SPIRITUAL ECONOMIES OF EVANGELICAL WORSHIP: TECHNOLOGY, STEWARDSHIP AND EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The present work explores how American evangelicals have learned to use and think about performance technology, such as professional audio, video and lighting technologies as they endeavour to craft worship environments. I track the discourses from trade publications, like *Technologies for Worship Magazine (TFWM)* and *Worship Facilities Magazine* and *Church Production*, in their devotion to bridge the divide between religion and technology to create a house of worship market.

Both TFWM and Church Production participate in conferences where they offer education on technology use. *Technologies for Worship Magazine* is the educational basis for the TFW Pavilion and *Worship Facilities* and *Church Production* for an event called Worship Facilities Expo (WFX). Ethnographic research at these events reveals that evangelical worship technicians learn to cultivate dispositions towards stewardship and technical mastery through attending these technology exhibitions and conferences, by taking offered educational seminars.

Training at the TFW Pavilion and WFX focussed on two main areas: first, how to use professional performance technologies, like audio amplification and control devices, lighting configurations, and video capture, production and broadcast systems. Second, training addressed the importance for church technicians to use technologies to create *excellent* and *relevant* worship experiences. By *excellent*, trainers meant worship practice that uses performance technologies seamlessly to create immersive experiences. Churches who strive for technological excellence embody the belief that the *relevance* of the church and its message among believers and non-believers is coupled with the use of technology to enhance the affective potential of the message delivered by the pastor. Yet, as church technicians—like audio or lighting engineers—

reflect on technology use, they reveal the ways that technology troubles contemporary worship practice as much as it augments the creation of poignant, immersive experiences.

Acknowledgements

Works of this kind always incorporate many voices. I have been fortunate enough to conduct research that engages the voices and narratives of evangelical technical directors and educators in their quest to create enduring religious experiences using the latest technologies and techniques. Spending time learning alongside technical directors often left me in awe of their commitment, considering their positions were voluntary. I hope their commitment and enthusiasm is faithfully conveyed in the pages that follow.

My dissertation committee, composed of Dr. Albert Schrauwers, Dr. David Murray and Dr. Natasha Myers, has provided invaluable support and guidance throughout the research and especially the writing and revision process. In particular, my supervisor Albert Schrauwers has been a steady and unceasing source of inspiration, support and advice before and throughout this project. I already miss our project meetings. In addition to the support of my committee, my fellow colleagues and faculty members of the York University Social Anthropology department, especially Dr. Penny Van Esterik, have helped me work through many of the challenges this project has generated. I am exceedingly grateful for Penny's support and mentorship. Competitive scholarships from the Ontario Graduate Scholarship fund and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council helped to make my field research possible.

It seems cliché to say that bringing this dissertation to fruition has been a long process. Even so, it bears repeating. My daughters, now three and one, have never known me outside of this project. I have typed more than one chapter with a baby napping on my lap. There were times throughout the writing process where I wondered if, considering the demands of being a parent, I would be able to finish this project. During those times of doubt, I returned to the notion

that our girls learn their first and perhaps most important lessons from us. With that in mind, I persevered with the concerted help of close family members who rallied to ensure I still had some time to write.

My mother, Brenda, father Robert and mother-in-law Shelagh, all played a role in caring for the children as only grandparents can. Their assistance helped me continue to make progress during the early days of parenthood and continue to offer support. My mother-in-law Susan has provided generous insight into my writing on this topic and I am grateful for her advice. My father-in-law Bryan improved my manuscript considerably through his keen and thoughtful attention to detail. Thank you.

I cannot express enough gratitude and admiration for my partner and best friend, Kevin. His patience and support through the duration of this degree and resulting dissertation has been unwavering. In moments of doubt, he reassured me and helped me keep the end goal in mind. His longstanding work in the worship market has helped me to refine my ideas and explore new lines of thought that have helped to shape what you are about to read. This dissertation is not only better for his insight; I am too.

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List of Acronyms

TFWM – Technologies for Worship Magazine

WFX – Worship Facilities Conference and Expo

NAB – National Association of Broadcasters

PLASA – Professional Lighting and Audio Standards Association

NRB – National Religious Broadcasters

RDM – Remote Device Management

1. Introduction

> *Each generation meets God in its own manner. Over the last few decades, this generation of Americans has sought out an intensely personal God, a God who not only cares about your welfare but worries with you about whether to paint the kitchen table. These Americans call themselves evangelical to assert that they are part of the conservative Christian tradition that understands the Bible to be literally or near literally true and that describes the relationship with Jesus as personal, and as being born again. But the feature that most deeply characterizes is that the God they seek is more personally intimate, and more intimately experienced, than the God most Americans grew up with" (Luhrmann 2012:xv).*

Close your eyes. Picture yourself sitting in a soft theatre seat in a large room. The ceiling rises high above you. Friends and strangers surround you. They are chatting and laughing. The smell of coffee wafts through the air. The overhead lights are dim but spotlights, hung from the ceiling focus on the stage at the front of the room. The room is an off-white colour and uniformly painted. There are hundreds of seats, arranged in concentric arcs from the front of the room to the back, bisected by aisles. At the back of the room, high above the seating a window overlooks the audience. Inside the room with the window are desks lined with large metal boxes covered in knobs. Beside them sits a computer. A microphone sits in front of them. On the stage at the front of the room, there are musical instruments. The lights dim and a man walks onto the stage followed by four others. They take their places with their instruments. The man in the centre, a thin microphone tracing his jaw, greets the room and asks you to bow your head and pray. You can hear him clearly, even though he is far away. It feels like he is speaking just to you. After, the band begins to play and the room comes alive with sound, light, and energy. Images of crosses project on the walls against a blue background. What were plain off-white walls are now vibrant and colourful. The music is clear, in time and in tune. You begin to sing. You do not know the words, but they display on a large screen hanging on the right and left sides of the

stage. The song is familiar. It is upbeat and contemporary. Everyone around you is singing; some with their eyes open and others with them shut, arms held above their heads, palms out. The room is getting warming, the singing louder, the atmosphere is charged. You feel the heat rising first in your feet. It moves up your legs and into your chest. The Holy Spirit is moving over you. Your body is moving with the music and you close your eyes.

I have asked you to picture this scene to help you "see" what *excellent* and *relevant* technologized evangelical worship feels like. For many evangelical Christians in United States, worship is an intimate encounter with God. Yet, it is also an intimate encounter with the technologies used to create immersive worship experiences. In what follows, I share how church technicians learn to create these experiences.

I have, throughout the tenure of my research, attempted to follow how American evangelicals have learned to use and think about performance technology. Following the action (Latour 1987, 2005) has meant trying to keep pace with discourse in the making, grounded in the material practices and techniques of crafting worship. Latour (2005) suggests that attending to the surprise of action means proceeding "from the uncertainties and controversies about who and what is acting when 'we' act" (45). Following the action has meant travelling with the staff of *Technologies for Worship Magazine* (TFWM) and attuning to ideas about the contemporary nature of evangelical worship production. My travels have taken me throughout the United States, to the United Kingdom and Australia following the Technologies for Worship (TFW) Pavilion, an outgrowth of TFWM. These sites offer multiple readings of technical education and the role it plays in technologization of worship practice. Amidst the travels to the U.S and elsewhere, I conducted research locally at Neighbours, a southern Ontario evangelical church.

My ethnographic research has been multi-sited in that it has "tracked" ways that evangelicals approach, use, and think about performance technologies (Marcus 1995).

Trade publications, like *Technologies for Worship Magazine (TFWM)* and *Worship Facilities Magazine* and *Church Production*, are devoted to bridging the divide between religion and technology to create a house of worship market. Both TFWM and Church Production participate in conferences where they offer education on technology use. *Technologies for Worship Magazine* is the educational basis for the TFW Pavilion and *Worship Facilities* and *Church Production* for an event called Worship Facilities Expo (WFX). Evangelical worship technicians learn to cultivate dispositions towards stewardship and technical mastery through attending technology exhibitions and conferences, by taking offered educational seminars. Products are also available to test. Trade and conference events provide a venue for house of worship markets to take shape—a place for technicians and manufacturers to meet and talk about the latest technologies and their uses. TFW Pavilion and WFX presenters model vocabularies of *excellent* and *relevant* worship for church technicians at these events. TFWM articles and church-produced training manuals also offer directives on *excellent* and *relevant* worship.

Exploring the TFWM office one day, I came upon a sound engineer manual for churches. It was held together with a binder clip and detailed aspects of church audio production, from sound basics to audio mixing. I asked Kevin, TFWM Editor, where the manual had come from—he did not remember. Like many educational resources in the TFWM office, this one arrived for review in the magazine, but never was. The manual's author, Troy Reit suggested that his goal was to equip engineers to live out their calling. Reit suggested that,

> the church today needs to tear down barriers that hinder us in sharing the Gospel with as many people as possible. To do that, we must present God's unchanging

> truth through a medium that is culturally relevant and even appealing to the audiences we are trying to reach. While we must never compromise our message, it is essential that we *translate* the message into a format and style that people can relate to. . . . Our message is crucial—the most important message in the world—and we must be intent on presenting it with excellence and in a way that people can relate to—a way that draws them into wanting to know more (Reit 2005:5).

Relevance, excellence, and the need to translate the Word through familiar formats and styles: Reit succinctly pulls many of the themes of the present study together. He recognizes the tensions of technologized worship, but understands that the potential outweighs the risk. Manuals such as Reit's augment the hands-on training that happens at the TFW Pavilion and WFX.

Training at the TFW Pavilion and WFX focussed on two main areas: first, how to use professional performance technologies, like audio amplification and control devices, lighting configurations, and video capture, production and broadcast systems. Second, training addressed the importance for church technicians to use technologies to create *excellent* and *relevant* worship experiences. By excellent, trainers meant worship practice that uses performance technologies seamlessly to create immersive experiences. Trainers claim the quality of these experiences, in order to be excellent, should mirror the standards of professional broadcast and theatrical production facilities. Excellence takes on multiple valences as it is deployed as a concept used to structure worship practice and as a marker to denote particular dispositions associated with the technical aspects of ministry. Churches who strive for technological excellence embody the belief that the *relevance* of the church and its message among believers and non-believers is coupled with the use of technology to enhance the affective potential of the message delivered by the pastor. Affective potential[1]—or the potential for "moving" the body of

[1] Kathleen Stewart elegantly registers the shocks and potentials of everyday affects when she suggests that we see the "ordinary affect in the textured, roughened surface of the everyday. It permeates politics of all kinds with the

the congregant by sacred words and beliefs—animates technological education. This affective potential materializes in the discourses and vocabularies educators use to frame excellent and relevant worship practice—they believe that technologized worship experiences will help to grow the church. For church technicians, affective potential registers in the ways they learn to value and create excellent and relevant worship. As technicians learn to use technologies with excellence and relevance in mind (and body) they begin to model the material-discursive *vocabularies of motives*, the situated ways of embodying particular methods for worship practice and articulating their purpose (Csordas 2001, Mills 1940).[2]

Cultivating and embodying the right dispositions towards technology use animates the technologization of evangelical worship practice. The present work considers the ways church technicians learn to use performance technologies to create immersive, meaningful worship experiences for congregants. Material-discursive vocabularies of motives frame those technologized experiences. However, as church technicians—like audio or lighting engineers—reflect on technology use, they reveal the ways that technology troubles contemporary worship practice as much as it augments the creation of poignant, immersive experiences. Technology use reveals the anxieties evangelicals feel about the nature of technology and its place in the church, even as they recognize the need to stay *relevant*.

The content of technical learning has often focussed on framing worship practice through the modalities of experience (Lindhart 2011). Lindhart, exploring evangelical religious experience, suggests that "conversion and growing in faith can be understood as processes of

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demand that some kind of intimate public of onlookers recognize something in a space of shared impact. If only for a minute" (2007:39). Later I will explore the sensorial and affective potentials of "impact" in the creation of relevant worship practice.

[2] Thomas Csordas succinctly suggests, "Motive orients act, and act articulates motive" (2001:192).

developing embodied sensibility to the sacred or learning to tune the senses to certain experiences, in addition to learning theological doctrines and understanding biblical truths" (2011:9). Some of the evangelicals I researched described tuning the senses and embodying sensibilities as learning to live lifestyles of worship. Learning to take on these 'lifestyles' extends to evangelical's treatment of technology. As such, technicians learn that to live lifestyles of worship means managing and stewarding technology. Stewardship becomes a way to mitigate the uncertainties they feel about technology's animated nature and role in the church. Their stewardship of technology engages new and emerging practices that signal new ways of being closer to God through engineering for the affective potential of immersive religious experiences.

Many contemporary evangelicals focus on the unceasing growth of the congregation; the *excellent* and *relevant* use of performance technologies for worship practice aid this growth by offering worship in familiar mediatized styles. Forging these technologized ritual experiences is the result of bringing church technicians into the field of the market where they learn about professional technology. Tithes, the financial offerings made to the church, fund the purchase professional grade equipment with the assumption that its use will grow church attendance. The growth of the church holds value for evangelicals. Meanwhile, volunteer labour operates the gear, placing immense pressure on technicians to produce excellent results without waged compensation. Generating the conditions for church growth, while often relying on volunteer labour, generates the supernatural effect of occult economies (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). Occult economies signal the post-millennial anxiety (and promise) that something can come from nothing.

Jean and John Comaroff describe occult economies as having two principle aspects: "a material aspect founded on the effort to conjure wealth—or to account for its accumulation—by appeal to techniques that defy explanation in the conventional terms of practical reason; [and] an ethical aspect grounded in the moral discourses and (re)actions sparked by the real or imagined production of value through such 'magical' means" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:19). These aspects lead Comaroff and Comaroff to position occult economies as a reaction to growing financial disparities and as a response to the seeming incomprehensibility of rapid economic accumulation amidst the "spectral" natures of "casino capitalism" (Strange 1986). Contemporary financial systems seem to reward speculation and rely on luck, much like a game in a casino. From within this current speculative encounter, those suffering the 'luck of the draw' frame economic accumulation as magic or occult practice.

Anthropology of Christianity scholar Simon Coleman argues that contemporary approaches such as the Comaroff's encourage us "to think of religious action predominantly as *response* to other events" (2011:32). Similarly, Ruth Marshall argues that a focus on the occult practice as *response* to broader events reduces religion "to its function of signification, forgetting that it is, perhaps above all, a site of *action*, invested in and appropriated by believers" (2009:22).

Instead of a focus on occult economies, I draw from Daromir Rudnyckyj's (2009, 2010) elaboration of spiritual economies, which suggests that the tensions of contemporary neo-liberalism and religion create forms of spiritual value through bridging work and piety. I explore spiritual economies in the context of technical training—not solely as action and response—but through the ways that through volunteer labour is affective labour and becomes a form of

spiritual currency. I depart from Rudnyckyj's "focus on the process of rationalization inherent in capitalism" (2010:133) and instead consider spiritual economies through the lens of markets-in-the-making. Affective labour, as Hardt and Negri see it, "is biopolitical production in that it directly produces social relationships and forms of life" (2004:110). In its productive capacities, affective labour shifts the product of labour from saleable commodities to the production of the self.

Contemporary North American evangelicalism exists at the juncture of late-capitalism, neoliberalism and religious practice. Sherry Ortner (2011) argues that the discursive shift from the terms late-capitalism to neoliberalism has revealed "a much darker narrative, a story of a crusade powered by ideology and/or greed, to tilt the world political economy even more in favor of the dominant classes and nations". Mark Noll suggests that evangelicalism, in particular,

> represented a shift in religiosity away from the inherited established churches toward spiritual communities constructed by believers themselves. It featured a form of conversion as much focused on personal experience, as much convinced of the plasticity of human nature and as much preoccupied with claims of certainty as any manifestation of the Enlightenment. And because spirituality was adjusted to an opening world of commerce, communication and empire, that spirituality effectively resolved the psychological dilemmas created by this opening world (2003:154).

Learning to create worship practice takes place within broader spiritual economies; that is, within the ways that neoliberal and religious principles have, I argue, dialogically (Bakhtin 1981) informed worship practice.[3] Dialogism is the ongoing material-discursive dialogue between neoliberalism and religion such that there is no longer a single voice, but an interaction

[3] Bakhtin argues: "there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and in what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance. This dialogic imperative, mandated by the pre-existence of the language world relative to any of its current inhabitants, insures that there can be no actual monologue" (1981:426).

of meanings. Within the trade and conference events, where I conducted field research, the dialogism of neoliberalism and religion was seen in the emphasis on unceasing growth and the importance of *relevance* and *excellence*.

I see this relationship between neoliberalism and spirituality as both discourse and practice, as it helps to shape the "affective labours" of church technicians who attempt to embody or become technology stewards. According to David Harvey (2005), individual freedom and choice become pivotal aspects of the way that free markets within neoliberalism operate. Neoliberalism brings "all human action into the domain of the market" through the expansion and opening of new markets and new frontiers, such as religion. Neoliberalism has reordered and reimagined "divisions of labour, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of the heart" (3). Affective labour, as I am using it in the present context, describes the "habits of the heart" that evangelicals learn through stewarding technology (Harvey 2005, Hardt 1999, Hardt & Negri 2004). Their labour, considering they are often volunteers, is often a labour of love and spiritual devotion and a way of demonstrating that they acknowledge and accept the gifts God has given them for worship production. Gifts, or as evangelicals call them, giftings, are endowments from God that must be realized to live a lifestyle of worship[4]—some have a gift, for example, for technology stewardship.

Volunteer technicians question the nature of technology use and its preternatural proclivities. Church practitioners ask if the technology is necessary and question its role. They

[4] The evangelicals with whom I researched reject divisions like the sacred and profane that Emile Durkheim identified to separate religious from everyday life. They advocate "living on mission" or adopting a "lifestyle of worship" to signify that faith is not something one does only on Sunday (Durkheim 1964).

speculate on the purpose technology serves (biblical or demonic) and if it is advancing the "Kingdom of God"[5] or acting as a distraction. Evangelicals, more broadly, wonder if performance technology use attracts religious consumers—who shop for churches like they do for groceries—rather than devout believers. Evangelical speculations on technology and its abilities lead them to question if technology itself promotes its own idolization in the quest for performance excellence. In response to these queries and uncertainties, evangelicals advocate the stewardship of technology—which combines religious principles for management and care with technical adeptness.

The stewardship of technology is one of the ways that I explore the intersection of spiritual economies and ideas about the nature and animism of technology. The animism of technology, and the dispositions of stewardship that seek to manage it, challenge secular-modernist assumptions about the progressive rationalization and disenchantment of the world. Disenchantment values scientific rationalism over mystical belief—something Weber believed belonged to "traditional society" (1964). Stewards learn to regard technology with suspicion, always monitoring it for uncanny and enchanted activity. Technology stewardship responds to the continuing enchantment of the world, providing a framework for how technology is managed in order to ensure that it is used, as evangelicals note, in the service of the church and not the devil. The enduring importance of guiding technology so that it serves biblically correct ends speaks to the anxiety many evangelicals feel about the capriciousness or trickiness of technology left unexamined. To tie these themes together, I look at the ways that technicians learn to create

[5] For many evangelicals, the nature of the Kingdom of God has been the subject of debate (Moore 2004). However, many evangelicals hold belief that to create the Kingdom of God on earth they must go on mission, evangelize and engage in social justice activities.

worship through stewarding technology towards the goal of creating immersive worship experiences.

Before exploring my fieldsites in more depth, I will explain how I came to this topic of research, these fieldsites, and how my positionality contoured this research project. In 2006, I was invited to the Music Industry Association of Canada/Pro Audio and Light (MIAC/PAL) trade event in Toronto by Kevin, the editor of *Technologies for Worship Magazine* (TFWM). Kevin and I had known each other since secondary school and had reconnected just prior to this event. I offered to take photos at the event for the magazine and during it saw my first demonstration of a video sequencing and mixing console designed especially for the house of worship market. On the screen, two doves in flight were layered over a woman with her arms outstretched above her in front of a blue, cloudless sky. The hair on the back of my neck stood on end. What was moving about this video was the seamlessness of the transition between the images, one fading into the other, and the effect of the symbol of doves juxtaposed with a woman in exaltation. Nevertheless, it was also something more, something ephemeral; it was one of those moments anthropologists get excited about and say to themselves: "there is something profound in this moment that I know nothing about, but I know it is significant".

At the time I attended this event I was also considering applying to complete a PhD. Having this idea in mind, I applied to three local universities and accepted a place at York. In 2007, I began my PhD at York University and also attended my first large scale conference and trade event: the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) show in Las Vegas, Nevada with the staff of *Technologies for Worship Magazine*, including Kevin, TFWM Editor. Since 1992, Kevin's parents, Shelagh Rogers and stepfather Barry Cobus owned and operated the magazine

and founded the Technologies for Worship Pavilion in 2006. Two thousand and six was also the year that Kevin's older brother died from cancer and Barry was diagnosed with brain cancer. Kevin and I became very close after the death of his brother. In 2009, we were married. Just months before the birth of our first daughter in 2011, Barry died from brain cancer. I share these events to situate how my research efforts occurred amidst family loss. Yet, also to stress that Barry's vision of the potential impact of the TFW Pavilion and TFWM guided him and us all despite his health circumstances. Perhaps Shelagh and Barry took risks to grow the magazine and Pavilion because Barry was ill. Regardless, Barry was driven to succeed. My research occurred alongside my employment with TFWM, first as a photographer and then as a Circulation Manager. Working with TFWM offered me access to events, like the National Association of Broadcasters, that I would never have otherwise been able to attend (or afford to attend). This exclusive access was not without its complications.

Working with TFWM enabled me to attend training seminars and workshops at the TFW Pavilion and secure contacts to attend their industry competitor, Worship Facilities Conference and Expo (WFX). Attending seminars and hands-on training while I was also working meant that I would often be dressed as the other TFWM staff: in a blue, oxford dress shirt with the TFWM logo on the front lapel and shirt back. I was visibly a staff member but made it clear to seminar leaders that I was in fact doing research for my PhD. On a few occasions, educators would single me out in the audience as though I was conducting a review of their performance rather than doing research. This embarrassing occasion made me wary of asking questions and participating in discussions but as I continued to attend seminars, many speakers began to understand me as a researcher and stopped drawing attention to my dual role. I became a taken-for-granted addition

to seminars and was able to use my familiarity to ask follow-up questions that were more situated and relevant after long-term study.

Being a researcher and staff member with personal connections to the family made the research process complex as I tried to balance working and learning. When I entered the writing phase of this research, I had ceased employment with TFWM. Having constant direct access to some of my primary informants has contributed substantially to the analysis I have been able to undertake. The family has been open to answering questions, entertaining new lines of inquiry, providing details about the past and present, and offering narratives of the business-in-the-making. They have been willing interlocutors, helping to clarify the details that compose this project. The positive benefits of "easy access" coincided with the stress of researching and working alongside my in-laws. While our relationship strained throughout this process, I have negotiated and reconciled the duality of my role as both employee and student by focussing on my experiences during the conference and trade events rather than the day-to-day work at the TFWM office. I turn now to consider the principle fieldsites that have offered the ethnographic substance forming this project.

