

Amen!

As you are all aware, we recently returned from a mission trip to the island of St. Croix. Clancy Etienne, who is the minister we support and a native of the Caribbean, does a wonderful job proclaiming the gospel in a fashion well received among Caribbean folks. This was my third trip to a Caribbean island congregation. In addition to Brother Clancy in St. Croix, I have worked and worshiped with Brother Lazar on the island of Curacao and Brother Bruno on the Island of St. Thomas.

One aspect of Caribbean congregations which excites me is their enthusiasm for the worship service. This is due to the singing and particularly, the participation of the congregation as they concur with the message by rendering a hearty "Amen." This "Amen" from the congregation is appreciated by the preacher. It is actually expected of the congregation. If the congregation does not respond to a point made from the pulpit, the preacher will make known his disappointment with their lack of enthusiasm and shift the direction of his speech to the walls of the building itself.

The participation of the individual in worship to the King is necessary for true worship. While each person is not required to do so, the saying of "Amen" during the service is certainly Biblical. Controlled emotion does have a place in worship. The Bible instructs us that the worship service is to be conducted decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). Additionally, we have examples where saying "amen" is approved during worship. Paul, while discussing speaking in tongues, renders a first century example of saying "amen" in worship: *Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?* (I Corinthians 14:16)

The encyclopedia states that the usage of "Amen" (which means "so be it"), as found in the early scriptures of the Bible, is said to be of Hebrew origin. The word was imported into the Greek of the early church from Judaism, from Greek into Late Latin, and thence into English.

I am always excited to worship our Lord on the first day of the week. When I am with brethren and experience events which bring joy during the service such as a song or hymn, I say "Amen!" Or, if I want to agree with the message, a reading, or prayer from the pulpit, I say "Amen!" Always at an announcement of someone putting on Christ in baptism, I want to say a hearty "Amen!"

For the elders,
Tony Williams