

Notable Song Leaders

Let me introduce you to some of the more notable song leaders I have had the misery of observing and the unenviable task of trying to preach behind.

There is Emcee Eddie, who perceives himself the Master of Ceremonies of the religious show. He bounces onto the stage with all the fanfare he can arrange, cracks jokes, quips, banter with the people and announces songs with all the professional glitter of Hollywood. Every part of the meeting is introduced as an exciting event. When the preacher finally comes to the pulpit, it is all over except enduring to the end.

Then there is Scared Sam, who evidently feels so much out of place he can scarcely be heard. He didn't want to be song leader at all, but some one had to stand up there. His fright and timidity infects the congregation so badly that no one can sing.

Here comes Grinning George. He thinks church is where everyone ought to be deliriously happy. Let no dour-faced Puritan intrude here. Taking his fingers, he turns up the corners of his big mouth, and bids everyone else to do the same. The ludicrous sight of someone trying to smile broadly and sing heartily at the same time is enough to make one burst out laughing.

Look out! Here comes Fast Frank. He will not have the song service "dragging". The most sober and solemn of the majestic hymns (if he has to sing them) will not escape this speed demon's mad rush. To pronounce all the words is a tongue twisting exercise. To understand and meditate upon them is impossible. Trying to follow Frank leaves the people breathless, bewildered and exhausted.

Behold Athletic Albert. Not only is his directing style energetic and expressive; he puts "body English" into everything. He squats and jumps. He runs backward and forward from the baptistry to the pulpit. He chases back and forth across the stage. He sways and wiggles. His antics are distracting enough to stop a clock. How are you going to worship, watching something like that?

My pet peeve is Talkative Tom. Tom is usually a frustrated "preacher". He is constrained to give some sort of information, sermon, testimony or lecture in between each song. If nothing else, he will give you the background of the author and the history of the song. More often than not, he wants to tell you something about himself and why he likes this particular song, and what it ought to lead you to do. By the time he is through, we are too weary to sing.

The church's ability to tolerate such travesties of worship in song, and survive to offer the Lord any true songs of praise at all, is indeed a miracle of grace, and a testimony of God's sovereign ability and purpose to preserve His church through all perils.

- C. M.