The Technologies for Worship Magazine (TFWM) and the Technologies for Worship (TFW) Pavilion

> *"Discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said" (Barad 2007:146).*

Before there was *Technologies for Worship Magazine* (TFWM), Shelagh Rogers and Barry Cobus created the American Music Industry (AMI) directory that listed businesses and resources

applicable to those in the music industry—from budding artists to seasoned performers. Before online databases existed, the AMI directory served as a printed comprehensive resource. The AMI directory was widely distributed in the U.S. and Canada. The directory responded to a need identified during Barry and Shelagh's experience managing Canadian music artists in the 1980s. The AMI directory employed less than a dozen staff and operated out of Barry and Shelagh's home. From an early age, Kevin and his older brother Andrew took an active role in the production of the directory and the early TFWM conferences. Kevin became the Executive Editor of TFWM in 1998.

Barry and Shelagh began publishing a bi-monthly magazine catering to house of worship technical staff and volunteers under the name *Religion* in 1992, based in Ontario but circulated primarily in the United States. With articles detailing technology use, system design, and implementation, *Religion* rebranded as TFWM in 1995. The new TFWM had a direct emphasis on the church market with an interest in technology. The magazine grew out of a music industry directory that had been the spark for expanding into the worship market. A small operation, TFWM was a family-run business employing a graphic designer, editor, bookkeeper, publisher, sales representative, public relations consultant, and circulation manager. During the period from 2007-2014, an independent contractor, based in the U.S., managed the Technologies for Worship Pavilion. With a background in the music industry, the owners initially brought together writers with an interest or stake in the worship market who also possessed marked technical knowledge. In conjunction with manufacturers, articles have been primarily educationally driven, premised on speaking to the needs of small to medium-sized (ex. 200-500 congregants) churches.

Like other types of trade publications, TFWM's revenue model is advertising driven. As such, its owners and sales representatives have been committed to convincing potential advertisers that TFWM offers a platform for introducing their product to "new" lucrative domestic and international house of worship markets. Beginning in 1993, TFWM held biannual training conferences and expositions called Inspiration East and West. The first to offer concentrated training and exposition in the U.S., TFWM programming coincided with the expanding reach of evangelicals into televangelism, mass media, and the internet to facilitate church attendance and growth. In the U.S., the growing Christian Right saw media technology as a way to amplify their message and engage a wider demographic of potential congregants. Together, the growth in the uptake of technology and the increasing complexity of worship production has seen the expansion of training conferences and development of specialized niche marketing directed to house of worship purchasers.

During its tenure educating technicians on technology use, TFWM has crafted an architecture that brings manufacturers, technology experts, users and distributors together. The Technologies for Worship (TFW) Pavilion creates a space for training, conversation and live demonstration of multiple audio, video, and lighting technologies. Through the live demonstration of technology, TFWM has negotiated the often contradictory, complex, and politically charged field of US evangelical worship practice by creating a space where church volunteers and technical directors can attend seminars and workshops delivered by technology manufacturers and technology industry consultants. As the idea for the Pavilion began to take shape, the owners of TFWM began courting manufacturer sponsorships to provide gear for the

pavilion. The owners later changed the designation "sponsorships" to "partners", in order to signal attempts to create enduring relationships with companies.

During my research, the principle US trade events that TFW Pavilion took shape at were the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) annual event in Las Vegas, NV, InfoComm, an annual event rotating between Las Vegas, NV and Orlando, FL and Lighting Dimensions International (LDI), held in Las Vegas, NV and Orlando. Of these three events, I attended NAB (2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010) and InfoComm (2008, 2009, and 2010). Internationally, the TFW Pavilion operated at PLASA[6] in London, UK, Integrated Systems Europe and Integrate in Sydney, Australia. In 2008, I travelled with TFWM to PLASA and in 2010 to Sydney, Australia. These events, although similar in scope, had their own character and appealed to attendees in different ways.

NAB, for instance, drew technology manufacturers *and* government exhibitors (like the US Army and the Federal Communications Commission [FCC]) together to discuss and debate the future of broadcast media. Although NAB draws attendees from all over the world, it principally focusses on the U.S. Often NAB attendees, who would otherwise not consider the Pavilion a destination, would cross the hall while the worship band played only to reveal to me that they attended NAB on behalf of their job but regularly attend church. Many expressed gratitude for a religious space within the show, even if it concerned the marketing of audio, video and lighting products. Often the same people would visit day after day and tell stories of how they "came to Christ" and the miracles that had ensued (like regaining their sight).

[6] At one time PLASA was an acronym for Professional Lighting and Audio Standards Association. As an organization, it has since rebranded as PLASA.

InfoComm, on the other hand, produced by InfoComm International, is a trade association of audiovisual manufacturers, users and other trade professionals. InfoComm International presents conferences in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America. Integrate in Sydney, as of my attendance in 2010, had just recently collaborated with InfoComm.[7]

These locations provided me an opportunity to see and experience training in action. I, like many of the church attendees, learned about the dynamics of sound, the qualities of light and shadow, the aspect ratios of video and how these elements come together to, in ideal situations, create moving experiences that help bring congregants into a space where they sensorially engage with God—where they feel "him" in the room.

The TFW Pavilion is a unique space on the trade show floor at events like NAB. As a demonstration and education area, the Pavilion provided hands-on experience of technology. But it also serves as a place of respite for some attendees amidst the speed and bustle of the show floor; stories of salvation and conversion and the power of prayer become a mode of introduction at the greeters counter as attendees consult the workshop schedule and sign-up for free classes.

[7] TFWM owners, through discussion and negotiations with NAB senior management, persuaded that the House of Worship market did in fact exist and represented a viable source of attendee revenue through impressing, as they describe it, their "vision" of the possibilities of the market on NAB management. The future of the TFW Pavilion within NAB depended on NAB sharing this vision of "bringing excellence back to the church". Often phrased in missional terms, the duty to help the church achieve a state of performance excellence through educating technicians and volunteers framed the negotiations over floor space and the other costs of constructing the Pavilion. Principally a trade-only event, the ability to host house of worship end-users was a result of a long and on-going conversation between TFWM owners and NAB management staff about the nature and viability of a house of worship market. TFWM began offering seminars and workshops with NAB in 2004. The relationship between TFWM and NAB can be juxtaposed with the relationship between TFWM and InfoComm. Unlike NAB, which has progressively stalled involvement with TFWM, InfoComm has created opportunities to expand involvement. TFWM classes, for example, up until 2011, had been included as renewal credits for the InfoComm certification process for Certified Technology Specialist (CTS). InfoComm management has been a steadfast supporter of the training TFWM offers. Their belief in the viability of the worship market contrasts with NABs consistent disbelief about the potential for house of worship market growth.

Bringing church attendees together with technology manufacturers within the TFW Pavilion meant trying to find ways to encourage communication and translation across a divide. This divide was a gulf between ways of being, between embodied material-discursive ways of seeing the world and expressing it. Often, attendees and manufacturers struggled to find common ground on which to speak to each other, much like some of the technical systems at the Pavilion. I came to understand the relationship between both technical systems *and* attendees and manufacturers as a nervous (Taussig 1992) and often-delicate configuration. Within the Pavilion or the trade show floor more generally, attempts to translate the needs, requirements, and desires of church attendees into something that would find coherence in a product or service was fraught with challenges. Uneven, difficult and sometimes strained exchanges occurred as some manufacturers (and educators) would try to translate the specifications of a device into qualities that would resonate for church users. Some manufacturers, in response to the precarious nature of appealing to the worship market, actively sought out potential employees who had been active in the church to translate specifications into capabilities in a meaningful way for church purchasers.

Hands-on training is a main component of this market; training occurs alongside product demonstrations and tours that highlight recent improvements and innovations. Events like the TFWM Pavilion and WFX fold selling into training. The TFWM Pavilion or the WFX event are not only educational or market spaces, they are themed spaces. "Theming," according to Lukas, "involves the use of an overarching theme… to create a holistic and integrated spatial organization of a consumer venue" (Lukas 2007:1). Theming, as we will see in coming

chapters[8], is what churches attempt to do when they attempt to create *relevant* and *excellent* worship environments. Creating a themed space is how the TFW Pavilion takes shape. The idea of a "signal chain" is used by manufacturers demonstrating their products at the TFW Pavilion and church practitioners to describe the literal arrangement of all the devices necessary to transport a signal, be it audio, lighting or video, from one place to another. This "chain" is composed of multiple "links" that code and decode analog and digital data from the console to the device. Think of the human nervous system, for example, where signals travel from the brain to other parts of the body which then feedback, relaying signals to brain. A technical signal chain, where information exchanges across different technical platforms, but not always successfully, can also be a metaphor to describe the communication between church technicians and technology manufacturers in their attempts to find common ground for situating the use of technology for worship.

The presenters at these trade events attempt, in their own ways, to convince attendees to cultivate *excellence* in their production processes and frame worship in culturally *relevant* ways. By culture, speakers refer to the mass-mediatized nature of contemporary U.S. life. To be *relevant* is thus to employ the media tools and production styles familiar to congregants. Within these attempts to convince attendees of the value of professional production as a means to encourage greater church attendance, is the push to *activate* the latent giftings of church members and incite them to live on mission.[9] Living "on mission" is a commitment to living out

[8] In the case of the TFW Pavilion, churches may actually attempt to reproduce the "signal chain" that animates the trade show floor in their home churches by advocating for the purchase of the featured devices.
[9] Certain words are italicized at various points throughout the present work to emphasize the broader implications of their use.

a purposeful biblical mission, such as ministering to the "unchurched".[10] Sharing methods for developing the contemporary, media-savvy evangelical church occur when ways of thinking about the purpose and mission of the church in a climate where growth—of the church, its membership, the technical ministry, the broader public influence and role in the community—is framed as the only option for success. A concept of *excellence* becomes a way of talking and thinking about the creation of experiences that stick with attendees. The intention of excellent and relevant worship is to create lasting dispositions towards service to the church—inciting congregants to live on mission through the recognition and use of their "God-given gifts".

Conference presenters (often themselves evangelical) positioned experience as the modality through which congregants would cease being an audience and start being participants. Their interest in crafting certain experiences led my endeavours to understand the relationship between the ways that technicians learn to use technology for worship and the underlying motivations for engineering certain experiences over others. This proved to be complex as I began to tease apart the intersecting discourses that compose technical education. Technical education is never *only* about the functional aspects of using performance technologies. Education attempts to frame the ideal technician, to teach technicians how to use technology to create conditions for church growth, and to contour the relationships between people and things through advocating technology stewardship.

When technicians learn technical skills there is a world of meaning "loaded", to use Latour's term, into that education (2004:210). Technical education is a cultural education in

[10] Being "missional" is, according to Ed Stetzer, the latest "buzzword" to reflect a commitment to living purposefully in one of two ways. The Pauline approach, named after Apostle Paul, focuses on planting churches and spreading the good word far afield. The other approach to mission is the Johnnine which places emphasis on ministering to one's neighbour, locally (Stetzer 2013).

embodied practices and comportments, a way of being a steward and thinking about technology. Technicians learn, for example, where to stand in relation to their audio console, how to reach and set the most important buttons and faders, and where to add their tape with their own settings. When working with lights they begin to differentiate between the subtleties and shades of lighting tone and warmth, knowing which to use when filming. Shadows become, not the absence of light, but a tool for creating dramatic effect. These ways of doing and being begin through learning bodily techniques to differentiate and act with the world (Mauss 1973). The materiality of gesture, when a technician watches for the band's cue to begin or the pastor's subtle nod that his earpiece is working, is learnt through an attentive involvement with the embodied role of steward.[11]

Latour, theorizing a way to talk about the body, suggests that "a subject only becomes interesting, deep, profound, worthwhile when it resonates with others, is effected, moved, put into motion by new entities whose differences are registered in new and unexpected ways. (Latour 2004:210). I take from Latour the insight that when technicians learn about *relevant* and *excellent* worship they are learning to register and be moved (into action) by an ability to articulate modes of worship. If they begin to understand, they differentiate between poorly executed and slap-dash worship and that done with a sense of excellence. "Learning to be affected" argues Latour, "means exactly that: the more you learn, the more differences exist" (Latour 2004:213). What this means is when technicians can discern, convey and enact worship with excellence, they articulate the world of worship in words, in motives for practice (Latour 2004:210).

[11] "Whatever the practitioner does to things", suggests Ingold, "is grounded in an attentive, perceptual involvement with them, or in other words, that he watches and feels as he works" (Ingold 1997:111).

Worship Facilities Conference and Expo (WFX)

Entering large conference centres, like the Charlotte Convention Centre in Charlotte, NC or Cobb Galleria in Atlanta, GA, I greeted the same nondescript medley of smells in the front lobby—a product of scrubbing and sanitizing and the wafts of cigarette smoke that crept through the front door. Each conference centre is unique but I was reminded of all those I had visited when I entered a new one as though there were regular, predictable features designating a venue as a conference centre. The dizzying pattern of the carpet in Charlotte and Atlanta stretches for thousands of square feet. You cannot help but focus on the repeating pattern as you cross through the halls, following the twists and curves of the design like a child tracing the cracks in the sidewalk. As the conference begins, the smell of coffee wafts through the air. Platters of bagels laid out on long tables where devoured quickly by attendees and reduced to piles of crumbs. Coffee spoons began to accumulate in a pile next to the coffee percolator. The drips of coffee extend further from the pot, across the white table linens, as the mornings wore on.

Groups of men sat together and talked, or walked to their next seminar room, carrying their signature conference swag bag (i.e. a branded bag often containing a notepad, pen, and vendor brochures). There were few women at WFX. Breakout seminars and hands-on technology training occupied the smaller rooms, seating 50 or more, while the keynote address occurred in largest ballroom, seating hundreds. The exposition area was located in a large open room, with booths lined up in a grid pattern across the area. Exhibitors purchased floor space where they could erect a booth and display their products or information. At WFX, vendors were a mix of those who service multiple markets (i.e. Roland, Sony, Yamaha, NEC, Sharp, and Canon) and those who solely service the house of worship market. At the two events I attended there were

approximately 90-100 vendors in the exposition area. In contrast, NAB, where TFWM held the Pavilion, had hundreds of exhibitors stretched across four exhibition halls, equivalent in size to 40 football fields. WFX, being focussed solely on the worship market, hosted, at their count, roughly 2000 attendees the years I attended from across the U.S. from mostly medium (301-800 seats) and large churches 801-2000 seats). WFX attracts members of the worship team including those from the technical ministry, as well as those from the pastorate with decision-making power. Denominationally, Baptists and those who designate as Other, meaning they do not fit within the categories show organizers have set, and Non-denominational are the highest represented (WFX 2010).

Worship Facilities Exposition and Conference, the outgrowth of *Church Production Magazine* and *Worship Facilities Magazine* began in 2005 operated by EH Publishing. WFX, Church Production and Worship Facilities Magazine are the main competitors to TFWM in the United States. WFX has mainly hosted its annual shows on the east coast of the U.S., after trying one year to hold events on both coasts. I attended WFX in Charlotte, North Carolina in 2009 and Atlanta, Georgia in 2010. I learned about and attended WFX through my contacts at TFWM. Kevin, TFWM Editor, facilitated access through requesting press credentials for us through his media contacts at WFX.

Far afield from the bustle and buzz of technology trade events and conferences, I attended a local Ontario evangelical church that I call Neighbours.[12] As a church with modest financial means, their technology use was fraught as a quasi-failing endeavour. At Neighbours, their budgetary constraints and resistance to "best practices" framed their casual approach to the

[12] This is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the church and congregation.

way worship was produced. From the converted theatre building, Neighbours used the technologies at hand to reach out to their local community and more broadly via online broadcasts. Ethnographic research at Neighbours has served as a contrast to the extreme commitment to excellence and cultural relevance espoused at trade events. The staff and volunteers at Neighbours took a more ready-to-hand (cf. Heidegger 1953[1927]) approach to worship that reflected their access to technical resources.

Neighbours Church

The lobby fills quickly as the service is preparing to start. People meet friends, talk over coffee, while kids skirt between the legs of standing adults. A doublewide central stairway leads up to the engineering booth. Children and young adults sit on the stairs as people mill about in the lobby. Short pile carpet covers the floor leading to the two entrances to the sanctuary that flank the central stairway and heads down the two aisles that divide the room into three seating sections. The stage for the pastor, William,[13] and the church worship band is set in front of the screen on which a large projector hung from the balcony projects the lyrics to songs and provides a direct video feed from the pastor's laptop. A switcher located in a group of devices on desks controls this feed. The desks sit in the left side of the central seating area. Two large broadcast cameras flank the room.[14] They stand against the two outside walls as the seats branch out towards the back of the room. Collections of wires run under rubber safety mats or under thick swathes of duct tape against the floor.

[13] This is a pseudonym.
[14] The cameras capture the worship service to broadcast it online.

At Neighbours, cables ran down the centre of the rows of seating, covered with fraying, unevenly applied duct tape. Crossing from one aisle to another between the seat rows meant being mindful of the duct-taped bulge, easily tripped over by anyone crossing between the aisles through the seats. Halfway down from the sanctuary doors, set into the central bank of seats, was the in-house audio console that controlled the sound mix within the sanctuary. Beside it, sat a desk with a computer that controlled the video feeds going to the central projector that displayed behind the pastor, on what was once the theaters screen location. Sitting behind this bank of devices one can see the service progress through the monotonous tapping of a keyboard key to advance slides for the song lyrics, or switch to the feed of the pastor's laptop. Often, Pastor William in a mildly irritated tone would prompt the volunteer operator to switch the feeds as he set up his first PowerPoint slide and gathered his thoughts. From the internet broadcast, one would never see the in-house console, the wires, the exposed plaster walls, the old theatre seats. Two large cameras caught the action within the sanctuary and one fixed mount camera had a bird's eye view from what was once the theatre's upper balcony. The two floor cameras sat against the outside walls, inset into the two outside banks of seats that flanked the two aisles. Operators stood behind them, taking direction from the director in the control booth, in the former balcony. Attendees in the sanctuary cannot help but be conscious of the presence of devices. They experience hypermediacy via, not the seamlessness of the technologized experience, but through the self-consciousness of its mediation. Concealing technology is impossible in this circumstance; but it becomes part of ritual practice.

Neighbours Church avoids learning about the tenets of production excellence in favour of keeping the boundaries of their technical knowledge closed to outside influence. Their efforts to

produce a live and online weekly service often occurred alongside device failure and malfunction. Although facing budgetary constraints, the technical director intentionally neglected the advice, educational resources, or best practices of trade publications like TFWM. In contradistinction to the discourses of worship education at trade events, this church actively opted for low-cost, often failing methods to produce their broadcasts. The technical director, Michael[15] rationalized their choice of these methods by telling stories of how he had opted for low-cost alternatives despite knowing the professional alternatives—a form of financial stewardship. He proudly told of his choice of a Home Depot lighting solution instead of purchasing professional lighting rigs. This disposition towards thriftiness, a disposition that not only Michael possessed, was borne out in the worn theatre seats that made it difficult to stand from sitting, the fraying and lifted duct tape running through the centre of the floor, the patched plaster walls, the tenuously functioning washroom facilities, and the un-emptied garbage cans that grew increasingly full week-to-week.

When evangelical churches at trade events were learning to value production excellence and the methods for cultivating a moving worship experience, Neighbours was creating a tenuously functioning technological montage of old and new technologies that frequently failed. While educators at trade events were emphasizing the importance of recognizing and activating the gifting of volunteers and church members, Neighbours was scrambling to find anyone willing to operate the video cameras, regardless of experience (with the exception of me). Often the senior technical staff, like the pastor's son Jeremy[16] would be required to operate the cameras when the volunteers failed to appear.

[15] This is a pseudonym.
[16] This is a pseudonym.

Neighbours Church is located two hours northeast of Toronto, in a small rural town surrounded by lush farmland and forests. It is a conservative evangelical church that believes in biblical literalism, emphasis on the importance of the gospel, and belief in evangelism as a mission to spread the word and bring the converted to Jesus so that they can be "born again" (Noll 2003).

Housed in a renovated theatre, Neighbours has a storefront space along a main street. In the theatre lobby, there are cocktail tables for congregants to lean against with their coffees and Tim Hortons Timbits before the service. I learned of Neighbours through attending the TFW Pavilion. A Canadian representative from a well-known technology manufacturer, who regularly participated in the Pavilion and advertised in TFWM, attended Neighbours and suggested I visit his church. I contacted the pastor and secured permission to attend the church to observe and participate (where possible). As I learned later, this representative often secured gear for Neighbours at a discount to enable them to expand their technological capabilities.

Neighbours Church often serves as a foil to some of the keywords that emerge from technical training events like *relevance* and *excellence*. Neighbours Church, while participating in spiritual economies, does so through shunning technological best practices, often due to budgetary constraints. However, they also embody a culture of resistance to the influence of what they consider to be "outside" advice, for example, from *Technologies for Worship Magazine*, which offers free technical education. Michael believed that his own experience equipped him to lead the technical ministry without help or training. Neighbours Church embodies the antithesis of many of the themes of technical training at large trade events through their slap-dash approach to worship performances. In their case, technology-for-technology's

sake seems more important than producing an *excellent* worship experience based on principles of professional production. Considering the themes that emerge from the trade events and Neighbours Church, my dissertation seeks to explore the contradictions that animate technical education and the local practice of creating a worship environment and stewarding technology.

At trade events and through published exegesis, teaching technicians to be a steward means modelling a relationship with technologies for the creation of worship practice. Education stresses the importance of trying to control the nervous technological system. At Neighbours, stewardship manifested as messy bricolage (Levi-Strauss 1962)[17] making it an ideal venue to explore the ways that the foundational tropes of *excellence* and *relevance* become or fail to become salient in a local context.

Configurations of old and new technologies make up nervous, quasi-failing systems (Frabetti 2010:110) that nonetheless work to share Neighbours' message. Exploring stewardship at Neighbours has meant going further than only seeing it as a means to control. Neighbours offers the opportunity to explore stewardship as "the ability to rearrange" technology into new configurations based on financial necessity but also in defiance of widely accepted methods.

From bustling conference and trade events to a small Ontario evangelical church I have engaged in fieldwork that forms the basis for what follows. The Technologies for Worship (TFW) Pavilion, Worship Facilities Conference and Expo (WFX) and Neighbours Church together are the ethnographic grounding for my theoretical understandings and insights. As I

[17] Deleuze and Guattari describe bricolage this way: "When Claude Levi-Strauss defines bricolage he does so in terms of a set of closely related characteristics: the possession of a stock of materials or of rules of thumb that are fairly extensive, though more or less a hodgepodge—multiple and at the same time limited; the ability to rearrange fragments continually in new and different patterns or configurations; and as a consequence, an indifference toward the act of producing and toward the product, toward the set of instruments to be used and toward the over-all result to be achieved" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983:6).

travelled between these fieldsites, I have endeavoured to understand the connections between them through my choice of methods and methodologies.

