

## **WITH RAISED HANDS IN WORSHIP**

There are several occasions where folks are inclined to raise their hands as an outward demonstration of inward inclinations. When we wish to ask a question, we raise our hands. When we respond to a poll, we raise our hands for yea or nay. When we are excited about something we often raise our hands to demonstrate the excitement. When our favorite sports team scores or wins, we commonly raise our hands in jubilation. In ancient times the Hebrew raised their hands in prayer and praise (Ps. 134:2). This the early Christians sometimes did (I Tim. 2:8).

In modern American, our Pentecostal neighbors like to lift their hands in response to their charismatic preacher, in their highly emotional prayers or as they sway with their rhythmic music. In recent years Catholics and many Protestants have taken up this practice of the Charismatics. Sadly we now have a few misguided members of our churches of Christ who have been encouraged by promoters of change to adopt this practice. While their leaders make a weak attempt to justify their hand raising by appealing to Scripture, observation suggests that their inspiration is more often from their association with their denominational neighbors. It is but one aspect of a larger program of change they wish to bring into the church. For many worshipers, raising their hands is accompanied by women filling roles of public leadership in worship, instrumental music, special performances by singers or groups for worship and preaching that is more entertainment than gospel proclamation.

One cannot fault the sincere worshiper who lifts up his hands to God. Such is no different than the man who kneels to pray. But if he does so to be like his religious neighbors, the motivation is wrong. Like the ancient Hebrews many want to be like the nations around them (I Sam. 8:5). Simple, unadorned worship is unappealing to jaded souls. They must have something physical and exciting to stimulant them to devotional heights. Raising hands is but one of those gimmicks offered to provide that artificial "spiritual high." Just as chemical stimulants affect the mind while making the body feel good, so artificial spiritual stimulation can distort spiritual judgment. It often causes those who imbibe to mistakenly assume that because their worship feels good and exciting to them it therefore is pleasing to the God of Heaven.