermon).
- Jackson, Wayne. “Clapping While Singing,” *Christian Courier* (May 2007), pp. 1-2.
- Kenyon, Brian. “Hand Clapping in Worship,” *Handling Aright the Word of Truth* (Westside Lectureship, 2002).
- Lockwood, Bill. “Is Applause Appropriate in Worship?” *Standing in the Gap* (January 25, 1998), p. 3.
- McCord, Hugo. “Hand Clapping in Worship,” *Firm Foundation* (November 1998), pp. 7-8.
- Miller, Steve. “What Are We Clapping For?” *Contending for the Faith* (January 1996), pp. 15-16.
- Taylor, Irene. “Do Not Clap for Me!” *Firm Foundation* (January 1998), p. 22.
- Wallace, G. K. “Our Swinging, Singing, Clapping Youth,” *Gospel Advocate* (June 8, 1972), p. 364.
- Whitten, Eddie. “The Spirit of Compromise and the Worship as Celebration, Holy Wow,” *Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.* Memphis, TN: Memphis School of Preaching, 1995.
- Yeakley, Jr., Flavil. “The Meaning of Clapping,” *Christian Worker* (June 1978), p. 4.