Methods and Methodologies

My methods reflect an experiential and participatory ethnographic approach to research based on the value and depth of knowledge produced through intersubjective, casual interaction and open-ended discussions. Accompanying participant observation, I have explored scholarly histories and ethnographic texts, done extensive media analysis, queried technology manufacturer documentation, and listened for public discourses around technology and religion. My fieldnotes chart interviews and conversations, record technology seminars and conference keynotes, and contain my reflections on the ongoing elaboration of worship markets.

My intention has been, during the process of fieldwork and after, to bridge various forms of data and explore the issues that animate my research from multiple vantages and perspectives. I have attempted to tease connections and disconnections from a body of material, which I have read both with and against the grain (Stoler 2002).

Reading with and against the grain has a tendency to unsettle familiar terms and provokes a rethinking of how one uses terms in practice. Throughout this dissertation, I use the term evangelicalism to denote a particular set of religious dispositions based on biblical literalism, emphasis on the Books of the Gospel, and the value placed on missionization or spreading the "Good Word". This is not an exhaustive list of dispositions, nor does every evangelical place equal weight on these attributes. Using evangelical as a descriptor I am thus less concerned with capturing all the qualities that may apply or defining a mode of religious being, but rather the

term evangelical acts as a shorthand for widely held dispositions towards religious practice. My analysis has focussed primarily on North American evangelicals who, according to psychological anthropologist and anthropology of Christianity scholar Tanya Luhrmann, seek an intimate relationship with God and who are at great pains to learn to speak to and hear God's voice (2012). These evangelicals attempt to feel the presence of God in their daily lives, making their lived religious experience similar other forms of Christianity, like North American variations of Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a form of Pentecostalism (Csordas 2001, see also Engelke 2007, Keane 2007). Although evangelicalism and Pentecostalism share some aspects of commonality, such as emphasized on living out faith, they differ markedly in the ritual worship practice. Csordas describes, for example, the occurrence of glossolalia, or speaking on tongues that was an important focus of Charismatic worship (2001). In contrast, the evangelicals with whom I researched focussed more keenly on interior states or commune with God in daily life and the ways that technology enabled or troubled the development of that devotional relationship.

Concerning technology, I move back and forth between the use of the term devices and technology to describe professional audio, video and lighting machines. Common uses of the term "technology" include as descriptor of a thing, as a set of practices, or as a process for creating or inventing. My use most commonly refers to technology as a thing. However, I acknowledge that technology is at times, a thing or device; at other times, it is a set of practices, like technologies of the self; and it can be a mode of creating both new things and new embodied dispositions. My use attempts not to avoid the politics of the term but to use it purposefully to describe the technical objects that evangelicals come to know through education and use.

The densely gendered and subtle (and not-so-subtle) politics of technology use and

stewardship within the church conditioned my access as I attempted to move along the routes and lines of flight that my informants pursued, trying to understand their observations and recollections through offering questions of my own. My gendered access, often the facilitator and gatekeeper when pursuing the questions that animate ethnographic research, allowed me to follow some routes, but not others.

Gender matters in the worlds of technology manufacturers and evangelical technical directors. Women are rarely sales representatives for manufacturers. Similarly, at the conference events I attended there are proportionally fewer women in the role of technical director. Among some streams of evangelical practice, there are restrictions on what roles women can play within the church (i.e. prohibiting women in leadership roles). The position of technician is, akin to much of the hierarchy of church operations, a highly gendered field.

Throughout fieldwork at educational seminars and trade events, it became obvious that women were underrepresented in the position of technician, volunteer or technical director. Few women also occupied the position of worship leader, the individual responsible, usually in consultation with the Pastor (predominantly men), for determining the song selection or musical direction for upcoming services. Worship leaders often collaborate loosely with technical directors on the technical expectations and requirements ("the vision") for worship services.

The impetus behind the absence of women in technical positions and positions of authority within the church are many but are without doubt related to broader understandings within mainstream evangelicalism of the biblically mandated place of women in support or service roles rather than in leadership positions. At Neighbours Church, for example, William clearly articulates his understanding of the role of women, much like the role of his own wife in

the church. Jane[18], William's wife, was the worship leader at Neighbours in close collaboration with William. Jane stood during each service to the right of William, near the front of the stage. Blond-haired and in her late-forties, Jane led the congregation in song and when the sermon began took a seat in the front row of seats. I often watched her nod her head in assent along with the points William made during his exhortations. Jane occasionally spoke during the service but her main role was to prepare the congregation through song for the solemnity of the message.

At Neighbours, there was one woman involved in the technical aspects of ministry and others involved in the worship band. However, it became clear through attending many sermons that the biblically-based traditional role for women (in service to their husbands) was a key feature of this conservative church. At conferences, a lack of women in church leadership roles translated into fewer women leading the technical ministry. Yet, the motivations that lead men, rather than women into technical roles are complex and are not explained by the obvious male-dominance alone. It became clear to me, however, that the effect of the predominance of men in positions to educate technical directors structured knowledge, reinforced particular methods and practices they weighed as important, and reinforced certain dispositions towards worship practice (i.e. conflict-based metaphors like "impact" implicitly structure the relationship between technology and the body during worship). Negotiating the gendered aspects of my research has meant taking account of the dominant metaphors used to talk about and understand the relationship between technology, the body and worship.

In the day-to-day aspects of my fieldwork, it became clear that I, as an educated woman doing research for a PhD, was an anomaly at the TFW Pavilion, in its seminars, at WFX and at

[18] This is a pseudonym.

Neighbours Church. The women that did attend conferences were often retirees and volunteers (not paid technical directors), attending with male colleagues. While engaged in research I often adopted a posture of deference because I was beginning from a place of curiosity, without assuming the answers before asking the questions. However, adopting this posture as a woman speaking mostly to men who consider women as adjuncts to the worlds of men meant that I often felt like many of the TFWM speakers and writers spoke to me as though I was a child. While this was valuable from a research perspective to learn how, from a foundational perspective, technical systems form, it was also one of the most challenging aspects of this project. As I established a rapport with many of the TFWM speakers and writers, they began to understand the depth of my technical knowledge—the dynamic between us changed—I became one of the team at the Pavilion.

My attendance and participation in educational seminars at conferences, technology exhibitions and at Neighbours Church put me in the middle of the action, where material-discursive assemblages took shape in seminar content and during hands-on technical training and the production of worship practice. I learned how dispositions towards technology generally are continuously framed and negotiated by educators and conference participants, and for many how they are incorporated and "encoded into bodily memory by repeated performances until [they] become habitual" (Hayles 1999:199). These encoded habitual performances help form a feeling for their use, a *habitus* in which the dispositions generated through bodily learning inform and encode ways of being, speaking and acting in the world (Csordas 2001:67). Practice theory, following scholars who productively use Bourdieu (1977, 1990) talk about how actors develop a naturalized "feel for the game"; what seems natural is in fact a stabilizing effect of learning how

to interact with and think about technology in particular ways (cf. Csordas 2001).

Learning alongside attendees at trade events enabled me to share their experiences, while remaining attuned to their reactions and reflections. Seminar content opened a window to the dominant metaphors, images, and keywords that attendees learn through education on the stewardship of technology. I spent countless hours at trade events "walking the floor", both alone and with technicians and volunteers. I spoke to and collected promotional materials from manufacturers that market their products to churches. The ways that manufacturers tailor their promotional materials for the house of worship market speaks to their efforts to translate technical specifications into what they believe are the needs and desires of church users. Translation, for this reason and others, is often a rough process; one characterized by attempts to learn and speak a religiously attuned language that turns a technical capacity into some indispensable for contemporary worship.

Another dimension of this research has been fieldwork at an evangelical house of worship in southern Ontario. This multi-sited (Marcus 1995) research progressed at, what I call Neighbours Church. Neighbours is a small fellowship that combines on-site and web-broadcast worship. Neighbours also broadcasts their own radio programming locally. I was able to attend this church, spending most of my time in the production booth through a contact I made at TFWM. A representative from a local technology manufacturer, also a church member, encouraged me to attend Neighbours and facilitated the introductions. As I recount in later chapters, I viewed the production process during live broadcasts and conducted informal interviews with technical staff. The act of "deep hanging out" (Geertz 1973, 2001) before and after broadcasts was a way for me to begin to understand the processual mechanics of online-

worship and explore some of the rituals (like praying over technology) that give their worship practice shape. Later, I recount my own embodied experience in these spaces and during these worship events through considering the "material-discursive practices" (Barad 2003:810) of production.

Through attempts at a holistic approach, I have drawn inspiration from Latour (2005) and taken the controversies actors identify and value seriously. Latour (2005) suggests that: "the time has come to have a much closer look at the type of aggregates thus assembled and at the ways they are connected to each other" (22). This perspective means listening for the connections that actors make but also remaining aware of what cannot be or is not said. Tsing (2005) adds to this approach when she advocates attending to the awkwardness of entanglements, engagements, and connections one cannot foresee from the start. This both theoretical and methodological framework has required the collection of data without restriction: recording as much tacit detail as possible, "thick description" style (Geertz 1973), collecting many documents, brochures, and other news media articles. This data has framed the "controversies" and connections of actors in my field sites, making them visible.

William Connolly suggests, and I concur, "you do not engage everything all the time; that would present the image of a holistic philosophy of totality resisted here. You adopt a problem orientation, pursuing the contours of an issue up and down these interacting scales, as the issue requires" (Connolly 2013:401). The productive tensions that arise from moving with and across connections may seem foreign to my evangelical interlocutors. This strategy has nonetheless produced resonances between their worlds and broader social forces and trends.

My analysis tacks between an emphasis on the material-discourses that frame worship

practice and the material, embodied and sensorial aspects of crafted technologized religious experiences. I have come to see the importance of considering how technical directors, technology manufacturers, devices, spatial and acoustical ecologies within which technologies and technicians operate, and the markets within which they all circulate come together, become durable or fall apart.

A disposition towards material-discursive methods has obliged me to assess "how language is used in and across social situations..." (Farnell and Graham 1998:411). Focussing on how language is used also means attending to the materiality of bodily production where "spoken discourse and other signifying acts/forms of expressive performance" (Farnell and Graham 1998: 411) get hooked into a dialogic and generative encounter. This "intimate ethnography" as Sherry Turkle (2008) suggests, takes seriously the assertion that:

> There are many stories to tell about people and their devices. We need to hear stories that examine political, economic, and social institutions. Inner history tells other stories. . . . Inner history shows technology to be as much an architect of our intimacies as our solitudes. Through it, we see beyond everyday understanding to untold stories about our attachment to objects. We are given a clearer view of how technology touches on the ethical compacts we make each other... (29).

The entanglements, negotiations, histories, and stories that inform the present work have been cultivated through reflexive anthropological practice result from my own situatedness. I began attending worship conference and trade events years before I began the formal component of my PhD fieldwork. As such, I entered "the field" already having established a rapport with many of the speakers and trainers that I would spend time watching and speaking with. My affiliation with TFWM facilitated these interactions but never made them simple. TFWM was, until 2013, a family-run business, of which I was a part through marriage. Where I had access, I also had responsibility and the requirement that I constantly negotiate corporate politics and the

demands of balancing work and research. The opportunity to attend events that would otherwise have been inaccessible enabled this research to go in fruitful directions but has also curtailed, like all ethnographic research, what events can be seen, what languages and discourses can be spoken and what actions can be followed. Seen as affiliated with the magazine and negotiating my own space as a researcher produced productive tension by creating an opportunity where, with the type of access I had, my fieldwork became a formative process through which to build analytic skills as a researcher, negotiate my professional position with the magazine, and with my extended in-law family. These differing demands meant that, although I was always an acting anthropologist, I had to be sensitive to the requirements of my job (as circulation manager) and the expectations of my employers, which were not always consistent with my research agenda. As a result, the push and pull of the research process extended long after the official end to my fieldwork but enabled me to garner insights into the creation and development of worship markets and industry that would have been impossible otherwise.

Organization

The organization of the remaining chapters concerns exploring the constellations of practices and discourses that orbit how worship technicians learn to think about, talk about, and use performance technologies.

Chapter 2, the review of the literature, focusses on two themes. The first theme concerns the relationship between religion and technology, with a focus on the ways that bodily religious practice occurs through the cultivation of particular practices, like creating immersive worship environments. In the second theme, I address the relationship between religion and political

economy. I draw on these literatures to inform how I situate contemporary evangelical worship practice. For example, understanding the conceptualization of religion and neoliberalism as adversarial has been integral for my argument that they instead share a dialogical relationship. Likewise, understanding the ways that religion and technology intersect has provided a jumping-off point for my analysis of the anxieties evangelicals feel about the nature of technology. Building on these literatures, I explore technical training as a novel approach to understanding the relationship between religion and performance technology. Moreover, my focus on the origins of a U.S. house of worship market contributes to understanding the events that make technologized worship possible.

Chapter 3 begins by relating an important event in the life of TFWM by exploring the conference and trade exposition in 2004 held aboard the Queen Mary, a docked Cunard ocean liner. The Queen Mary event became the catalyst for the creation of the TFW Pavilion and TFWM's main competitor's event, WFX. By exploring attempts to create and legitimate a house of worship market, I look towards the discursive and performative aspects of how a market with no ostensible market transactions has taken shape.

In Chapter 4, I explore the ways that keywords like excellence, relevance, experience, giftings, growth and others take on different meanings within the performative genres of speech in which they are used. Exploring these genres of sacred, technical and neoliberal speech help to tease apart the variety of meanings these words carry in different contexts. I use the concept of translation to explore how the movement of keywords between genres is not always smooth. This rough translation signals the ways that meanings are not fixed, but instead take on new valences as words travel between speakers, like church technicians and technology

manufacturers, for example. I then consider the ways that worship events at Neighbours Church hang together as a bricolage of nervous technological systems.

Chapter 5 pursues ideas about spiritual economies and their relationship to crafting of religious experiences. I interrogate the ways that a surplus-value of flow—the capitalization of movement and life experience—is created through mobilizing the affective labour of congregants, and seeks to instill a "lifestyle of worship". Informing these dispositions towards church organization is the belief that growth is contingent on operationalizing members. Constant growth, as a marker of success and spiritual value, forms a basis for the creation of spiritual economies of experience.

In Chapter 6, I move to the ways that technology stewardship is framed among contemporary evangelicals through exploring the ways that technology itself is understood and conceptualized at trade events, through technological education and in the writing of religious technology trade publications and consultants. Neighbours Church provides an opportunity to explore the local elaboration of stewardship and its relationship to the ways they understand the nature of technology.

Chapter 7 turns to the sensorial formations technicians learn about at trade events that configure worship in particular ways. Considering how keywords like excellence and relevance work through in practice, I endeavour to situate the ways that discourse about contemporary evangelical worship contours attempts to create immersive worship experiences for congregants. Drawing the main threads of the chapters, the conclusion explores novel ways to understand the technologization of contemporary evangelical worship practice.

In the conclusion, chapter 8, I draw together the preceding arguments to suggest that the

collective apparatuses (the collection of technologies, technicians, stewardship, vocabularies of motive, keywords, and nervous systems) that frame the technologization of evangelical worship practice reveal the discontinuities that challenge commonly held notions about the nature of political economy and religious practice. At the intersection of technologization and neoliberalism are sensorial experiences that result from the affective labour of technology stewards. The conclusion furthermore suggests that the speculation by evangelicals on the nature and role of technology signals attempts to negotiate worlds of things *unseen* as they learn to craft seemingly otherworldly experiences.

To understand the importance of experience I consider how things come together, find some measure of permanence or fall apart. This nervous and often fragile system (Taussig 1992) finds coherence through the interaction of people and animated things—in attempts to engineer worship. Through learning to attune to the material-discursive natures of technical learning, I have tracked the ways technicians learn to negotiate the dynamics of techno-religious worlds. Yet, before engineering worship, the interactions of church technicians and technology manufacturers, give shape to the ways that church technicians understand technology's purpose. Often, attempts to find common ground between church users and manufacturers result in rough translations that signal the tensions of contemporary evangelical technology use.

This introduction has queried understandings of the church as a bastion to find instead, dialogical exchanges where religious and political economic logics have informed new ways of understanding technology use and its relation to ritual practice that are worked through in the creation of immersive experiences. Attempts to cultivate excellence in performance techniques occur in concert with notions that stewardship is an integral way to manage, control and ensure

technology does not get out-of-hand. The chapters that follow offer an experience of discourses-in-the-making. These material-discourses are elaborated during trade events and seminars, in the pages of trade publications and in the writing of technically-savvy evangelicals that reflect on the nature of technology use in the church and the ways that the concept of experience—used as a way of crafting a lifestyle of worship—is curated through technologized worship. Neighbours Church provides local context to the ways that discourses materialize through practice.

In the literature review that follows, I explore the relationship between religion and technology through contextualizing the evangelical desire for a direct relationship with the divine. I also, more broadly, explore attempts to make sense of human/technological relationships. Discussing spiritual economies, I also endeavour to expose the connections and divergences of religion and political economies. My research builds on these bodies of literature through an attention to the creation of house of worship markets and the unique focus on technical training.

2. Literature Review

Two themes have emerged through following along with TFWM, attending WFX, and visiting Neighbours Church. One concerns the technologization of religious practice and the other the political and spiritual economies within which that technologization occurs. These themes represent bodies of literature that I parse to foreground the importance of considering the connections between media, religion and political economy. I engage these two bodies of literature through an attention to the anthropology of Christianity, which, through various ethnographic contexts, contextualizes contemporary forms of belief and practice (Csordas 2001, Daswani 2015, Engelke 2007, Luhrmann 2012, Meyer 2004, 2010). These two literatures also enable me to speak to the complexities of learning to use technology amidst anxieties about its nature and capacity by situating my theoretical orientations at the juncture of media, religion and approaches to political economy that I argue, must be considered together to understand contemporary forms of mediated worship.

Religion and Technology: the problem of presence

Of the many Christian denominations that occupy the U.S. religious landscape, evangelicals, for the most part, have been early and eager adopters of cutting-edge performance technologies, invariably changing the experience of worship to speak to a desire of immediacy (Bolter & Grusin 1999:34). The adoption of audio/video devices and technologies has occurred alongside the significant shift in the structure of belief for many U.S. evangelicals towards the experience of an intimate relationship with God. Concerning American evangelicals Tanya Luhrmann

argues that:

> Over the last few decades, this generation of Americans has sought out an intensely personal God . . . These Americans call themselves evangelical to assert that they are part of the conservative Christian tradition that understands the Bible to be literally or near literally true and that describes the relationship with Jesus as personal, and as being born again. But the feature that most deeply characterizes them is that the God they seek is more personally intimate, and more intimately experienced, than the God most Americans grew up with. These evangelicals have sought out and cultivated concrete experiences of God's realness. They have strained to hear the voice of God speaking outside their heads. They have yearned to feel God clasp their hands and to sense the weight of his hands push against their shoulders. They have wanted the hot presence of the Holy Spirit to brush their cheeks and knock them sideways (2012:xv).

Creating experiences of realness using technology is no simple task. Technology stewards try to create a feeling of presence of an intimate, otherwordly other through using technology such that they render that technology's presence transparent. Stewards attempt to achieve "transparent immediacy" where they seek to "erase or to render automatic the act of representation" (Bolter & Grusin 1999:33). "Hypermediacy", in contrast, makes those acts of representation visible (Bolter & Grusin 1999:33). In the context of evangelical worship practice, the desire for an immediate and personal experience of the divine is in tension with the apparent hypermediacy of contemporary worship at moments of malfunction, or where technological presence interrupts the event. Stewards endeavour to create experiences where congregants have an "immediate relationship to the contents of [the] medium" (Bolter & Grusin 1999:23–24).

Studies of the intersection of religion and media highlight the tensions between the presence and absence of technology in worship, between the hypermediacy of high-tech worship practice and attempts to erase technology's presence. Contemporary anthropology of Christianity scholar Birgit Meyer (2011), following Matthew Engelke (2007), articulates this tension "as the 'problem of presence.' This problem of presence ensues from the concomitant denial of

mediation and the striving for immediate encounters with God that demand mediation of some sort" (29).[19] The "sensational forms" that, according to Meyer organize authorized religious experience, also sometimes sacralize mediation (32). In the case of evangelicals engineering a virtual (worship) reality, the attempts to sacralize mediation through the "sensational forms" of authorized modes of technology stewardship contribute to the creation of a virtuous reality of immersive worship. "Sensational forms" in the context of evangelical worship, for example, could be immersive light and sound displays or the use of sermon-themed videos. In understanding how attempts are made to negotiate the requirement of mediation and quest for immediacy, Meyer argues that, "what a medium is and does is not intrinsic to the medium itself, but subject to social processes that shape religious mediation and authorise certain sensational forms as valuable" (31). What this perspective offers is an attention to the specificity of relationships built through interactions with technology and shaped through the discourses evangelicals use to understand their relationship to technology and worship. I explore these discourses through the framing of certain dispositions as they take hold and become authorized ways of engineering worship practice.

As an example of these processes, Charles Hirschkind (2006) points to the role of cassettes and audio technology in the cultivation of ritual speech genres and postures of worship. The public broadcast and audition of tapes in Egypt, in contrast to private, internalized worship,

[19] Mathew Engelke (2011), in response to Charles Hirschkind, elaborates on the relationship between media, presence and the senses: "As Derrida himself puts it, 'The choice is not between media and presence. The presentation of the presence itself supposes a mediatic structure' (2001: 81). The answer to Hirschkind's question about whether or not the small group of people in Portland, Oregon can worship their deity without mediation and mediatisation, then, is 'no'. (They might be able to do without mediatisation, if that is taken to mean the reification or production of a medium.) They can certainly do it without televisions and jets, but they cannot do it without their senses. 'A voice and nothing more', to borrow a phrase from Mladen Dolar (2006); yet there is always something more (97-8).

foregrounds “modes of expression understood to facilitate the development and practice of Islamic virtues” (106–107, see also Silverstein 2008, Van de Port 2006). Hirschkind explores the sensorial and “material conditions of discourse” (106) as he tracks the counterpublics of cassette listeners. Public audition and modes of ethical listening are “geared to the honing of sensibilities and the cultivation of pious habits” (107). The tapes themselves are understood as a vehicle for the cultivation of piety, and their content often critiques other forms of media entertainment. In contrast to mediated evangelical worship, it is not the technology itself that acts to shape the message, but the discursive content that forms embodied dispositions and modes of ethical listening. In the case of evangelicals who attempt to erase the presence of technology, we might suggest that they form a “technopublic” that problematizes the social life and situatedness of technology as it increasingly mediates worship practice. This “technopublic” might be said to consider the “technologization of religion and the religiosity of technology” (Stolow 2013:4) and hint at the ways that technology animates religious discourse by making itself visible, despite attempts to steward it.

