



## ***Pet Peeves of Planning***

BY Dr. Jim Altizer

When it comes to Corporate Worship, I think I'd feel better if I could hear *from* God before I had to respond *to* Him. I'm just not sure I deserve to have the first word in a worship service. Since GOD always makes the first move, shouldn't HE have the first word? Is it not HE who invites *us* to respond? Instead, the second I walk in, I'm told to stand (no one ever tells "why" anymore) and sing. Yea; I'd feel better hearing *from* God before responding *to* Him.

I mean, I get it. Evangelical worship services are patterned after the old revivals: 1) use music to gather a crowd; 2) preach to win them; 3) invite them forward to seal the deal. And it works great if, in fact, you are in constant revival mode.

Scripture, theology and history, however, give us another pattern for the worship gathering: God reveals, and we respond. I don't anticipate that, in my lifetime, Western Evangelical Christianity will reverse the order by putting the sermon first, but, at the very least, we could be mindful of the Revelation-Response dialogue. Why not begin by reminding folks of God's invitation; calling people's hearts and minds to be attentive to God's presence; providing an attribute or two to muse on; listening again to Whom we have come to worship. Otherwise, I have to throw some mental/emotional switch between the parking lot and the pew (and I don't seem to have a switch).

Or, I have to rely on song lyrics to reveal God's truths and attributes. This works sometimes, but often I'm just singing about how I love loving God. Corporate Revelation! Let's speak it; sing it; recite it; portray it; pray it; meditate on it; listen to it. Oh yeah; and preach it. Then I can respond to God, not as I hope Him to be, or as I wish or think Him to be, but as He has revealed Himself to be.

Anything less is idolatry (read "narcissism").