In other contexts, the shift towards mediated ritual practice that seeks to create a sense of immediacy has been coupled with the popularity of “prosperity gospels” that tie committed religious practice to personal wealth and well-being (Coleman 2000, 2006, see also De Witte 2003, Ukah 2003). Meyer (2004) suggests that, “Pentecostalism has not only embraced the prosperity gospel but also advertises in the media, and, at the same time, its cultural style is at the center of commercial popular culture; Pentecostal churches are run as businesses, and Pentecostal views are mass reproduced and commodified in popular culture” (105). Visualizing prominent religious themes via film ‘brings to life’ images of good, evil, God, the devil, and

often the promises and perils of generating wealth that cultivate, among viewers, a visual and bodily engagement with these religious themes (see also Spyer 2008). These "sensational forms" authorize a sense of God's realness (and the devil's machinations) through evocative storytelling, much like contemporary sermonizing and film in U.S. evangelical churches.

Sensational forms attempt to expose the relationship between the look and feel of ritual practice and its ability to frame an experience of the divine and share that experience using performance technologies (Meyer and Verrips 2008). Sensational forms, like earlier attempts to understand the meaning and function of ritual practice, attempt to bridge action and intention. In a religious context vocabularies of motives—the ways of thinking and acting that *seem* self-evident and natural—build on prior understandings of the role and function of religion and the work of symbols. Clifford Geertz posits a theory of religion that relies on the endurance of sacred symbols and their reflection in a group ethos and emotively in a group worldview (1973:90). He explains that, "Religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often, implicit) metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other" (90). While Geertz offers a powerful way to understand the work symbols do, he fails to discern the processes through which they come into being, find relevance, gain traction or slip away. Vocabularies of motives, on the other hand, concern what *becomes* thinkable and can be said to explain action and intention. Vocabularies are always in the process of being built, some aspects of which gain traction, while others lose relevance.

Talal Asad, in his critique of Geertz's theory of religion, suggests that Geertz adopts "a distanced spectator-role, as compared to 'knowledge from' and 'attitudes in' living. …The

trouble with this is that it closes off the possibility of examining how 'knowledge' and 'attitudes' are related to material conditions and social activities" (1983:239). Important for Asad is connecting symbols to social communication and locating them cognitively. Using the example how children learn, internalize speech and ways of thinking through exposure to language in social situations, Asad attempts to set out the conditions "(discursive and non-discursive) which help to explain how symbols come to be constructed, and how some of them are established as natural or authoritative as opposed to others" (1983:240). Taking a semiotic approach to understanding the relationship between religion and technology within spiritual economies reveals the bridge between discourse, metaphor, and everyday practice. Discourses come to life and materialize through the relationships between technology stewards and their technologies.

The problem of presence, of direct and intimate contact with the divine, throws the nature of technology and its sometimes-capricious behaviour into relief. Situated within spiritual economies, the technologization of religious practice offers new readings of the nature of technology. Communications scholar Jeremy Stolow, who has added depth and life to the study of religion and technology, suggests that,

> Having dismissed innocent accounts of technology as the instrument of human intention and the handmaiden of social progress, a growing chorus of scholars has placed a new premium on technology's sacral and/or magical dimensions. Because of their imponderable complexities, their autonomous, networked agency, and their capacities to compress time, erase distance, and reproduce sameness, modern technologies have thus come to be understood as possessing transcendent or uncanny features, the encounter with which is phenomenologically comparable with performative techniques of prayer, ritual action, or magic, or with the 'religious' experiences of ecstasy and awe—as famously quoted by Jacques Derrida in his account of what he describes as the return of a repressed, 'primitive' animism within modern tele-technoscience (2013:5).

Contrary to a "primitive" animism, I take the suggestion from Tim Ingold (2006) that,

"Animacy . . . is not a property of persons imaginatively projected onto the things with which they perceive themselves to be surrounded. Rather … it is the dynamic, transformative potential of the entire field of relations within which beings of all kinds, more or less person-like or thing-like, continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence" (2006:10). Animacy may be the ghost in the machine for science and technology studies—bridging the anthropology of religion with the renewed interest in the vitality, materiality and liveliness of things.

I have looked to scholars who explore the relationships between humans and machines, or humans and *others*—may they be technical, animal, or otherwise—to contextualize the configurations of technology stewards and their interactions with performance devices. This approach, drawn from Speculative Realism—a philosophical undertaking that speculates on the realities of things and the broader worlds in which they belong—interleaved with perspectives from Science and Technology studies, and feminist materialism, is, according to Bryant, concerned with the "profound decentering of the human and the subject that nonetheless makes room for the human, representation, and content, and an accompanying attentiveness to all sorts of nonhuman objects or actors coupled with a refusal to reduce these agencies to vehicles of content and signs" (2011:27, see also Bogost 2012, Harman 2010, Bennett 2010, Hayles 1999).

The way evangelicals use technology matters: they devote considerable time to speculating on biblically informed methods for creating immersive, technologically mediated experiences. To understand these human/machine configurations, I look to perspectives on the ways that humans and machines materialize through their relationships. Considering this proposition feminist science studies scholar Karen Barad argues that "[w]hat is needed is a robust account of the materialization of *all* bodies— 'human' and 'nonhuman'—and the

material-discursive practices by which their differential constitutions are marked" (Barad 2003:810). In the interface of people with technological devices, as in the interface between people, one learns to interact in particular, dispositional ways and explain these practices through vocabularies of motives—the explanations and rationales for acting in particular ways that seem natural in a given situation. Considering technologies as participants in the ongoing elaboration of discursive landscapes commits to listening and speculating on the nature of nonhuman materializations and their performative dimensions.

Discourses that frame technology use among evangelicals bring into being not only ideas about what *relevant* and *excellent* worship can look like, but also structure the experience of working with technology to engineer worship. Crafting experience through working with technology should not ignore, as Haraway reminds us, the variety of discourses, structures and systems of inequality that "get *built* into and out of working machines" (1992:332, see also Helmrich 2009:129-30). Listening for signs of life, I draw from Lucy Suchman (2007) to suggest that through the sociomaterial aspects of cyborg theory "we might find other grounds for recognizing the agential properties of the material than the operations of a transcendental intelligence over inert, mechanistically animated matter" (271). Those "other grounds" are terrains of discursive-materiality—or the ways that "all entities take shape in encounters, in practices; and the actors and partners in encounters are not all human, to say the least" (Haraway 1994:65).

This discursive-materiality signals the illocutionary force where "speaking is believing" (Harding 2000). Sandra Harding, working among U.S. Christian Fundamentalists, "began to see God's hand in everyday life and the daily news" while standing in the gap of "narrative belief"

that “opens up born-again language and makes available its complexity, its variety and creativity, and its agile force” (2000:xi-xii). In evangelical practice, building relationships with technology that risks the possibility of malfunction appears in discursive approaches to stewardship and the ways that becoming a steward is an expression of broader translation of ideas (about technology and its capacities) into action. When a piece of technology fails to function as expected, or does not function at all, Frabetti suggests, “technology escapes its own conception as an instrument, a tool which we can use, control and master” (2010:110). In these moments of malfunction, evangelicals are reminded of the uncanny aspects of technology and its relationship to the belief that God and Satan are always moving in the workings of the everyday. It is the *something else*, the excess, the uncanny or haunting aspects of technology’s call that animates the material-discursive realities of technical education; where things and people are always in-the-making, rather than always already made (Haraway 2004:307).

Understanding how technology stewards learn to use technology to craft worship experiences, within spiritual economies of contemporary evangelicalism, has relied on my own willingness to speculate on the nature of things. I have explored how belief and worship practice intersect and diverge, and listened for the ways that technicians, conference speakers, and trade publication writers speculate on the role technology plays in the growth of the church how it creates immersive, immediate experiences of the divine.

In what follows, I situate the relationship between religion and political economy in order to take up how technicians engineer these experiences within spiritual economies. The following review reveals that engineering contemporary worship practice is not just a religious endeavour; it is a space where immersive experiences ideally translate into increased church membership. As

such, the relationship between religion and technology exists within the broader spiritual and political economies that naturalize success as a motive for practice.

Spiritual economies

Religion is often viewed as the object of both economic logics and technological progress, rarely the instigator. This perspective wholly ignores religion's role in the adaptation and development of unique, local theory and the development and drive towards technological innovation. Moreover, this perspective assumes that the capillaries of neoliberalism have extended out and into religion. Noble (1999) argues that, in fact, the vast technological achievements of the recent past have their origins in religious logics. Despite this, it is clear from recent work on the relationship between religion, technology and political economy that questions concerning the nature of religion in relation to forces and discourses like neoliberalism and technology, and mediatisation generally, remain very much open (Meyer 2004, 2010, Hirschkind 2011, Engelke 2011). Hirschkind (2011) notes: "Anthropologists working within a variety of religious contexts have explored how adherents of diverse religious traditions rework and redefine some of the fundamental norms of those traditions as they accommodate to the technological forms, discursive protocols and market values of globalising media infrastructures" (90). This "one-way" accommodation suggests that there is only unilateral communication between the religious core and social forces periphery.

My research instead suggests a dialogical relationship between political economy and religious practice that sees both as the arbiter of powerful logics and not as isolated genres of speech and action (Csordas 2001:285 n 9.). This dialogic relationship treats both religion and economics as though they engage in an ongoing and creative dialogue that does not lead to a resolution per se, but rather to an ongoing elaboration and creative reformulation of the discursive constitution of religious and neoliberal practice. One way I observe this dialogic

relationship is in the way that keywords move between genres. Keywords circulate between genres of technical, sacred, and neoliberal performative speech. Often they do not cross between genres smoothly, but rather take on new valences as they circulate.

Keywords are the concentration of meaning (Williams 1985). They are those words that stand out, begin to repeated, and catch like a cold within genres of speech. Throughout my fieldsites there are genres of speech composed of keywords signalling their neoliberal, technical, or sacred mooring. *Excellence*, for example, belongs to all three genres of speech to indicate different aspects of worship practice. Genres are about context: I am using genres to clarify that keywords move and take on new meanings as they do. Genres give shape to the ways that speaking and acting relate (Csordas 2001:162). Drawing from John L. Austin and John Searle, Csordas (2001), identifies the role of the performative speech act where "there is no simple distinction between spoken word and physical act" (162). When speakers, like those that populate the TFW Pavilion or WFX seminars, speak about worship practice using keywords that render neoliberal logics, they do the dialogic work of creatively offering modes of worship practice that respond to those logics.

Thomas Csordas, in writing about Charismatic Catholic renewal movements through performative theories of practice, speech, and ritualization, explores the role of language and the rhetorical functions of discourse. Drawing from Bloch (1974, 1986) and Tambiah (1973, 1981), Csordas explores the role of ritual language in the ritualization of practice and the radicalization of charisma. This emphasis on ritual communication and its role has prompted an understanding "of the embodied character of all language as the ground for experience of divine power in ritual utterance" (2001:253). Navigating the tensions of the possibility for creativity (in ritual speech),

Csordas departs from Bloch to suggest that "instead of being raised to a conscious, controllable level, the simplified choices of ritual language can be experienced as spontaneous, as language speaking itself" (2001:255). The emphasis on performative genres "*within* a system of ritual language" (261), enables Csordas to negotiate the constraints of longstanding views of restrictive ritual speech and language exemplified by Bloch. More broadly, within ritual studies, the focus on the role and function of language and discourse invokes the linguistic turn in anthropology and a move towards the relationship between embodiment and performativity. In contemporary evangelical contexts like trade and conference events, the creative use of keywords, like excellence, signal the potential for the embodiment of material-discourses that make excellence make sense.

Excellence, in the genre of technical education, becomes a salient indicator of an evangelical commitment to pursuing an increase in membership and the growth of the church. Through technical education, dispositions towards excellent and relevant worship become indicative of spiritual economies, or the combination of religious piety and economic motives. In order to understand the relationship of religion and political economy as they form spiritual economies, I focus on the linkages between spiritual economies and the technologization of worship practice. Within particular strands of economic theory, the role of religion becomes merely supportive in the production of economic modalities. At worst, religion becomes the impending victim of secularization (Weber 2005[1930], Weber 1978[1947]). Rarely, religion becomes a catalyst or author of economic realities. From one perspective, economic theorists of religion have understood religion as a commodity that consumers select among a set of options (Iannaccone 1992, 1998, Starke and Bainbridge 1987). Iannaccone (1998) suggests that

"[v]iewing religious behavior as an instance of rational choice, rather than an exception to it" (1478) is a remedy for the characterization of religion as irrational or subject to increasing pressure from processes of secularization. Choosing religion to maximize rewards, theorists of the economics of religion suggest, makes economic sense (Starke and Bainbridge 1987). Underlying this appeal to choice is the rational economic actor looking to exercise his religious freedom (Robertson 1992). Religion, writes Starke,

> is not just a matter of individual commitment, nor can it be fully comprehended on the basis of individuals and their membership in various religious groups. Religion is always embedded in societies and is greatly shaped by the conditions imposed on religious expression and organization by the state. To encompass this reality fully, the term 'religious economy' was introduced. A religious economy consists of all the religious activity going on in any society: a 'market' of current and potential religious adherents, a set of one or more organizations seeking to attract or retain adherents and the religious culture offered by the organizations. (2005: 198)

Critics like Wuthnow (1991), suggest Robertson (1992), have noted the absence of culture and religious discourse in the formulation of the religious rational actor and the market into which he is embedded (149).[20] These theories (specifically those advocated by Finke, and Starke and Iannaccone) fail to address the long-term anthropological engagement with religion, not as a bastion of rationality or irrationality, but as a cultural aspect of social life that varies in

[20] Stephen Sharot (2002), suggests that American religious experience forms the basis for theories of economic rationality and do not apply in the same way to eastern religious contexts. And, McKinnon (2013) reminds that when scholars disregard that the market and religious economies are metaphors, they fail to stop them from becoming tools for neoliberal purposes. "The market is the God metaphor of the 'New Paradigm' in the sociology of religion (Warner, 1993; 1997), and its advocates have used to supplant the 'old' paradigm which conceived of religion as a 'sacred canopy' (Berger, 1969). Within the New Paradigm, Rational Choice (RC) has managed to establish itself as the dominant school of thought. It has been able to do so, I argue, in part because of its advocates' thoroughgoing and particular use of a metaphor, used in a way that resonates with our contemporary political and cultural context. Rational Choice theorists conceive of the market in decidedly neo-liberal terms, and then naturalize this conception, denying that their conception is in any way metaphorical; they argue that the market is built into human nature. . . . What is most problematic in rational choice thinking is not so much the metaphor itself, which it shares with the New Paradigm more broadly, as the way that rational choice theorists use it, including the denial that the market metaphor is in fact a metaphor." (McKinnon 2013:530).

practice, importance, and meaning across time and space. One need not apply economic theory to religion in order to "see" it as rational; nor must one assume that religion and economic activity are antithetical to begin with. Moreover, these theories fail to account for religious practice and the ways that religious practitioners help to structure the markets within which they operate.

One of the most known and widely cited elaborations of the relationship between political economy and religion is Weber's writings on economic rationality of the Protestant work ethic. Stanley Tambiah (1990), in his noted lecture on "Magic, science, religion and the scope of rationality", describes the relationship between Protestantism and economic values. He suggests that,

> Weber's thesis was that the Puritan values such as the doctrine of vocation or work as 'calling' on behalf of God, of engaging in good works and in systematic activity upon nature and its transformation for the glory of God, combined with personal asceticism as regards the use of material benefits and wealth for one's pleasure. All these were conducive to rational economic activity and to the requirements of profitable capitalism. . . . The tensions posed between an 'innerworldly ethic' of attaining salvation and a this-worldly imperfection, between a doctrine of predestination, which held that God alone decided men's fates, and an anxiety among the religious whether they will attain salvation and what the outward signs of that grace might be, served positively to motivate and fuel an orientation of transforming this world through rational conduct and good works (Tambiah 1990:12).

Tambiah identifies Weber's central point that is relevant to us: the Protestant Reformation was not isolated to economic or religious activity; it fuelled them both and more. It inspired actions in other domains, such as "administration, politics and science" (Tambiah 1990:12). Economic activity or the influence of neoliberalism, for example, on contemporary evangelical worship practice encompasses not only the domain of the market but becomes something that is lived. Contemporary evangelicals embody the tensions Tambiah notes, placing emphasis on cultivating

the bodily comportments of someone living on mission, coupled with developing keywords for describing the dispositions that a contemporary congregant or technology steward should embody. Activating a "gifting", like living a calling, becomes a way of mobilizing the affective labour of technicians and volunteers in service to the goals of the church, often framed as the growth of the Kingdom of God. The shift to neoliberal notions of affective labour and 'technologies of the self' sets Weber's analysis of the relationship between Protestantism and capitalism into a new frame where the rationalities of economic activity have been augmented by the spectral nature of late capitalism (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999).

Comaroff and Comaroff (1999, 2000) reveal the enchantment and sometimes-magical life of wealth as though, in the spectre of millennial capitalism, it has materialized from nothing. The doubleness of millennial capitalism reveals how deeply entwined prosperity and poverty are in the divestment and concentration of wealth. Churches oriented towards preaching the prosperity gospels fill the void between abundance and scarcity as they attempt to convince congregants that to give to the church is to receive back in spades. Comaroff and Comaroff interrogate a "capitalism that presents itself as a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000:292). Speculation, suggests Comaroff and Comaroff, plays a key role in neoliberal millennial capitalism as the mechanism generating riches or encouraging ruin using the "spectral technologies" of financial markets to amass great fortunes (2000:298).

Speculation is also the way in which those most disenfranchised by contemporary financial prospecting make sense of the growing disparity: they speculate on the potentially

occult nature of wealth and prosperity that seems to amass for some without effort (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000:313). Comaroff and Comaroff (2000), drawing attention to these broader shifts in financial double-dealing foreshadowed the 2008 financial crisis, brought on in the U.S. by the near-collapse of Lehman Brothers through the sale of risky sub-prime mortgages and the transformation of that debt into low-risk financial products (The Economist 2013). The low interest rates of the period encouraged investors to seek out what they understood to be low-risk products, with higher returns. The seeming mitigation of risk through transforming unstable mortgages into bundles of credit products was tantamount to the "alchemic techniques [that] defy reason in promising unnaturally large profits—to yield wealth without production, value without effort. Here, again, is the specter, the distinctive spirit, of neoliberal capitalism in its triumphal hour. So much for the demise of disenchantment" (Comaorff and Comaorff 2000:313-4). Enchantment did not wither as Weber expected in the glow of rationality. The seemingly spectral nature of the fiscal events of 2008 fell like a stone into a pond, sending ripples all the way to the TFWM office and Pavilion.

Among the technology manufacturers that partnered with TFWM, many representatives were laid off in the wake of the 2008 crisis. Many churches, anticipating a drop in tithes from amongst their congregations, delayed technology purchases causing an almost instantaneous drop in manufacturer revenues. TFWM also saw a decrease in revenue as manufacturers cut their advertising budgets and tried to shore up their losses from decreased sales. Anecdotally, many of the evangelicals I spoke with ventured that, in the wake of 2008, many smaller churches either closed or grew substantially, and larger (500+ congregants) churches increased their numbers

considerably.[21] With shuttered churches on one side and mammoth churches on the other, these larger churches were the ones experimenting with new performances techniques, pushing their own understandings of excellence further in their quest for sustainable growth.

Speculation, beyond church growth, also factors in the contemporary experience of many U.S. evangelicals when they consider the nature and role of technology for worship. As I recount later, many evangelicals are wary of the capacities and capabilities of technology and question its place in worship. Sometimes seen as a gateway, technology embodies the sometimes spectral or uncanny qualities that signal the continuing enchantment of social life when it acts in unexpected ways (Gell 1992). Evangelicals are familiar with notions of enchantment. Their commitment to things unseen and forces beyond their control animates their use of technology and the anxieties it causes. It is because they regard the world as having the potential for enchantment that they pursue intimate encounters through technological mediation. American Studies scholar Melanie McAllister, writing about what it means for U.S. evangelicals to 'have a heart' in the midst of their post-war engagements and 'enchanted internationalism' suggests that the

> longing for enchantment is a multivalent affect: it resists rationalism and claims a willingness to be delighted and swept away. But to be enchanted is also to risk being captivated and captured. . . . US evangelicals, then, are not alone in their rich evocations of a will to believe in a saturated world. What is striking, however, is the intensity of such longings within a tradition that has so often defined itself by its austerity. Many US evangelicals are engaged in a not-necessarily-conscious effort to "re-enchant" their own experience, to activate sensuous, emotive intensities in the face of a sense—broadly shared by many believers—that modern evangelical life, however committed to faith in 'things unseen,' has left behind an abundant sense of the otherworldly (2008:882-3).

I suggest that the technologization of worship practice serves to 're-enchant' experience

[21] Speculations on evangelical church growth and decline are reflected in this New York Times article by Paul Vitello: "Bad Times Draw Bigger Crowds to Churches" http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/14/nyregion/14churches.html?_r=0, accessed February 11, 2015.

through creating environments that, if excellent and relevant, immerse the sensing, feeling, congregant within an event that encourages them to hear and feel God's presence. This technologized experience is not possible without the ability to purchase and implement the devices necessary to augment the space. Evangelicals, TFWM, and WFX trainers often speculated on the formula or recipe for success. They tried to make sense of the rapid and sometimes explosive growth of some, but not all, churches. A commitment to excellence, they noted, is a key attribute of the successful, growth-oriented church. But perhaps excellence, in this instance, also codes for the enchanted touch of God's grace.

Daromir Rudnyckyj (2010) has refashioned occult economies, a bastion of enchantment, as spiritual economies to explore the ways that religion and political economy intersect in the cultivation of dispositions towards religious practice. Within spiritual economies, learning to be pious is often in dialogue with pursuing economic success. During evangelical technical training sessions church growth and survival, according to educators, hinges on the Biblically correct use of technology and the development of dispositions towards technology stewardship. Even as neoliberal discourses appear to mediate and reform religious practice, a more nuanced analysis reveals the local ways that religious practice adapts neoliberal discourses and refashions them into economies of spirituality.

Rudnyckyj (2009) suggests that spiritual economies stand in contrast "to the notion of 'occult economies' that treats religious resurgence as a refuge from the disruptions wrought by a global 'culture of neoliberalism' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000)" (2009:105). His perspective differs thusly: "Rather than seeing religion as a retreat into mystification or means of resistance against neoliberal transformations, *the concept of spiritual economies elucidates the way in*

which economic reform and neoliberal restructuring are conceived of and enacted as matters of religious piety and spiritual value" (2009:105 emphasis added). Rudnuvkyi appears to suggest that neoliberal restructuring *becomes* a form of piety, suggesting that neoliberal discourses impose themselves on religious practice without negotiation or adaptation by local actors. In contrast to Rudnuvkyi (2009), I suggest that it is not a monologic, but rather, a dialogic relationship between religion and neoliberalism that creates new and emergent forms of religious piety and value amidst contemporary financial, social and religious conditions.

Rudnyckyj explores the deployment of a training program that combines neoliberal ethics with Islamic teachings in an Indonesian steel factory. The spiritual economies that are the impetus for this program, says Rudnuvkyi, operate by: "(1) objectifying spirituality as a site of management and intervention; (2) reconfiguring work as a form of worship and religious duty; and (3) inculcating ethics of individual accountability that are deemed commensurable with neoliberal norms of transparency, productivity, and rationalization for purposes of profit" (2009:105-6). Spiritual economies rest on an understanding of what neoliberalism is in practice. Rudnuvkyi (2009) explains: "I argue that managers, state technocrats, and religious reformers sought to enact a set of neoliberal practices by creating a new type of subject, a worshipping worker, for whom labor was a matter of religious duty" (107). Again, this perspective assumes religion and religious workers to be the "target" of neoliberal discourses, a victim of the rationalizing ethics of the market.

Where Rudnyckyj and I find common ground is in the recognition of the role of affective, spiritual labour that, in the contemporary church, speaks to both the demands of piety and the pursuit of growth through technological and performance excellence. Among U.S. evangelicals'

volunteer labour occurs within the neoliberal mandate of constant growth. Growth occurs by way of increased attendance, the saving of souls, and spreading of the "The Word". Using the idea of being "called to serve" because of personal "giftings" (aptitudes for particular activities), churches recruit volunteers who feel compelled out of a sense of duty and call from God to assist—their labour becomes affective, motivated by a calling, a gift, a sense of duty. As an electrician who visited the TFWM office one day explained, he and his wife were *called* to make a change of church in the local area and ended up at one where he now runs the technology. Their sound system "was a mess" he suggested, and he was called to fix it. Answering the call to operate the technical ministry of a church or answering a call to teach, speaks to the increasingly affective dimensions of spiritual labour and depict the growth-oriented commitment to excellence: they are affective "habits of the heart" (Harvey 2005:3).

Spiritual economies of evangelical worship add new valences to the Marxist origins of affective labour as desiring production. Michael Hardt suggests that current analyses of affective labour should consider its changing role in the "processes whereby our laboring practices produce collective subjectivities, produce sociality, and ultimately produce society itself" (Hardt 1999:89). Hardt, tracking the contemporary information society and knowledge economy, suggests that immaterial labour centres on information and services, rather than manufacture or industry. The affective form of immaterial labour is focussed, says Hardt, on the "creation and manipulation of affects" (1999:95). Hardt explains: "[t]his labor is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion—even a sense of connectedness or community" (1999:96). Hardt further divides immaterial labor into three types, the second and last of which being most

applicable to exploring worship. Hardt suggests that "creative and intelligent manipulation . . . and routine symbolic tasks" are a distinct form of labour focussed on the analytical and symbolic. The third type concerns "the production and manipulation of affects and requires (virtual or actual) human contact and proximity" (1999:97-8). Within the context of technologized worship practice, the false dichotomy of immaterial affective labour neglects the materiality and material-discursivity of affective labour that is a bodily matter and a habit of the heart. Together, these types of "immaterial" labour speak to the context of technologized evangelical worship through their emphasis on the effect of the stirring of emotion through the material labour of technicians, in conjunction with the worship team (often composed of the pastor, band, and singers). These labours are habits of the heart inasmuch as they are a means to live out giftings through living on mission. When keywords like 'living on mission' and 'giftings' are dislodged from their sacred moorings they take on new valences as they become coupled with aspects of neoliberalism that sees the goal of worship as the unceasing expansion of the church.

These "habits of the heart" suggest an intimacy between religion and capitalism that Walter Benjamin argues has always been the case. In his fragment on Capitalism as Religion, he suggests that capitalism and Protestantism share similar social functions, that of providing answers to "worries, torments, and restlessness" (Hamacher and Wetters 2002:86). Benjamin suggests that Christianity and capitalism are intimate, and continue to be so. This is contrary to the rational causality to which Weber subscribed, which posits that capitalism grew from an ethic of Protestantism. It was not Christianity that gave rise to capitalism but in fact, "transformed itself into capitalism" (Hamacher and Wetters 2002:87). Following this, Hamacher and Wetters

(2002) suggest that, "Christianity would not have been able to transform itself into capitalism if capitalism had not been essentially Christian" (87). Benjamin suggests that Weber's causality regarding the nature of religion and capitalism creates an intractable position with religion on one side and economic forms on the other. Between them is no room for movement, or as Benjamin would argue, there is no possibility for liberation. Hamacher and Wetter (2002), argue to distinguish Benjamin's position that, "Weber thus insists upon the derivation of economy and religion from one another, but does not take into account the possibility that both might refer themselves to a third sphere that does not represent their condition—as *ation* or *causa* [as cause]—but rather presents the space of their articulation (2002:86).[22] This third space of articulation is the crucible of present forms of dialogic exchange between evangelicalism and neoliberalism, such that neither are discrete forms, but instead inform each other. Capitalism *as* religion for Benjamin is thus a history of capitalism as "parasite" consuming its host—in other words, capitalism becomes a religion (Hamacher and Wetter 2002, Benjamin [1921]1996).[23] To clarify, I am not suggesting that capitalism is a religion, nor that religion is a sacred vessel into which neoliberalism has poured itself, but that evangelicalism and neoliberalism are locked in a tense rhythm that shapes their mutual and ongoing practices.

This ongoing relation has precedents in late nineteenth century understandings of

[22] It is interesting to note that Weber's conclusions in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism ([1905]1958*) have been widely criticized from within economic theory. Iannaccone (1998), following Samuelsson and Tawney suggest that, "nearly all the capitalist institutions emphasized by Weber preceded the Protestant Reformation that he viewed as their cause. Samuelsson further finds that early Protestant theologians were not particularly interested in economic matters, nor did they seem to understand markets. And like their Catholic counterparts, most took a dim view of credit and interest. Finally, Samuelsson refutes Weber's stylized account of European economic history, demonstrating that, across the regions cited by Weber, economic progress was uncorrelated with religion, or was temporally incompatible with Weber's thesis, or actually reversed the pattern claimed by Weber." (1998:1474-5).

[23] Zīzěk argues, "If, as Benjamin asserted, capitalism is actually, at its core, a religion, then it is an obscene religion of the "undead" spectral life celebrated in the black masses of stock exchanges" (2006:118).

political economy. Boyd Hilton (1988) has explored evangelicalism in Britain where "religious belief was important in shaping *as well as* rationalizing the economic philosophy of the period" (6). Hilton distinguishes "the extent to which evangelicalism's middle-class piety fostered new concepts of public probity and national honour, based on ideals of economy, frugality, professionalism, and financial rectitude" (1988:7). Hilton suggests, "the ideology of moderate evangelicalism rationalized and defended existing social and economic structures of society" (376-7) Evangelicalism, however, was a "religion of the heart" (Hilton 1988:8), and was instrumental in the composition and elaboration of the political economy of the period and after.[24] Looking ahead, the ideas of this late-nineteenth century period had lasting influence on British political economy well into the following century. Margaret Thatcher, says Hilton, was quoted as saying: "economics are a method, but 'the object is to change the heart and soul'" (1988:374).

American evangelicalism, as an everyday living religion that aims to create durable and lasting impressions, products of a commitment to excellence, maintains its focus on church growth through cultivating the heart and soul of enterprising churches. The impending risks of being growth-oriented were built into the wealth and work oriented principles of Calvinism in America where "the sacramental value of wealth in itself or of business success [was] a fulfillment of one's calling" (Hilton 1998:376). I understand the relationship between spirituality and political economy, growth and the habits of the heart as part of the everyday habits and techniques of managing the self.

[24] "Evangelicals, like economists, believed in a 'hidden hand'; unlike economists, they believed that 'hidden hand' held a rod" (Hilton 1988:114). What Hilton does not lay claim to "is the question of how the evangelical system of belief functioned, and how it related to material reality and the interplay of social relationships" (376).

Spiritual economies reflect the articulation of neoliberalism and contemporary evangelicalism through the focus on the ways that technology stewardship becomes a religious duty. Considering that many technicians are volunteers, their efforts to learn to steward technology are a form of self-management, encouraged by church leadership. The nature of this management invokes the role of institutions in the cultivation of techniques of the self (Foucault 1988, Macmillan 2011). Macmillian (2011) suggests, "[t]echniques of the self are techniques that allow individuals to affect their body, thoughts and behaviors" (7). Macmillan also identifies Foucault's interest in the Christian experience and techniques of the self. Forming the basis for Western experience, Macmillan suggests that the Christian experience of the self "imposes a set of conditions and rules of conduct, and requires a specific transformation of the Christian subject. The Christian technologies of the self will demand a total renunciation of oneself and a blind obedience to divine principles" (2011:12). This understanding of the self in the context of spiritual economies suggests that stewards, insofar as they learn to transform technical specifications and capabilities into divinely sanctioned worship practices, do so in an attempt to enact divine principles or understandings of what constitutes relevant contemporary worship. Evangelicals, through living out their giftings, actualizing and activating their selves (through living on mission or adopting a lifestyle of worship), and learning to steward technology means learning to self-manage as a form of affective religious labour.

The technologization of worship practice is an important part of contemporary U.S. evangelical spiritual economies but it is not limited to the U.S., nor to evangelicals. Understanding the technologization of religious practice means exploring the broader contexts from anthropological and media studies literature. This literature demonstrates the growing

variety of religious rituals and practices that are subject to the dialogism of religion and neoliberalism. In the chapters that follow, I demonstrate the importance of considering the relationships between performance technologies, church technicians, markets-in-the-making and the engineering of relevant and excellent worship practice. Crafting technologized worship, though, begins with the markets within which church personnel, technology industry consultants, and technology manufacturers come together. The following chapter concerns the telling of origin stories—led by the founders, family and employees of TFWM—about the tenuous creation of a house of worship market.

3. Curious Economies: A House of Worship Market

> *"We live, [Michel] Callon argues, in a world of technology. We buy, sell, and function by means of tools. This ubiquity of technology paves the way for performativity, because to the extent that economics shapes artifacts and artifacts mediate market calculation, the ideology of economics shapes market activity" (Beuenza 1998:97).*

"What is a house of worship market? There's a market for churches and technology?" Surprise and then intrigue accompanied these questions in the early days of TFWM, relates Kevin, former TFWM Editor. I encountered the same surprise and then quizzical look of intrigue when I began this research and told people what I was researching. The idea appears simple enough: churches use technology; they buy microphones, speakers and lights, so why should they not belong to a market? However, when TFWM began, this was anything but a simple idea. Ways of thinking about house of worship markets and the embodied practices that elaborate those ways of thinking accrue over time. They become familiar and take on the appearance of being natural. When TFWM began, the very material ways of thinking about churches and technology as a market of potential consumers was only a vision of the founders.

One of the founders of TFWM, Barry Cobus came to the world of technology and religion by way of playing and managing bands in the 1970s. It was through managing bands that Barry met Shelagh and they together created the Audio Music Industry (AMI) Directory. Distributed throughout Canada and to a lesser extent, the U.S., the directory had the unintended consequence of generating interest from houses of worship. During the tenure of its printing (1980-1990) the AMI directory became the go-to resource for churches looking to source professional performance gear. From the AMI directory, Barry and Shelagh designed a magazine for churches specifically, calling it Religion. The magazine served as a springboard for the

conferences, bringing church readers together with technology manufacturers. This idea—to bring people together—was based on a vision of the future of the technologized church.

Barry's step-son, Kevin, grew up helping to build the directory and later run conference and trade events, before becoming Executive Editor of TFWM. Kevin recalls that Barry "just straight up believed; he believed in the product, in what they had built. It was easy for him to convince people about what they were doing". For Barry, everyday was like church because he believed he was growing the Kingdom. He would get up every morning and write notes with ideas to build and expand the business. Even the most radical ideas, like producing events in London, UK, Amsterdam, or Sydney, Australia were realized because, as Kevin suggests: "You couldn't argue with him; he believed it [the vision] so much that it just makes it true for other people."

Making a *vision* a reality required the long-term engagement that comes from "living on mission" to create an educational experience. The very first show was in Burlington, ON at the Crossroads Centre in 1993. Print promotion went out publicising the event, and 100 Huntley Street advertised it. Kevin and the then small staff of TFWM made a flurry of cold-calls—calling companies and churches to make them aware that the show was happening. Kevin recalls with disbelief, "You can imagine cold-calling a church to convince them to come to a conference on technology." At the first event in Burlington, manufacturers provided the educational content because, at that time, they were the professionals. This first event drew attendees who were curious about a church technology show—a few of which became long-term speakers for TFWM.

What seemed strange in the early 1990s has become far more commonplace. Churches

use sound, video and lighting systems to augment their worship services. What seems normal now to those in the house of worship industry—that churches buy and use technology—did not seem so twenty years ago. Making a market by bringing together churches and technology manufacturers was a radical vision in the early 1990s. It gained traction as an idea through the legitimacy that Barry and Shelagh brought because they had been running the AMI Directory. Kevin notes, "we had Yamaha and Sony, and to attendees it looked like: 'Wow, this could be legitimate'. Not just another run-off church show." Before continuing with the story that will lead us to the events of the Queen Mary and TFW Pavilion, I contextualize the relationship between religion and the market to demonstrate that this contemporary relationship has been the subject of long-standing debate. What I aim to show is that the relationship may not be new, but how it materializes the tensions of spiritual economies is novel.

Common understandings of what a market is suggest that within a market, goods, like technology, are bought and sold. This chapter endeavours to understand the creation of house of worship markets primarily in the U.S. through the lens of education events and the "search for information" (Geertz 1978:30, Walsh 2012:xxvi). Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, using information theory and cultural analysis, suggested that information in the context of a Moroccan *suq*, or bazaar, is the "matter upon which everything turns" (1978:30). This "bazaar economy" functioned from the value of information exchange prior to goods and service exchange. Geertz's understanding of the bazaar economy and the value of information lends insight to my own understanding of technology trade events where training occurs. Information about what piece of technology has value for a particular application and why, becomes a salient commodity. Understanding the problem a piece of technology solves or how it will function with other types

of gear is a complex puzzle. A puzzle that many technicians seek to solve.

Unlike the bazaar participants, evangelical technicians do not often attempt to control the amount of information others have. Technicians do search for information where they are "not balancing options but finding out what they are" (Geertz 1978:30, Walsh 2012:xxvii). I am not, however, suggesting that the bazaar economy is a prototype for house of worship markets, merely that inspiration can be found in it that usefully grounds the practices of a market in the practices of searching for and gathering information.

Similarly to Geertz, Karen Ho, writing about the political economies of Wall Street asks, "what if we approach and conceive of the market as having no externality or abstraction? Given that 'the market' has for so long assumed a place of taken-for-granted power in social scientific literature, what would it mean to conceptualize and approach markets only as a set of everyday, embodied practices?" (2009:294). The market for Ho does not exist apart from everyday life—it has no externality or abstraction. It is the very real and embodied activities of buying carrots, a car, getting a pedicure, or buying a quarter-of-a-million dollar audio console. However, the significance of these purchases is worth distinguishing. The purchase of carrots or a car may fulfill a need to eat or travel; they do necessarily possess a greater significance. You may love your car but you will likely own many during a lifetime. Moreover, you may buy carrots every week, consume them, and buy them again. Buying an audio console has divine significance—technologies purchased for the church are "for the Kingdom", meaning they are for sharing and growing the Kingdom of God. Selecting the right one that will accommodate the needs and budget of the church and in the long term becomes a weighty decision. The technicians with whom I spoke searched for the best model and manufacturer. Their church leadership directed

them to research the available options. In a sea of choices, having the ability to talk to other churches, the actual manufacturers, or TFWM or WFX educators was a valuable part of making a choice. Part of being a technology steward, which I discuss later, means understanding the relationship of technology and worship and how it will be used to grow the kingdom. Take for example, the case of "vapour-wear". Vapour-wear is an idea for an exciting new product, like an audio console or personal monitor mixer that was shared at trade events. The product does not yet exist but manufacturers often share the concept to generate excitement and expectation. The "vapour" in vapour-wear indicates that these conceptual products never make it to market. Stewards, in their excitement for this new vapour-wear product may share their enthusiasm with their church and when it fails to materialize, they may seem to have neglected their research. Information about reputable companies, their products and the landscape of the technology industry is an essential part of being a steward. Ultimately, what many of these churches were trying to avoid was another piece of gear ending up as a very expensive doorstop.

Conceptualizing the market this way—as affective and material-discursive—sees it as a space of possibility rather than a codified set of rules for interaction. The market is not merely a system of ideas, but rather a collection of embodied ways of being. Sociology scholar Karin Knorr Cetina, who has written extensively on the nature of markets, characterizes the market as an "idea of a mechanism that solves the problem of *bringing together the diverse and dispersed interests of buyers and sellers*, of those who have goods to offer and those who need or want them" (2005:552 emphasis in original).[25] House of worship markets are performative in the ways

[25] In the well-known work, *The Laws of the Markets*, Michel Callon proposes that what comes to constitute economic activity is shaped by the ideology of economic theory. I am suggesting that while economic theory may contribute to how market theory and economic action plays out, the day-to-day embodied actions of religious

they contingently come together in spaces of encounter. Picture the sometimes-awkward encounters of church technicians and manufacturers meeting for the first time with only the technology as common ground. Inspiration events or the TFW Pavilion, were opportunities to translate device specifications into capabilities salient to church users. Seeing the relationships that create a market as material-discursive situates a house of worship market within the scope of a protracted purchase cycle where churches purchase technology after trade events, based on educational offerings and the particular needs of the church.

The U.S. house of worship markets I explored used technical education to create the conditions for future technology purchases. Education became an important part of exchanges of goods through equipping technicians with the cultural capital to make educated decisions and embody dispositions for the best use of devices (Bourdieu 1986). Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu, is what and whom you know, and what you can do—like use a complex piece of performance technology well (1986). The education provided by *Technologies for Worship Magazine* through the Inspiration conference or TFW Pavilion and the content provided by WFX created an opportunity for technology users to interact with and learn from manufacturers and industry consultants on the best practices for creating compelling and immersive worship experiences. Teaching became a way to share ways of using technology, which in turn shapes understandings about worship practice, but also feeds back into the markets within which technology and technicians circulate. In this way, the educational content provided by TFWM and WFX is performative: it creates the conditions and realities for normalized, naturalized and

practitioners on the ground so to speak, often unaware of economic theory, make markets through the often tense negotiations of dialogical relations and alignments that contingently produce market relations.

technologized worship practices (Butler 2010).[26] Daniel Buenza suggests, alluding to the performative (and disruptive) aspect of markets, that "(m)arkets do not simply sit on top of existing social arrangements: they replace existing ties, untie norms, displace habitats" (2008:96, cf. Mirowski and Nik-khah 2007). What Buenza alludes to is the idea that markets become a way of giving shape to social relationships—in the case of U.S. house of worship markets, their shape is contoured through the material and affective labours of educators who are often also technology manufacturers, consultants and technology industry insiders (Carrier and Miller 1998, Carrier 1997).

This chapter explores the events in the life of TFWM that led to the creation of the TFW Pavilion and attempts to contour a market of technology users and consumers. The narratives and material-discourses that emerge in this chapter explore attempts to frame and create a market—exemplifying the dialogical conversations between the economic interests of technology manufacturers and the vision and mission of the owners of TFWM, Barry and Shelagh (and those who spoke and wrote for them). Before exploring TFWM and the TFW Pavilion, I consider the relationship between religion and the market. In the previous chapter, we explored the dialogical relationship between religion and neoliberal capitalism where they, as systems of material-discourses, inform each other in ways that cannot be determined from the outset. Earlier understandings of religion and the market saw them as antagonistic.

Is contemporary U.S. evangelicalism a "victim" of the market? Writing on religion and the market, David Haddorff, a Theology and Religious Studies scholar, attempts to understand

[26] Where performativity finds its strength is, as Butler suggests, in the earlier distinctions made by Austin (Butler 2010:147). Illocutionary speech acts are "speech acts that bring about certain realities" and perlocutionary speech acts are "those utterances from which effects follow only when certain other kinds of conditions are in place" (Butler 2010:147). This approach encompasses individual utterances and operates beyond the subjectivity of the lone speaker.

and conceptualize the relationship of religion and the market over time by identifying three trends. First, following Karl Marx (and Frederik Engels) and Max Weber, Haddorff sees an oppositional relationship. He argues that,

> [f]or Marx it is the power of the market that secularises the sacred, reducing it to a commodity, and for Weber it is the sacred legitimizing the market, coupled with the modernization process, which causes secularization and the triumph of "iron cage" (sic). In both theories the market becomes the dominant power in society. For Marx it leads to a utopian revolution and for Weber it leads toward dystopian disenchantment. The secularization of religion and the triumph of the market are inevitably linked together in the same oppositional theory of market society (Haddorff 2000:488).

Following Marx, Haddorff suggests, "religion has no power to transform market structures themselves and its impact is limited to caring for persons in light of the harsh realities of the market" (2000:487). Again, religion becomes the victim of powerful 'external' logics. Summoning Weber he notes, "for Weber it is the process of 'modernisation,' exemplified by economic rationality and bureaucratic structures, which forces religion to be powerless in all spheres of public life, especially in the economic realm" (2000:487). The very existence of a house of worship market suggests that this reading of Weber does not reflect the current realities of evangelical spiritual economies. Instead, we could suggest that houses of worship who participate in markets devoted to the technologization of worship practice dialogically help shape the contours of the market through the ongoing conversation between economic and religious logics (Gudeman and Rivera 1990). As Gudeman and Rivera suggest, (1990), "there are many voices in conversations that are thick with history and laden with memory" (190). What voices are thicker or more laden with memory than the *longue durée* of religion and the political economy of the market?

A dialogical understanding of market society or the relationship between religion and

political economy appears to be something other than Marx or Weber could have guessed (Haddorff 2000, Wuthnow 1996). With religion understood as no longer a bastion or safe harbour from the ferocity of the market, and the market no longer a purely secular space for the 'rationality' of *homo economicus* the contemporary spiritual economies are nervous systems of affective labour, made visible through the travel of keywords, and performative through the crafting of worship and educational experiences.

The second trend, characterized by Emile Durkheim, sees religion and the market as symbiotic, existing together in an ongoing dialogue. "For Durkheim," suggests Haddorff, "a healthy society fosters and on-going equilibrium between the sacred and the profane, which enables both polarities to limit—but not control—each other" (2000:490-1). This perspective assumes an organic and functionalist view of society that understands religion as the author of social order. In this trend towards religion becomes, in an increasingly secularized society, absorbed into the market. The market itself becomes religion (see also Benjamin 1996[1921]). Haddorff also notes that, "In a thoroughly materialistic society, the languages of meaning, worth, and value are dominated by the market understanding of monetary exchange and instrumental reason" (2000:492). What his analysis implies is that economic ideologies come to frame the meaning of other facets of social life—economics functions as a framework for the moods and motivations (Geertz 1973) that religion has traditionally structured. Moreover, he argues that profane economic symbols and objects become more important that sacred religious symbols. Material goods in this functionalist formula, rather than sacred relics, "transcend their materiality, as they constitute a system of meaning, order, and purpose to structure our lives" (Haddorff 2000:492). Material objects absorb sacred meanings and take on the role of sacred

objects—again the tense dance between the sacred and profane results in a final, intractable position.

Haddorff labels the third trend *ambiguous*. The ambiguity of the market-religion relationship "refuses to accept the total secularism of religion and a dystopian disenchantment" (Haddorff 2000:494). Authors like Polanyi, which Haddorff considers emblematic of this ambiguous perspective, reject Durkheim's functionalism and Weber's secularisation thesis in favour of dialectical relationship between religion and the market (Haddorff 2000:494). The alternative to oppositional and absorptive understandings of the market-religion relationship refuses to assume that the result of the relationship is knowable. Writing about *Material Christianity*, Colleen McDannell suggests, "If we immediately assume that whenever money is exchanged religion is debased, then we will miss the subtle ways that people create and maintain spiritual ideals through exchange of goods and the construction of spaces" (McDannell 1995:6, see also Wuthnow 1996).

From the activities and beliefs of early nineteenth century American revivalists, the relationship between the market and religion demonstrates an ongoing dialogue. In his book, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture*, R. Lawrence Moore writes of Charles Grandison Finney, a former lawyer, turned revivalist in the 1820s. Finney became a well-known revivalist. He embodies the dialogism of a U.S. market-religion relationship by emphasizing the performative aspects of religion that transcend their nineteenth century moorings and become a salient example of contemporary perspectives.

> Ministers, he [Finney] said, had to compete for people's attention if they would be a counter-force to 'political and other worldly excitements.' To do that, they did not need a Harvard or Yale education. They needed a style with popular appeal. Reading a learned sermon was poor style. 'In delivering a sermon in this essay

> style of writing, it is impossible that nearly all the fire and meaning and power of gesture, and looks, and attitude, and emphasis should not be lost.' Ministers should aim for excitement (Moore 1994:50)

Technologized contemporary worship contains resonances of this fire, excitement, and the power of gesture in the ways that stirring the hearts of the congregation is central to engineered worship practice.

While I find Haddorff's analysis helpful for elucidating broader perspectives, I am inclined to note his lack of specificity of concepts. Both blanket terms—religion and the market— elide the variety of practices and embodiments that give meaning to what counts as religion and market behaviours. While he identifies the dialogical nature of the relationship, he falls back on the reification of both the market and religion. In what follows, I intend to lend some ethnographic insight to these broad concepts in the hope of situating this dialogism in the everyday practices and embodiments of performative house of worship markets-in-the-making.

Markets-in-the-making are performative in that they do not depend on an *a priori* understanding of what the "economy" or a "market" is and what economic and market-based actions are. Instead, performativity counters attempts to fix economic activity or a market with absolute certainty. Through highlighting the constructedness (and processes of construction) of the categories themselves, and importantly "starts to describe a set of processes that produce ontological effects, that is, that work to bring into being certain kinds of realities or . . . that lead to certain kinds of socially binding consequences" (Butler 2010: 147). While Butler's approach to performativity opens avenues to understanding the discursive constitution of lived realities, Karen Barad's agential realism goes beyond the solely discursive emphasis that performativity often harbors.

Through agential realism, Barad's critique of performative models builds on the notion that models should explain the relations between structural (and structuring) forces reshaping subjectivities (2007:226). This perspective goes beyond normative understandings of performativity towards an emphasis on the "the natures of structural relations in their materiality and their relationship to discourses, and a new understanding of the dynamics of power relations" (Barad 2007:226). The performative materialization of not only human bodies, but also technological bodies, occurs in configuration with an educational process. A focus on this configuration attends to the material-discursive practices of agential realism that hold our attention on the relations of power, and not only production (see also Herzig 2004). I do not assume, however that the performativity of markets are uniform for all involved. I have aimed to track the contingently produced alignments that enable a house of worship market to come into view as a material-discursive assemblage.[27]

Church technicians, who are often volunteers, do not enter into a trade or educational event as a market: they enter into it through various programmes, technologies, calculations and

[27] If we think about the capacity of markets of organize we can look to Çalişkan and Callon who argue that: "1. Markets organize the conception, production and circulation of goods, as well as the voluntary transfer of some sorts of property rights attached to them… 2. A market is an arrangement of heterogeneous constituents that deploys the following: rules and conventions; technical devices; metrological systems; logistical infrastructures; texts, discourses and narratives… technical and scientific knowledge (including social scientific methods), as well as the competencies and skills embodied in living beings. 3. Markets delimit and construct a space of confrontation and power struggles. Multiple contradictory definitions and valuations of goods as well as agents oppose one another in markets until the terms of the transaction are peacefully determined by pricing mechanisms" (2010:3). Moreover, Callon and Çalişkan argue, "by emphasizing that the economy is a social activity like all other human activities (albeit a particular one) the sociology of economy has contributed powerfully to the recognition that there are multiple forms of organization of economic activities, in general, and of markets, in particular" (2009:383). Hence, attempts to create and shape a U.S. house of worship market, like other social activities is an attempt to bring into being certain opportunities for creating shared vocabularies of motives, even if and when they only are roughly translated.

initiatives that seek to position them in relation with particular products.[28] The circulation and production of particular goods, and their rendering as objects of desire[29], are formed through discourses that frame the spiritual experience of using performance technologies to craft moving experiences through an understanding that church growth must be achieved through technologization. House of worship markets appear as indices of "confrontation and power struggles" (Çalişkan and Callon 2010:3, Barad 2007). We experience these power struggles and confrontations when there are disagreements about the framing of technology use or about the efficacy, utility, spiritual importance or threat of technology use between manufacturers, users, church leadership and all those in between. I see house of worship markets as fragile configurations and tenuous alignments that signal the immensity of the labours required to bring them into being.

House of worship markets lack the transactions that normally characterize economic markets. Instead, manufacturers rely on education to push the potential sale towards completion through translating technology specifications into capabilities. These protracted purchase cycles sometimes lead to sales or often, the purchase of technology never occurs at all. Precarious sales

[28] One might be tempted to refer to these formative processes using the increasingly parochial structuralist approach that positions people apart from the structures within which they operate. Markedly, a structuralist approach, often heralded by "concepts like 'regimes of value', 'spheres of circulation' or 'systems of exchange' (Callon and Çalişkan 2009:384). Callon and Çalişkan suggest instead that a pragmatic approach, characterized by attention to "the conditions of complexity and mobility in the relations between things, people and their context" (Callon and Çalişkan 2009:384) attends to the embeddedness of economizing and marketization processes (see also Grannovetter 1985 on embeddedness). Karl Polyani was an early proponent of this perspective demonstrating how "economic life was embedded in social structures prior to modes of abstraction and reification, which pertained most consequentially to the reification of the market itself" (Butler 2010:148).

[29] Does it not also imply that certain things, technologies, are being valued (via cultural understandings of worth, importance, and the social import of certain forms of performance)? Taves and Bender, in their edited volume, explore how things get valued or how things of value are created: "referring to 'ethnographies of value,' we signal our interest in the ways that people in various contexts decide (or experience or identify) what is of value as well as the processes that allow them (and us) to assign or apprehend such things. (2012:10). What gets valued? Bender and Taves note that the processes through which things are valued are often tied to identifications of "secular, religious, or spiritual (or some combination thereof)" (2012:2).

and yet committed believers in the possibility of the market, make the house of worship market a unique example of the dialogism of spiritual economies. In the section that follows, we explore the events that led to the TFWM Inspiration conference and trade event aboard the Queen Mary that steered TFWM towards the creation of the TFW Pavilion. Additionally, we explore the ways that education at the Inspiration conference and TFW Pavilion adds another dimension to understandings of how house of worship markets have come to be and technologies valued. These events reveal the ways that the creation of house of worship markets has been, in no small part, forged through the affective labours of the TFWM owners and staff. Their "vision" of the technologized church has framed endeavours to bring technology manufacturers and church technicians together—even if that union is fraught with the potential for misunderstanding and tense relations.

The Queen Mary

> *"Our mission is to educate Houses of Worship on the various technologies that are available to them, technologies they can be using in worship to augment and grow their ministry. . . . Every conference we participate in provides us with the opportunity to fulfill our mission. Whether we're able to help one church or one-million, every step forward is exciting for us. We're thrilled that we can provide the information Houses of Worship need to embrace today's technologies for their ministry" (Shelagh Rogers, Owner, TFWM)*

Fostering and nurturing the creation of a house of worship market in the U.S.—a market where church purchasers interact with technology manufacturers—was the principle mission of TFWM founders Shelagh Rogers and Barry Cobus. As a mission and a calling, nurturing a market takes considerable time, effort and planning; it became the main occupation of Shelagh and Barry as

they devoted their entire business to creating opportunities for churches to learn to use technology while facilitating access to the manufacturers of that technology. The TFW Pavilion became the apotheosis of their long-term commitment to creating opportunities to "fulfill their mission". Yet, the Pavilion was born from the crucible of near failure.

Before the TFW Pavilion took shape, there was the conference and trade event aboard the historic Queen Mary in November of 2004. Aboard the Queen Mary, a historic Cunard ocean liner docked in Long Beach, California, Barry Cobus and Shelagh Rogers attempted to create a space to elaborate the vision of TFWM, "to bring technical excellence back to the church", as Barry would say, by creating an event they called "Inspiration". Its purpose: to inspire churches to use performance technologies with excellence to attract new, curious religious "seekers" and encourage church growth.

Docked in Long Beach in 1967, the Queen Mary began her tenure as a hotel, attraction and conference event space. Nearly 40 years later it became a temporary home to the 2004 Inspiration trade show. The Queen Mary had a long history of responding to the demands of the times, first as a luxury ocean liner and then as a troopship during World War Two. During the war she was called the Grey Ghost "because of her stealth and stark [grey] color, the Queen Mary was the largest and fastest troopship to sail, capable of transporting as many as 16,000 troops at 30 knots" (Queen Mary 2014). The Queen Mary's speed and size, however, served little use for the slow, tense work of forming a U.S. house of worship market.

Bringing manufacturers and churches together has not been a "natural" process but one composed of many attempts to create common ground. From multiple vantage points, fostering markets became a labour of love, where having "the vision" for the goal was as important as

pursuing it. The events that led up to holding Inspiration on the Queen Mary highlight the difficult labour of trying to parse the worlds of churches and technology manufacturers.

After the initial show in Burlington, Ontario, Barry and Shelagh began holding Inspiration in the east of the U.S—in Dallas (1998-1999) and then in Atlanta (2000-2002). In 2003, Inspiration went to Cincinnati. In May of 2004 and 2005, Inspiration occurred in Charlotte. November of 2004 Inspiration boarded the Queen Mary and in July of 2005, it was held again on the west coast in Santa Clara, California.

In 2004, an opportunity arose to hold the show on the west coast—then a new market for TFWM that led to the show on board the Queen Mary. EH Publishing, a company owned by Ken Moise that would later go on to publish Worship Facilities Magazine, and Church Production had been courting Barry and Shelagh to purchase TFWM. Barry and Shelagh met Ken through a decorating company—Shepherd Exposition Services—that did the Inspiration conference. In 2003, Shepherd held a summit where they brought show managers, Barry, Shelagh and Ken included, together in Atlanta. Ken was intrigued by the idea of a worship market and that there was a conference dedicated to fostering it. After the event in Atlanta, Kevin invited Barry and Shelagh to his office in Massachusetts. He took them out and "wined and dined" them. Shelagh and Barry attended some events that Ken had organized.

EH Publishing was producing the Electronic Home Show[30] at the time and that is where the idea for a West coast show emerged. The EH show was running in Long Beach, California and the decision was made for Shelagh and Barry to organize an event in conjunction with the show in Long Beach, CA. Barry and Shelagh were looking for venues and, as it happened, the

[30] The Electronic Home Show is like a small competitor to the Consumer Electronic Show (CES).

Queen Mary was available for conferences and exhibitions. The intent was to hold an Inspiration event aboard the Queen Mary at the same time as the Electronic Home Show. A tourist shuttle was already operating between the Queen Mary and the other venue to carry attendees between the shows. Attendees would be admitted to the Inspiration event with their EH badge and in turn Inspiration attendees would be encouraged to visit the EH event. Kevin notes, "In context it seemed like it could potentially work."

At the time of the event, Ken Moise was courting Barry and Shelagh to purchase the Inspiration show or buy shares in it. They had been in negotiation throughout 2004. The Queen Mary event occurred in November 2004 but before it, Ken had made an offer to Barry and Shelagh. The offer did not sit right with them so they passed on it. They were under the impression that they were still in negotiation but right before the TFWM staff travelled to the conference, Ken sent an email sharing the sentiment, "Can't wait to see you and by the way I've made an arrangement with your competitor". Ken purchased Church Production (TFWM's competitor) and at the time, they were holding an event called T3 and were doing events in conjunction with other conferences. Ken acquired controlling interest in the Church Production conference, and it became WFX. He assigned staff to run WFX specifically and it became what it is now, the main competitor to the TFW Pavilion.

The Queen Mary event, from Kevin's perspective was a nightmare, although he laughs as he calls it that. He explains why the Queen Mary was a difficult event: "Part of the thing of the Inspiration conference was to be a technical resource, a technical conference and that ship is quite old. You technically can run conferences there, you can technically run a trade show, but for the demand for the power and the lack of proper elevators to access all areas, it was not an

ideal venue." Picture three tiers in an iron ship and the only way to move from level to level is by stairs. This was a problem for some exhibitors, like Yamaha. The floor plan for the conference placed Yamaha on the second level. As it turned out, they brought a baby grand piano to the conference for product demonstrations. As it happened, the Shepherd Exposition staff had to lift the baby grand piano down a flight of stairs to put it in position. Additionally, for all exhibitors the quality and reliability of the power supply was a concern. Kevin notes, "The power was so antiquated there was a legitimate concern about it frying a lot of the gear. So people were leery about using the power in the place. It was such a juxtaposition that it became kind-of ludicrous; it was a very bizarre scenario." Holding a technical and educational conference onboard a retired ocean liner with no elevators and faulty power starkly contrasts with the discourses of technical excellence the event was attempting to foster by trying to build a church market.

The Inspiration event held on the Queen Mary was not remarkably successful; church attendance was low and exhibitors were disappointed. However, Kevin suggests, "all the exhibitors that supported the Inspiration conferences knew about the concept and believed in the idea—that there was indeed a market there". Yet, the Queen Mary event demonstrates that this market did not emerge spontaneously but through the slow work of trying to create opportunities to bring church technicians and technology manufacturers together. Even amidst the quasi-failure of the Queen Mary event, the dissolution of the deal with Ken Moise, and the slow work of fostering a market, Barry's vision of helping to create technically excellent churches animated TFWM's unceasing attempts to give shape and form to an idea.

The idea for the Queen Mary event was, as Kevin notes, "a hard sell because it was such a niche market." As a "niche market" it had its own vocabulary and way of speaking; its own

discourses and practices that made it unique—unique enough for its own conference event. As we will explore in upcoming chapters, creating common ground with a shared language for describing and understanding technology and its uses relied on the *experience* of learning about, using and experimenting with technology within the space of the Inspiration events, later within the TFW Pavilion. The Pavilion itself, as we will explore, occupied its own niche within larger trade events and expositions in the attempt to provide a bridge between technology users on the one hand, manufacturers, and industry consultants on the other. In an upcoming section, we will follow along with the story of an industry consultant and TFWM writer and speaker named Marshall as he describes his role in fostering and participating in the educational aspects of a worship market while trying to stay *relevant*. Before we meet Marshall, however, it is important to understand the context of the TFW Pavilion as the apotheosis of what began as a humble event in Burlington, ON.

The TFW Pavilion

> *"Technology doesn't save souls. The message you proclaim does." Salem: The Message is Our Mission. (Full-page advertisement in TFWM)*

The TFW Pavilion is the locus of attempts by manufacturers, consultants and contractors to speak directly to end-users, church technicians, about the applicability of their products and services to creating immersive, impactful worship experiences. The TFW Pavilion attempts to foster a market as an idea, as a material-discursive reality born of the slow work of creating shared experiences. We explored in the previous chapter the conception that spiritual economies embody the dialogical tensions of religious practice and neoliberal discourses, often through the

uneven or rough movement of keywords between genres of speech. This chapter has so far explored how markets form through the material-discursive practices where education becomes an integral part of market transactions. In what follows, we explore how education at the TFW Pavilion operates in the context of trade events.

Education at the Pavilion (and elsewhere, like WFX) is the performative means to frame technologized worship practice through creating opportunities for the formation of new social ties, the exchange of ideas about technology and understandings about what can constitute worship practice (Bourdieu 1986). It is also an opportunity for technicians to learn how to steward technology and create worship experiences amidst neoliberal discourses of growth and innovation. The expectation of future sales shapes some of the educational offerings by TFWM and WFX through a focus on a single product rather than type of product. Regardless of this expectation, conference speakers often offer what they feel is the most sound advice, guidance and framing of technological and performance best practice.

Creating the opportunities for learning and the learning itself become the locus for transacting in experience. For many attendees the experience of the technology, its feel and design, combines with learning how it functions to create a meaningful worship experiences. The Pavilion and WFX make those experiences possible to create durable relationships between technicians and devices and manufacturers and consumers. Nothing is bought or sold except for the tangibility of feel, smell, touch, proximity, a closeness to devices whose price (ranging up to quarter of a million dollars) cannot compare with the capabilities they make possible. The experience of the thing itself becomes a tangible part of the embodiment of technology stewardship, the kernel of affective labour, where technicians learn that the possibilities devices

offer are vast. The material process through which evangelical churches have become a market, beyond the understanding that they are a group of potential consumers, has been premised on creating an economy of experiences that begin on the trade show floor and extend into worship practice. In the seminars and workshops, the concepts and keywords technicians learn about the role and operation of technology can become part of their vocabulary for understanding worship practice. When this happens keywords travel between the technical genre of education in the Pavilion and worship practice outside of it. When a term like *experience*, for example, is used and accorded sacred importance during seminars, it can become a way to understand how to engineer worship—with the *experience* of congregants in mind. The shift I am drawing attention to—from education to practice—may seem subtle but when experience doubles up with specific practices like "audience blasting" or Environmental Projection, which I explore in a later chapter, it materializes ways of conceptualizing and embodying dispositions towards how the relationship between technology and congregant works in practice.

The transition from word to deed, where speech blossoms with illocutionary action (Austin 1975)—where an action is performed in saying something—propagates from the keywords that travel between technicians, conference speakers, technology manufacturers and industry consultants. Within the physical floor space of the Pavilion particular worship practices come to matter through the elaboration of ideas about what constitutes *relevant* worship, the nature of excellence (for production), and what the most desirable dispositions for volunteers and technical staff are. Over time the type of training requested, space limitations, speaker interests and aptitudes have all shaped the education that happens at the Pavilion. Changing technological requirements and capacities, for example, have influenced the types of seminars offered. The

transition from standard definition (SD) video cameras to high definition (HD) was a popular topic for discussion while I was conducting fieldwork. Attendees expressed anxiety about the future of their video systems should they continue to use SD equipment. They also lamented the cost of switching to HD knowing that, to some extent, many of them would also be behind the technological curve of innovation with new standards and technologies introduced each year.

Hands-on training, like learning to use an audio mixing console like the Yamaha M7CL, adds another dimension to TFW Pavilion education through learning about the application of principles for creating a suitable audio mix. Through the discursive-materiality of practice, hands-on training becomes an opportunity to learn to embody actual dispositions towards worship practice. For example, determining the kind of audio mix depends on the technician's understanding of the composition of the congregation and the impact that generational listening habits may have on audio volume or the emphasis on particular instruments over others. To be relevant is also not to alienate the congregation by, say, using a rock n' roll audio mix during a solemn hymn. This would not seem appropriate to those in attendance and so relevance also concerns being attuned to the dynamics of the congregation and consistent with the values of the church. Hands-on sessions at the TFW Pavilion provide attendees an opportunity to exchange ideas about how to harmonize the message and values of the church with the actual operation of devices.

The TFW Pavilion has been almost without exception located on the outside of the edges of the exhibit hall at all conferences I attended. This position is deliberate because manufacturers and trade event organizers consider the house of worship market a fringe industry. As a fringe industry, it occupied a space on the margin both figuratively and literally. Situating the Pavilion

on the margins also concerns how the floor space is valued—the space furthest from the entrance is less desirable and so less expensive (per foot) and often granted for educational use. As a marginal industry (in the making) providing education, the TFW Pavilion lived on the periphery. Situating the Pavilion on the outskirts of the hall may also demonstrate the way that event organizers felt about the presence of house of worship end-users—normally end-users outside the professional audio, video and production field are not able to attend these events. The show floor at the Pavilion became a religiously interstitial space within the secularity of the show. The architecture of the space demonstrates the liminality of house of worship markets: it is both within and outside the mainstream of the event.

At the margins, the TFW Pavilion exemplifies the ongoing labour that makes it possible as it teeters on the edges of the exhibit space. Attempts to keep it from failing as an attraction for visitors belong to the affective labours of educators and TFWM staff that worked to create a space for the exchange of ideas and creation of understanding about what can constitute a relevant and excellent worship experience. Recall, importantly, that conference attendees cannot buy gear on the exhibit show floor, but that does not mean that other forms of exchange do not occur. The exchange of information about upcoming technologies, the use of performance devices, and ways of thinking about the relationship of technology to evangelical practice are central to house of worship markets. Moreover, there are connections made when evangelicals have the opportunity to sit with a representative (reps) from a technology manufacturer at a lighting console, for example, they can see how reps model the use of devices. Where they place their hands, how they program in cues, how they stand or sit in relation with the gear. Even when a technician finds that they have contrasting worldviews that strain their conversation, they have

the common ground of the device itself. The device is not merely a mediator for religious messages. It becomes an active part of the relationship between technicians and reps through an ability to become a part of their social relations (Suchman 2009:239). In these settings, the staging of technology as inert device masks their sociomaterial affiliations—how they materialize associations like those between technicians and reps (Suchman 2005).

Considering that many evangelical churches have begun using professional audio, video and lighting devices to ensure technological and cultural relevance, they have a unique problem. Insofar as they believe that technology is a necessary component of worship practice, churches often have limited understanding about the nature of professional production. Their facilities often do not possess the architectural and infrastructural requirements to augment the space. For example, many older facilities were built out of reverberant materials intentionally to make one hundred people sound like one thousand. As worship styles have changed, from grandiose to concentrated and concise, where the pastor must be heard as though he is speaking directly to the listener, buildings have been refashioned to reflect these shifts in style. Many churches, especially small-to-medium sized congregations do not have the technical skill to create a "signal chain" which connects multiple devices in order to transport audio, video and lighting signals from one place in the sanctuary to another. Moreover, they often do not possess the staff or volunteer base with skills to operate the performance gear once it is in place. It is within this interstice that TFWM and WFX provide educational resources and facilitators, creating opportunities for rough translation of understandings between church technicians and leadership and technology manufacturers. In effect, these zones create opportunities for churches to be understood as part of a market—where training on what constitutes excellent, growth-oriented

worship can look like.

From the heart: the affective labours that bring markets into being

> *"[I]t is not possible simply to situate certain processes and activities within a state or, indeed, an economy, as if 'state' and 'economy' were pre-given entities, already bounded, identifiable, and knowable. If such notions of the state are produced through state effects, then we must rethink the basic ontologies with which we operate. And the same goes for the economy which only becomes singular and monolithic by virtue of the convergence of certain kinds of processes and practices that produce the 'effect' of the knowable and unified economy" (Butler 2010:147).*

Education at the TFW Pavilion serves to bring into being certain kinds of material-discursive practices for engineering contemporary worship. Education becomes both a program and technology of calculation used to give shape to house of worship markets through the moods and motivations of the presenters (Geertz 1973, Csordas 2001, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). The creation of lasting moods and motivations, to draw from Geertz's (1973) understanding of the function of religious symbols, forms "a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often, implicit) metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other" (90). This style of life—framing worship practice—seems utterly real and is normalized through the efforts of the TFW Pavilion speakers who speak as though compelled by God to share their knowledge and endorse the vision of an *excellent* and *relevant* technologized evangelical church.

Marshall[31], a regular presenter at the Pavilion, article contributor and church technology consultant, relates the following narrative as he describes how he became involved with TFWM.

[31] This is a pseudonym.

> I guess I started probably officially maybe 6-7 years ago and the Inspiration conferences, I started going there maybe for a couple of years. And I was working full time at my church here in Memphis, Breath of Life Christian Centre… I was the digital media director of digital media technology for the church and started going to the Inspiration conferences which later became Technology for Worship Pavilion. I saw a need, or at least I saw something in the Christian industry or the Christian market-place for a lot of people like myself who were full time and who were not getting all the necessary information they needed to go back and actually, and I'm talking *actually* really implement those strategies that were taught at the Inspiration conferences. You know, not knocking any one particular group of people, but you know, I felt when I attended those conferences [of TFWM competitors], I was not able to go back and accurately apply what I wanted. And I felt like how do I do this? And so, from that, talking with Theresa and Barry and Shelagh and Kevin, I was sharing with them my thoughts and how I felt as an attendee and at some point Barry suggested that I should start teaching or at least, you know, sharing my…not my frustrations, but my heart on ministry and how I felt it could be effective for the global Christian community. I think God put in my heart to start educating people who were in my position.

Identifying a perceived need that frames education for *effective* worship Marshall began participating. He began sharing his expertise through identifying the needs of house of worship technicians and their limited capacity to implement what they were learning. Identifying the needs of technicians after having been one, Marshall sympathizes with technicians and conference attendees. His sympathy leads him to connect God's will with his own. Having a heart for education, Marshall's "gifting", his penchant for sharing what he knows about technology, is galvanised through becoming a TFW Pavilion speaker. His commitment to staying "ahead of the curve" frames his understanding of the relevance of church technology use. "You know," said Marshall, "technology is changing so rapidly, you gotta stay ahead of the curve or you become non-relevant, you know?" He continued: "Yeah, so that's why I keep my ear and eye to the ground to keep the pulse, so I know what's happening in the [technological] ecosystem. It's changing so much and that why I try to incorporate so many different classes to accommodate those who may be a little more advanced or maybe they're just getting started."

Keeping an "ear and eye to the ground", Marshall's attempt to be tuned in to emerging technologies is his way of being and staying *relevant*. Passing this "tuning" onto his attendees, he frames and authorizes certain material-discursive realities (Geertz 1973, Asad 1983). By taking on the role of expert, Marshall advocates for the applicability, usability and viability of particular technologies—ultimately he models how particular technologies contribute to being *relevant*. His selections are discernments: they express his techno-cultural tastes and distinguish him as an expert authority. In other words, he knows the difference between devices enough to select applicable products with the functionality for the task, while still looking towards the technological horizon. For church technicians being on the crest of a technological wave is a point of honour, but also understood as their contribution to the growth of the kingdom and the church. The Pavilion taps into the desire for growth that fuels technologization.

The way evangelicals understand growth matters. It is not enough that the church grows in attendance but relies on the number of people whose souls are saved. Growth relies on a fungible form of accounting where the salvation of attendees stand-in as a form of spiritual currency. Being relevant is a way to "cash-in" on this spiritual currency. Kevin, TFWM Editor, notes that there are many evangelicals that concentrate more on a definitive metric like how many people came in the door, how many 'souls saved', or how many people went for altar call. Determining that number has considerable meaning to many churches as a metric for success. "In their way of thinking, you've converted this amount of people and so it's almost like they think: 'we're doing a great job for the big guy because this many people said yes, we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour' regardless of that person's conduct up-until and then after. They think: that doesn't matter as long as we got them to say they buy-in, then we've done our job,"

reflects Kevin. On the other hand, he suggests that many other churches take time to cultivate relationships with people and those are the ones who are making a difference. Churches, Kevin speculates, have to measure something and they would rather measure people and souls, than dollars. "You can't go around saying: 'we had a really successful weekend! We pulled in sixteen grand in donations'. What kind of church does that make you sound like? People become a proxy for dollars. But it's a softer way of putting it, I suppose. The reality of it is that it's still a business."

The TFW Pavilion sits at the crossroads of spiritual economies of growth—discourses that are shaped and moulded through much of the education presented—and the affective labour of technicians who attempt to grow the kingdom through mastering and stewarding performance technologies. Technicians come to understand the relationship between technology and growth, relevance and excellence, and the transubstantiation of church attendees into spiritual currency. While thinking about people as spiritual currency presents a problem for many technicians who work at odds with church leadership, the desire for technical and performance excellence and relevance still masks the imperative for growth. For many technicians, people are not a proxy, nor are they fungible. Souls saved are the very real and tangible result of dedication and commitment.[32]

Growth, as a keyword, translates across sacred, technical and neoliberal genres of speech to take on new, and not entirely stable, meanings. When souls saved serves as a proxy for tithes, growth takes on the hue of neoliberal imperatives that seek to pursue financial frontiers. When growth is framed as though it is for the kingdom (of God), it adopts an aura of the sacred where

[32] One way to think about the soul for evangelicals is as an enduring self that persists after death. God imparts the soul and it returns to him upon death.

evangelicals believe it is God's will being enacted through the affective labours from the heart of technicians. The growth in the sophistication of the church's technological systems adds another layer of complexity where the elaboration of a signal chain can contribute to the technological and cultural relevance of the church to grow the kingdom and increase tithes.

Learning to use technology is a complex process. It is not merely a functional knowledge that technicians often receive during educational events. During one conference seminar at WFX, the panel was composed of lead technicians from large U.S. churches. Technicians from smaller churches put up their hands to ask questions about the details of the larger church technical systems and of their well-known performances. The small-church technicians often found the stories of megachurch success hopeful but discouraging. The question often posed of the presenters: how can I do that in my church? Often the presenters would answer, "You can't. You have to find your own vision". Attempts to learn how to mimic larger churches often met with resistance from the larger church presenters who did not often share the details of their technical arrangements. One reading of this situation suggests that larger churches, having gone through the growing pains of developing durable technical practices and learning to create creative displays and content did not want to share their processes in detail. Another reading suggests that each church, because it is uniquely composed of a congregation, cannot adopt dispositions; they are learned over time. Technicians thus not only learn the skills that larger churches employ, but also the significance of learning to improvise their own vision with the tools at hand. What they learn is to value creativity, planning, and improvisation (Ingold & Hallam 2007:3). Ingold and Hallam (2007), interested in materiality and sites where creativity and improvisation unfold, offer a way to understand the way learning is connected to practice. Ingold suggests that, to

"improvise is to follow the ways of the world, as they open up, rather than to recover a chain of connections, from an end-point to a starting-point, on a route already travelled" (2010:97). Technicians learn to not only use technology, but also to create, to make and to model forms of making and creating (Ingold & Hallam 2014:1, Myers 2010). Their learning becomes not only ways of doing, but techniques for improvisation when they incorporate and embody the vision of their own church.

This chapter began by exploring the relationship between religion and the market. Rather than accept that they exist in an antagonistic struggle that pits tradition against change, I have shown that lived experience and everyday practice of evangelicals reveals a dialogism, a *longue dureé* with the notion of political economy and the market.

This chapter has also explored the ways that education is a fundamental part of market transactions and has helped to create the conditions for a U.S. evangelical house of worship market. The events aboard the Queen Mary, TFW Pavilion, and trade events like WFX, have offered insight into the slow and difficult work of creating shared experiences and laying the foundation for shared ways of embodying and modelling the techniques for engineering worship practice. These vocabularies of motives shape understandings and enactments of technical systems. Educational sessions bringing people and technologies together have produced a market. Courting for the possibility of future sales relies on technology manufacturer's ability to translate device specifications into useful and salient capabilities. In that vein, we now turn to exploring the "rough translation" that has gone into creating shared vocabularies as indexical keywords move between genres of speech at the TFW Pavilion.

4. Vocabularies of motives and rough translation

The TFW Pavilion brings church technicians, technology manufacturers and industry consultants together to learn about how to use performance gear and about emerging technologies. I do not assume that attendees come together, talk, learn and leave enriched for the experience as though they all share a common understanding of the role of technology, the purpose of using it for worship, and even the ways it works. Proceeding from the notion that a shared understanding of the nature of events at the Pavilion exists would neglect the labours that contribute to shaping the translation of ideas about technology, from purely technical for example, into something with sacred importance. These material-discourses performatively give shape to the creation of sacralised worship practice guided by neoliberal norms of growth. This chapter explores three genres of speech: technical, sacred, and neoliberal capitalism. Together, these genres of speech manifest a reflexive spiritual economy whereby vocabularies, signified in this case by keywords, hang together in a space where the translation of material-discursive practices between technicians, technology manufacturers and other industry participants is often difficult.

Take the keyword *excellence* for example: *excellence*, within a technical genre, is indicative of technical mastery such that one operates a device with excellence. Within the sacred, *excellence* refers to spiritual proficiency in crafting *relevant* worship. However, within the sacred, *excellence* carries the understanding that to craft *relevant* worship is to do so within the broader frame of market growth where one must "grow the kingdom" through increasing church attendance. The impetus towards growth becomes neoliberal in its emphasis on cultivating a lifestyle of worship that transcends the formality of ritual and extends into the everyday. Within the genre of technical speech, *relevant* worship incorporates a commitment to

technical excellence that aims to satisfy the discerning tastes of church attendees who expect quality productions. Therefore, *excellence* travels between these genres, depending on the speaker and audience. Within the Pavilion, *excellence* invokes these three genres of speech in the content of educational seminars and workshops.

Vocabularies of motives are a way to make sense of particular actions; they index the meanings specific to situated cultural practices. C. Wright Mills notes that, "[m]otives are of no value apart from the delimited societal situations for which they are the appropriate vocabularies. They must be situated" (Mills 1940:913). An emphasis on practice requires, as Sherry Ortner suggests, a "theory of motivation" (1994:394). Mills is drawing attention to the ways that plans for action make sense in a given context. Mills argues, "motives are strategies of action. In many social actions, others must agree, tacitly or explicitly" (Mills 1940:907). The vocabularies used to describe and understand situated practices become a way of differentiating between motives and motivations suited to one situation rather than another. The social character of vocabularies of motive displaces the emphasis on individual strategies in favour of a material-discursive ethos of practice.

Technical, sacred, and neoliberal genres of speech form broader collections of vocabularies. Thomas Csordas, through research on Charismatic Catholic renewal movements, shows that the movement of motives of between speech genres allows for the possibility of creativity, and thus an improvisational translation. He argues that in the context of Charismatic Catholics ritual life and processes of ritualization,

> the vocabulary of motives constitutes the concrete basis for a specific kind of intertextuality within and across genres . . . as the motives are circulated in performance each genre endows them with a characteristic rhetorical function,

> indexical in that it addresses and reflects the immediate state of participants (2001:197).

As motives circulate they take on meanings depending on the genre of speech within which they are used. Complexes of meaning, like the multiple valences of *excellence*, are intra-subjective—they exist between individuals, not within them (Csordas 2001). Motives are situated but can span multiple situations; the genres of speech at the Pavilion can recur outside of that context and become the normalized way of imputing meaning to social situations (Schrauwers 2001:436). For evangelical technicians, vocabularies of motive are invoked by the discursive-materiality of performance. I use vocabularies of motives to understand how ways of thinking, talking, and learning become ways of acting; vocabularies of motive linger on the material-discursive crux of translation, on the slow work of making and sharing meaning across performative genres. I understand the normalizing role of vocabularies of motive through their capacity to provide a direction for action—such as when an educator offers methods for lighting a subject for video broadcast. The role of performance, suggests Csordas, is to keep "the motives constantly in the purview of participants, so that they eventually come to be taken for granted as the standard vocabulary in terms of which people should interact" (Csordas 2001:198).

Keywords, part of vocabularies of motive, index important aspects of material-discursive realities, helping to form and describe changes to existing relationships. To understand the role keywords play, I look to Raymond Williams. He suggests that keywords help to bind events while they are suggestive of particular ways of thinking (1985:15). Many keywords express a "history and complexity of meanings; conscious changes, or consciously different uses; innovation, obsolescence, specialization, extension, overlap, transfer; or changes (Williams 1985:17). Thus, keywords—because of their richness of meaning—stand out among motives as

they move between genres.

Between genres, keywords form provisional bridges, sometimes blending connotations and acquiring new meanings. As keywords move from one genre to another, like between technical and sacred genres, everyday practice at the Pavilion undergoes transformation through processes of ritualization—within otherwise secular trade events. The Pavilion is unique on the trade show floor because within it there is the possibility for the sacralisation of keywords. When keywords take on sacred meanings, like when relevance or excellence come to denote commitments to particular dispositions towards worship practice, or when technical specifications for a device translate into capabilities with sacred importance, practice undergoes a degree of ritualization. Csordas suggests that, "(r)itualization is the . . . consolidation of features in this imaginative terrain by incorporating them into a habitus, endowing the self with dispositions in the sense that it becomes 'disposed' within a previously alien but now familiar terrain" (Csordas 2001:101). In the pocket of practice on the trade show floor, the Pavilion becomes the terrain that at first seems alien or strange for attendees but comes to feel like their own space amidst the tumult (and secularism) of the event.

Even when attendees find some measure of familiarity at the Pavilion, it should not be assumed that bringing people together at the Pavilion levels the uneven cultural differences that make translation rough and understanding messy. Because the tensions of cultural and social difference exist within the Pavilion, TFW Pavilion speakers and technology manufacturers attempted to find ways to translate their understandings about the nature of technology for church users. An example of this effort to translate occurs when manufacturers search for the right ways to render product aptitudes into capabilities relevant to religious end-users—this often

means emphasizing some features over others or positioning products within familiar discourses (like relevance and excellence).

Translation is the mechanism through which vocabularies of motive shift between genres of speech. Translation, in the context of the Pavilion, draws from Bruno Latour's emphasis on mediation. Buzelin suggests that,

> For Latour *translation* refers to a process of mediation, of 'interpretation' of objectives, expressed in the 'languages' of the different intermediaries engaged in a project/process of innovation—intermediaries who, at the beginning, do not necessarily have the same points of view or interests. It refers to the strategies which make it possible for objectives to change and evolve, ensuring the participation of the intermediaries and the continuation of the project (Buzelin 2007:48)

Latour's understanding of translation relies on the mediation of languages, metaphors and idioms that make sense for participants. He suggests that translation marks the traceable association between entities (Latour 2005). Within the Pavilion, this association is born out of attempts to find common ground to understand the role of technology for worship.

Other important keywords circulate between the genres of sacred, technical and neoliberal within the TFW Pavilion and the pages of trade publications. Keywords are also not static; while they index contemporary meanings, they also carry the legacies of past meanings. In what follows I explore the contemporary significances of a select group of keywords that I encountered during the tenure of my research. While not exhaustive, the following list explores the relationships between genres of speech and the valences keywords take on in practice. It is also important to note that not all keywords make the transition between genres, although many of them do. Through an analysis of keywords, I seek to reveal the complexities of material-discursive practices as they cohere around the production of evangelical worship.

Experience as a keyword speaks to the embodied aspects of practice. Regarding a genre of technical speech, experience is used to talk about the ways that technology is used to create immediate and immersive worship events. Experience, from a sacred perspective speaks to the ritual and sacred aspects of the encounter between congregants and the worship experience. They experience worship through the performative elaborations of technology stewards and the devices they attempt to control. Experience, insofar as it occurs within technologized worship, also takes on neoliberal valences. With an unceasing emphasis on growth, experience becomes the means to convert potential church attendees through attempts to foster enduring dispositions (and a sense of allegiance to the church).

Giftings is used in a sacred context to denote the God-given aptitudes that believers may possess. A focus on giftedness for many evangelicals comes from particular understandings of the teachings of the apostle Paul[33] who placed emphasis on living out personal gifts within the community of the church (Gombis 2011). Further, the understanding is that gifts from God must be "activated" and used in order to pay respect to God's endowment. Giftings tangentially concerns the technical genre: if one possesses a gift for using technology, one should seek out a position of technical director within the church. Within a neoliberal genre, the giftings presuppose affective labour or habits of the heart that harnesses the love and commitment of church volunteers for advancing the Kingdom. Living out one's giftings is also a way to live on mission and demonstrate a lifestyle of worship making the acknowledgement and activation of

[33] An article in Christianity Today reveals the complicated evangelical relationship with Paul, but the author notes regarding gifts that: "As individuals, we have been saved for life-giving relationships within kingdom of God communities, not merely for privatized walks with Jesus. We become our true selves only in community, exercising our gifts and learning to receive the gifts of others. Paul's vision for the church includes the renewed social practices of forgiving and being forgiven, reconciling formerly alienated individuals and communities, learning to speak words of grace and kindness, practicing justice, and absorbing loss rather than taking vengeance for wrongs suffered" (Gombis 2011:3).

giftings indicative of an unspoken commitment to church life.

The sacred aspects of g*rowth* concern the desire by church leadership and members to bring the word of Christ to as many people as possible (to spread the good word). Evangelicals within the missional approach to church organization focus on growth. This approach, like beliefs on the role of personal gifts, focusses on the teachings of the Apostle Paul who encouraged early Christians to spread the word everywhere. Growth in a technical genre fuels the expansion of the church signal chain. Adding components and capabilities is central to the vision of the TFW Pavilion: education often seeks to share the latest trends and upcoming technologies and troubleshoot the integration of new devices. Growth echoes a neoliberal emphasis on unceasing expansion, which constantly looks for new frontiers for growing the church. Many of the larger churches that attended the TFW Pavilion or even provided education at WFX, had multiple campuses, sometimes stretching across states or national and international borders.

Authenticity relates to sacred understandings of relevance. For evangelicals authenticity is a way of trying to be true to the values of the church. Often, these values are an elaboration of the congregation's belief about the nature of the church. Alternatively, in top-down churches, church leadership establishes values. Within a technical genre, being authentic means developing understandings about what practices resonate with church values. For example, some churches are keenly cognizant of the dangers of idol worship. As such, they would never show a lasting close-up of a person on the large projection screens at the front of the sanctuary because this has the potential to be understood as valuing an idol above God. With a neoliberal genre, authenticity speaks to attempts to create a unique worship experience—that in effect, is about branding the

churches identity and acknowledging a unique genetic signature or DNA.

Transformation[34] concerns the sacred technologies of the self that contribute to the experience of being born again. Churches attempt to create indelible experiences of the immediacy of God's presence that speak to the heart of potential congregants, telling them to listen for the still small voice of God as they live and learn to adopt a lifestyle of worship. Like authenticity, transformation has a technical hue when churches map out the future of their technological ministry and the transformations they see for both the technology and the church. A neoliberal aspect of transformation concerns church attempts to cultivate a transformative personal experience—the ultimate offering, whose goal is to save souls and create believers (who then also spread the word).

Vision, in the context of sacred genres of speech refers to the image of the future of the church. It denotes a path, often understood as determined by God, that the church is trying to follow to spread the word and grow the Kingdom. The nature of vision is such that not everyone in the church may share understandings for its implementation. The actual direction the church takes, regarding technologization or the type of sermon or message offered can be a site of conflict and debate. Regarding technical aspects of vision, the metaphor of a path resonates with the need to plan a technical purchase and implementation strategy. Considering the substantial cost of most professional performance gear, churches often have to save or secure loans to purchase and install new audio, video or lighting systems. Vision is also a key term within TFWM. Barry Cobus, co-founder of TFWM, consistently spoke about *his* vision for "bringing

[34] Gombis (2011) speaks to the cultivation of a lifestyle of worship by noting the 'transformative habits' of discipleship: "Evangelicals have done well to emphasize personal commitment to Christ, but we must take care to regard discipleship as the practice of transformative habits set within communities of renewal empowered by God's Spirit. Central to Paul's conception of salvation is 'the church of God, which he bought with his own blood' (Acts 20:28)." (4).

excellence back to the church". His understanding of what a vision is—a motivating idea and concept—guided efforts to create the Inspiration conference and eventually the TFW Pavilion. Vision tangentially speaks to neoliberal genres in that sacred aspects of vision concern the growth of the church, which if framed within aspects of relevance and excellence, rely on the technologization of worship practice.

Technology—central to the nature of this research project—has multiple valences within the genres of sacred, technical and neoliberal speech. Sacred aspects of technology concern the ways that evangelicals have come to understand the nature and role of technology used for worship. Their complex relationship with technology centres on anxieties about the openness of technology to external spiritual or animating influences. This in turn, relates to the way they grapple with the purpose of technology used for worship even as they seek to adopt it. From a technical perspective, stewards attempt to erase the presence of technology, blending it into worship practice such that is it rendered transparent in the immediacy of the moment (see also Eisenlohr 2009, de Vries 2001). When technology intercedes in the flow of the event, it draws attention to itself, becoming hypermediate (Bolter & Grusin 1999). It is this paradox of immediacy/hypermediacy that Esienlohr identifies when he acknowledges that, "widespread desires for immediacy focused on new media [occur] against the background of ever more complex apparatuses of mediation that are supposed to enable more immediate forms of interaction" (2009:277). Technology stewardship seeks to address the "hypermediacy" of technology through careful consideration of the purpose for its use. Technology's relationship to neoliberalism is a by-product of ideas about church growth positing that the route to expansion is via maintaining relevance through the technologization of worship.

Clearly, the three genres of sacred, technical and neoliberal speech should be understood less as rigid categories and more as concentrations of speech that index aspects of vocabularies of motives. Vocabularies of motives reveal how particular ways of speaking are indicative of strategies for action. To use technology excellently, as we have explored, means embodying a practical strategy committed to using it well to grow the Kingdom. Both subjective and beyond the lone speaker, vocabularies are situated in specific social circumstances, like the TFW Pavilion or within the evangelical technical director community. Translation is also central to the ways that genres of speech elaborate vocabularies of motives. Take for example, technology manufacturers attempt to render device specifications into capabilities that resonate with church technical directors—this rendering situates capabilities within a frame of potential action relevant to the technician. In the next section, we explore how manufacturers explicitly and implicitly use some of the keywords discussed previously to situate their products for church users through translating technological specifications into capabilities.

Specifications becoming capabilities: Translation in action

Arranged along tables, in rows, the audio control consoles sat waiting for conference attendees to take a seat in front. The Yamaha M7CL console was used for TFW Pavilion hands-on audio mixing workshops. Each console, with its arrangement of knobs and faders, was the focus of Yamaha's mixing class education where attendees were encouraged to push, slide, and through hands-on practice, learn to manipulate sound with the device. Yamaha attempts to position the M7CL in terms that will resonate for church users both during live, in-person training and though

their print advertising. A TFW Pavilion partner[35], Yamaha Commercial Audio, has attempted to demonstrate how device specifications become capabilities when they attempt to strategically convey the importance of their particular products for the church market. In a full-page 2007 advertisement in TFWM, entitled "Aesthetic Acoustics" Yamaha used a church case study to express the aspects of their audio console that marketers understand to be most appealing to church end-users.

> Northwoods Community Church in Peoria, Illinois understands the importance of beautiful sound. With Yamaha's M7CL, mixing is made easy without compromising quality. A touchscreen, single layer control surface and Centralogic™ functionality make console control at Northwoods simple. With intuitive operation and maximum reliability, there's more time to appreciate the music and words, spoken, sang and played in this house of worship (Yamaha 2007).

Drawing on keywords like audio intelligibility, reliability and ease of use, Yamaha has become adept at negotiating the rough translation of specifications into capabilities. Keywords like *simple*, *reliable*, *easy*, and *quality* attend to the recognition that it is often volunteers operating the sound consoles during Sunday services. Appealing to novice users, Yamaha attempts to position a complex professional mixing console as a necessary means to enhance worship practice. Achieving production excellence becomes the impetus to produce professional-quality results with professional gear operated by novices and volunteers—it is sold as the ideal to eager churches looking to grow their congregations.

Technology manufacturers endeavour, often through events like those held at the TFW Pavilion, to identify key understandings about the nature of technology that will resonate with

[35] "Partner" was used instead of "sponsor" to denote attempts to create an enduring relationship between TFWM and technology manufacturers who showcased their gear at the Pavilion, often through offering education n how to use it.

many churches. Their product sales often rely on being able to translate key specifications (such as design features that make the device venue specific) into capabilities that are unique to churches (like having to create an audio mix that accounts for many people singing along with the band, adding extra volume and reverberation to the sanctuary). An extremely important aspect of church production, audio intelligibility, is often the focus of efforts to craft a message for church users. Audio intelligibility refers to the ability to hear a speaking pastor clearly, without echo, audio feedback, or static interference. When creating a worship experience, the ability to speak directly and clearly to attendees is central to efforts to encourage them to listen for God's voice. Listening *to* the pastor is training on listening *for* God's voice—and if one cannot hear the pastor or the message clearly, how can one really experience the gravity and potential of the Word?

Manufacturers attempt to speak in situated ways to church technicians and leadership, but I am not suggesting that churches read and believe every word of attempts to advertise specifically to them. I am instead interested in, first, the attempts to translate specifications into capabilities and the work this does, and second, in what evangelicals bring to the ideas and discourses these ads espouse. Finally, I am drawing attention to the understandings about the worship market this translation work reveals.

The Sanctuary Series by Peavey Electronic Corporation, Technologies for Worship Magazine advertiser, is a range of audio control devices that allow users some, but not all control of the audio signals sent out to sanctuary speakers. With an ivory case embossed with the outline of a dove in flight, the design of this audio console assumed that its aesthetics would appeal broadly to church consumers. According to Peavey, they designed its easy-to-use interface for

church volunteers. Peavey promotes their products on their website, emphasizing what they believe are the capabilities that will appeal to church end-users.

> Sanctuary Series mixers are a line of all new, innovative audio products dedicated to making pro audio easy and cost-effective for houses of worship. Since many worship centers are unable to staff an experienced sound technician, Peavey developed several unique, user-friendly mixing features to simplify operation so any church leader or choir director can speak and perform with confidence.
>
> We've replaced hands-on mixing with our exclusive Automix™ technology, an automatic mixing function that turns down unused channels to give dominance to the main microphone, minimizing unwanted noise.
>
> With our built-in Feedback Ferret® automatic digital feedback elimination system, you can forget about interruptive squeals. The Feedback Ferret uses exclusive Peavey technology to eliminate feedback without sacrificing tonal quality.
>
> We developed these mixers as your sanctuary solution, with an unwavering attention to detail and intuitive design. Our compelling Sanctuary Series mixers are investments in creating a flawless audio environment for your worship service (Peavey Electronics Corp. 2007).

The important aspects of Peavey's translation of specifications into capabilities concern the ways that they attempt to identify and speak directly to the issues that often plague church users. Volunteers who may not have the training to create a pleasing audio mix, nor avoid feedback, often operate audio consoles. Touting their devices as "user-friendly", Peavey attempts to reassure potential buyers that anyone can operate their device. Their Automix and Feedback Ferret features speak directly to the desire for audio intelligibility, while reassuring potential users that they take the guess-work out of creating a "flawless audio environment"—appealing to the desire for production excellence.

The cost-effectiveness of the Sanctuary Series is framed in terms beyond the actual cost of the device, but within the broader cost of device failure and its effect on the ability to reach

attendees. What Peavey hopes to convey is the sense that their venue-specific devices speak directly to the needs of church users, unlike venue-independent devices like the Yamaha M7CL whose design is suited to any type of theatrical environment, not solely churches. Unlike Peavey's Sanctuary Series, the raw ability of the Yamaha M7CL can only be mastered through extensive training.

The translation that Peavey is attempting is to take a complex technical device and transform it into something easily understood and used. They are effectively opening the black box of a complex device (Latour 1987) only to reveal another black box as they restrict user control and conceal the operations that the device performs. Peavey's strategy for framing the Sanctuary Series attempts to negate the need for training (like Yamaha provides at the TFW Pavilion) by rendering the device as a solution to the problems churches face regarding audio intelligibility and feedback, which disrupts the continuity of the ritual event and draws unwanted attention to the technological mediation of practice.

Another example of manufacturers attempting to translate their products for church buyers comes from Sony Electronics, a long-standing TFWM advertiser and Pavilion partner. Sony emphasizes the special utility of their products as a means to communicate the message while attempting to anticipate the current and future needs of the church. A full-page advertisement in TFWM from Sony suggests that it has all the options for churches who want to "magnify" their message.

> You supply the message. We'll supply the means. Sony audio and video solutions enhance your service. How do you make a compelling service even more powerful? With Sony microphones and sound reinforcement that let your voice be heard. For scripture or lyrics, Sony big screens keep everyone on the same page. Sony video production extends your reach while Sony live and on-demand video streaming can deliver your message anywhere there's internet service. Sony even

> meets your needs with a website, a newsletter, financing, after-sale support and a team dedicated to Houses of Worship. Magnify your message in HD audio and video with Sony at your service (Sony 2007).

Words like enhancement, reinforcement, solutions and power serve to transform product specifications into capabilities. They translate latent capacities into something meaningful for church buyers by suggesting that with these means, these tools, the church can augment and amplify the force of a clearly intelligible message, potentially reaching more people. And, if something breaks down, "we are here to help". Sony attempts to tap into the desire to create a compelling experience that can potentially breach the walls of the church and reach almost anyone (with internet access).

What these manufacturers promise are technological solutions to problems that transform product capacity into capability, by using terms that speak to the anxieties of church technical directors and leaders. Yet there is always slippage in these attempts to translate—the abilities of these technologies always exceed the attempts to describe them and translate them. In this way, translation is always partial. Manufacturers roughly translate the actual abilities of the device into specific capabilities that are tailored to church technicians.

Technology manufacturers have struggled to travel the road to building relationships with churches. Insights from Kevin, editor of TFWM, suggest that the cause of this bumpy road and rough translation comes from the difference in situated motivations for worship and performance practice. Kevin relates that many of the pro-audio manufacturers come from the music industry. "They are like rock 'n roll type guys (which may be sexist but it's a male driven industry). They came out of the rock 'n roll days, making speakers in their garages, tinkering around with how to make sound and then later forming these large pro-audio companies (i.e. John Meyer from

Meyer Sound or Community loudspeakers).” The professional-grade technology industry is small, suggests Kevin, because manufacturers would often hire friends and ex-musicians as representatives. Problems between these ex-musicians and church representatives arose from the difference in ways of embodying dispositions towards performance that set the stage for the rough translation of specifications into capabilities. Kevin suggests that there are some manufacturer representatives,

> who may not be aware of the nuances of dealing with churches or houses of worship, so they wouldn’t necessarily curb their language; it wouldn’t occur to them. And so in some cases I’ve witnessed a disconnect where the churches would be turned off by someone’s appearance or the way they carried themselves or the way they presented a demo of the equipment. In some cases they didn’t have anything in common. So you have a real rock ‘n roller who’s never stepped foot into a church except for a wedding or a funeral and doesn’t know the lingo. So really they didn’t jive.
>
> I think for the most part that started to change as companies began wising up to the industry, to the potential of the market and began hiring volunteers or those who do the audio in houses of worship. [Companies would say] ‘you know the church market, we want you to work for us. We want you to service the church market’. And they [the church hires] would be heavily connected with the trade publications, like Technologies for Worship Magazine. They knew who we were and we knew who these guys were. So, that started to shift mid-way through the 2000s.

As Kevin suggests, with stories from years “on the road”, these manufacturer representatives framed device use from their own experiences, using anecdotes from the “rock and roll” life that often included drugs or alcohol to explain the functions of the product. To many church representatives this “disconnection” unseated the capabilities and potential benefits of the product and coloured the relationship where “the lingo . . . didn’t jive”—or, where translation was rough. Rough translation was not limited to language. It encompassed the clash of embodiments where sacred beliefs where not shared between technicians and reps. How could

they convince a church technician that a piece of gear was suited to worship when they had never experienced what that was like? TFW Pavilion education thus incorporated two aspects of translation: as technicians learned about products, reps learned about technicians, their expectations and the changing natures of technologized worship practice.

The capabilities or special properties of the product, in this instance, combine with assessments of the worthiness and affiliation of the representative with the church market. Technology itself becomes imbricated in the cultivation of social relationships. It is not only the specifications of products that require translation but how technologies live through the lives of their sellers and users. Thus, to church attendees, the disjuncture between the way they and some representatives conceptualized the utility of devices was contingent on very different points of reference. For manufacturers, cultivating a relationship with the worship market meant learning how to speak, use metaphors, keywords and examples in ways that would resonate with church users. Attempts to create these shared material-discourses have thus been an ongoing process of finding, creating and sharing common ground.

In a recent research report on brand preference of houses of worship Tanya Lippke, TFCinfo director of survey market research suggests that,

> This research shows that more than half of all respondents state that brand is extremely or very important to them in their purchasing process for projectors. . . . The importance of brand name during selection is even higher for flat panel displays with 60 percent. This means that manufacturers' efforts to solidify the brand image of their product line to the house of worship marketplace can have a significant impact, but only if the manufacturers make a concerted effort to learn how to reach this unique market that has different needs from most other segments in our industry (Lippke quoted in Coppedege 2014).

Churches, with their large volunteer workforce, demanding production schedule and spiritual mission place value not only on brand names, but on channels of established relationships (like

those between church and manufacturer or consultant or trade publication, like TFWM). These relationships extend to aspects of denominational affiliation is some cases. Affiliation can often determine the nature of relationships between churches and between churches and publications like TFWM. Kevin explains that the assumption church representatives make is that if one is writing for (in the case of TFWM) or selling to (in the case of technology manufacturers) churches that one attends a church. He says, "there's not really a question as to 'if', it's more so, which one". The determining factor that they want to clarify, Kevin suggests, is "what denomination are you? There's no question that you're Christian and there's no question that you go to a church, they just want to know 'what flavour are you'? It can make a big difference; there are fundamental disagreements. There are differences between each denomination and it says a lot about the type of person that you are if you to church x or church y." The importance of determining a denomination for company representatives would be, says Kevin, "an important question asked of companies trying to sell gear and the people working wouldn't be prepared for that type of approach. They'd be like: 'I don't go to church. Is that going to be a problem? The gear still works just as well'. I think that in a lot of cases, that could have been the make or break for the sale."

As Kevin suggests, sharing the common ground of church attendance, or also denominational affiliation often sets the stage for the technology sales. The rapport between reps, manufacturers, and church users also made sales. Establishing rapport was built on the way representatives spoke, the examples they used, or the way a manufacturer emphasized technical specifications and capabilities specific to church understandings of the role of technology. In some cases, keywords in one genre did not transition neatly into another (i.e. technical to sacred).

Their vocabularies for making sense of the role, utility, and purpose of technology often differed—yet reps attempted to situate devices within vocabularies that resonated with church technicians and leadership. Moreover, although translation between genres was often rough, gear was still evaluated, plans still made for purchase. Technicians and sales representatives still attempted to understand how to arrange signals (like keywords between genres) to enable technical systems to communicate.

Talking back: the languages of lights

Arranging the signals of technical systems into a chain requires that devices are arrayed and wired together with cables that carry commonly understood signals. At the TFW Pavilion, production devices were arrayed to mirror the configuration of house of worship audio/video/lighting systems. The "front of house" directly in front or opposite the stage was a collection of control devices that, used in tandem, coordinated the sound from the speakers, the sequencing of lights, the way the audio was "mixed", and the imagery and video that was projected onto the screen behind the worship band. While it may have appeared that all the devices seamlessly communicated with each other, relaying signals and commands across the distance between the front of house and the stage, this was not always so.

Not all devices "speak" the same language, much like the rough translation between church technicians and technology manufacturers. For production devices to communicate, an intermediary device must transform the signal so that the devices can "speak" to each other. By metaphor, the TFW Pavilion attempts to be this intermediary regarding the development of a worship market. During the production of one TFW Pavilion at the National Religious

Broadcasters event in 2010, the behaviour of one of the lighting fixtures in the signal chain provides an opportunity to explore how technologies "talk-back", relaying information about their functional status—about how they're "feeling".

The Pavilion was arranged with "partners" (usually manufacturers) buying an opportunity to display their product in action. The spaces in a signal chain (i.e. audio console, lighting consoles, lights, etc) determined Pavilion technology positions. TFWM, when arranging the signal chain in conjunction with the Pavilion production company that put everything together, often acted as the intermediary between different technical language communities. Ensuring that the audio consoles spoke to the lighting console, and lighting console spoke to the lights, often required a great deal of experience. The Pavilion coordinator occupied this role and attempted to fill the positions necessary to make the Pavilion come alive as a worship experience on the trade show floor.

In a media ecology (Helmrich 2007:622) like the Pavilion, the medium does not sit still. But then again, sometimes it does not do anything you intend it to do. The following narrative, as told to me by a lighting engineer and manufacturer representative named Joshua[36], describes the actions of a light fixture during the setup of the TFW Pavilion at the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) event in 2010. We arranged to speak because he had experienced a stage light exhibiting some peculiar behaviours, and I wondered how he made sense of them. Our conversation turned from discussing the actions of a single light, to stories of how he named his company, to experiences teaching in a theatre school. What became clear as we spoke was that lighting for Joshua was not merely shining a light on a wall or stage but was a philosophical

[36] This is a pseudonym.

endeavour that informed his worldview. He also revealed, in the narrative that follows, how concepts and ideas, despite attempts to translate them between contexts, can go awry.

Translation was not only rough between the people at the Pavilion or between manufacturers and users generally, but also between devices themselves. In sharing this, I hope to draw attention to the ways that configurations like the Pavilion hang together awkwardly at times, yet still come together. When the stage light in this account doesn't listen, when it fails to "wake up" and "talk-back", it becomes a way to explore how, between objects, signals, like vocabularies and keywords travel.

In thinking about the relationships between objects like lighting systems, their human interlocutors and the chains within which they find themselves, I recall the importance of taking "things" seriously. Technologies like lights and audio consoles have played a vital role in developing my understanding of contemporary evangelical worship practice. As a result, I turned to the metaphysics of Bruno Latour, to the speculative realism of Graham Harman, and the feminist techno-science of materialism so artfully articulated by Karen Barad. What unites these theorists is their attention to things of all kinds; to the propensities and yearnings of matter and matters beyond an anthropocentric focus (Barad 2015).[37]

Speculative realist Graham Harman[38], suggests that for Latour, in a democracy of objects,

[37] I invoke Barad knowing that my focus on evangelical worship practice may not begin to engage her political engagement in materiality. Nonetheless, her analysis and investment in the elaborative natures of materiality illuminates my engagement with the things that come to matter for and disturb evangelical practice.

[38] Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (2011) suggest that "One of the key features of the Speculative Turn is precisely that the move toward realism is not a move toward the stuffy limitations of common sense, but quite often a turn toward the downright bizarre" (7). Bryant (et al) suggest, "Latour has . . . been an important figure in the recent Speculative Turn. Against all forms of reduction to physical objects, cultural structures, systems of power, texts, discourses, or phenomena in consciousness, Latour argues for an 'irreductionism' in which all entities are equally real (though not equally strong) insofar as they act on other entities. While nonhuman actors such as germs, weather patterns, atoms, and mountains obviously relate to the world around them, the same is true of Harry Potter, the Virgin Mary, democracies, and hallucinations. The incorporeal and corporeal realms are equally capable

even "an Adidas shoe is . . . an actor every bit as real as justice itself" (Harman 2009:91). Latour makes no distinction regarding the equality of objects (so, lights, snails, manufacturer representatives and Pavilion trussing all occupy the same field). Harman (2009) suggests that for Latour, "There are nothing but actual objects. They come in all shapes and sizes, and all are equally sequestered by way of gaps that some third term [i.e. translation] must always bridge" (159). We come to know about the activities and qualities of a light fixture in its configuration with other technologies and its operator at the Pavilion. Within this intra-action (between light, space, event and operator), Karen Barad suggests that, "Things don't preexist; they are agentially enacted and become determinately bounded and propertied within phenomena. Outside of particular agential intra-actions, 'words' and 'things' are indeterminate. Matter is therefore not to be understood as a property of things but, like discursive practices, must be understood in more dynamic and productive terms—in terms of intra-activity" (Barad 2007:150)[39]. Moreover, in a recent article on the "materiality of imagining together with the imagination of materiality" Barad engages "the nature of matter and its agential capacities for imaginative, desiring, and affectively charged forms of bodily engagements" (Barad 2015:388). It is precisely this attention to the "charged forms of bodily engagements" that I endeavour to tease apart in the forthcoming analysis of Pavilion lights. It also recalls the potential for calamity when church technicians or

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of having effects on the world. Moreover, the effort to reduce one level of reality to another invariably leaves residues of the reduced entity that are not fully translatable by the reduction: no interpretation of a dream or a historical event ever gets it quite right, nor would it even be possible to do so (2011:5-6).

[39] Interestingly, while developing a Melanesian perspective, with an eye to "real time", Strathern elucidates forms of Melanesian 'intra-activity' where "relations only appear as a consequence of other relations, forms out of other forms". She further suggests that "We have seen that the benefits of ceremonial gift exchange must be reabsorbed by one of the other partner in order to create a premise for new action. The same could be said of Melanesian knowledge. Relationships have to be hidden within particular forms-minds, shells, persons, cult houses, gardens—in order to be drawn out of them. That is an inimitable process" (1988:344). Strathern seems to touch on the same sort of "indeterminancy" that Barad notes about the stability or visibility of the properties of matter outside of relationships.

pastors fail to consider their relationship to the capacities of technology.[40]

Working with lights in a religious context suggests that intra-actions that account for a democracy of objects are open to the speculations of technical directors—speculations that reveal the ways that evangelicals or technology manufacturer representatives attempt to make sense of their (technological and spiritual) worlds. Speculative realist Levi Bryant, suggests that a democracy of objects

> attempts to think the being of objects unshackled from the gaze of humans in their being for-themselves. Such a democracy, however, does not entail the exclusion of the human. Rather, what we get is a redrawing of distinctions and a decentering of the human. The point is not that we should think objects rather than humans. Such a formulation is based on the premise that humans constitute some special category that is other than objects, that objects are a pole opposed to humans, and therefore the formulation is based on the premise that objects are correlates or poles opposing or standing-before humans. No, within the framework of onticology—my name for the ontology that follows—there is only one type of being: objects. As a consequence, humans are not excluded, but are rather objects among the various types of objects that exist or populate the world, each with their own specific powers and capacities (2011:19-20).

While I do not want to elide the differences in theoretical dispositions of Bryant, Latour, Harman and Barad, I am endeavouring to demonstrate that a renewed attention to materiality

[40] The following commentary concerns the electrocution of a pastor who was performing a water baptism. “The theme of the final prayer delivered last week by a Christian pastor who was electrocuted during a baptism was, ironically, "Surprise me, God." . . . During a service last Sunday morning, Rev. Kyle Lake was standing in waist-high water as he prepared to baptize a woman. When he reached for a corded microphone, the 33-year-old was jolted by electricity, and did not survive. The woman going to be baptized was unharmed. The incident took place just minutes after the 800 members in attendance had prayed aloud, "Surprise me, God." When asked if he thought the events were result of asking to be surprised, Esau, who witnessed the electrocution, said, "I wish I could answer that. I honestly, truly don't know. That gets you into all kinds of really, really hard questions. 'Does God cause everything to happen?' or 'Is there tragedy and chaos and stuff in the world because it's the natural consequences of humankind and our freedom of choice?'" Esau speculated on what Lake could have said about the stunning event, wondering if the young pastor might have quoted from a well-known bumper sticker reading "[Garbage] Happens." . . . "I think he would have said, 'There are laws of nature, electrical laws, and they were violated that day and I was in a really bad place where the violation happened.'" (WND 2005).

takes objects and their relationships seriously.[41] In the following story, Joshua explains how Remote Device Management (RDM)[42] works. This narrative does the work of exploring the speculative aspects of working with technologies.

Understanding Remote Device Management is fundamental for conceptualizing the actions of a Pavilion light fixture that confounded Joshua at one of the TFW Pavilion events. Describing this event Joshua reveals the ways that vocabularies of motives, or the ways of making sense of the world, operate and are situated within the technical worlds. He talks about the light as though it had a life of its own, which through its ability to function unpredictably, it did. Talking with lights becomes a way for Joshua to understand the philosophical underpinnings of his love for the lighting industry but also a way to reflect the direct state of the light.

Considering technical vocabularies of motives creates a space to think about the non-human actors that enable the Pavilion, and worship practice, to come together. These technical objects occupy life-worlds that both manufacturers and evangelicals speculate on. Through Joshua's admiration for the capacities of light and lighting fixtures shines through as he tries to explain, in his own terms, how lighting fixtures behave (or fail to).

To explain how Remote Device Management operates Joshua uses the analogy of a substitute teacher coming into a class that they have never taught before. The first thing they do

[41] Latour and Harman for example, argue that translation is the key to understanding the mediations of objects (of whatever kind). They critique the notion of potentiality for this reason. Potentiality, they suggest, obscures the many translations that must occur for something to happen (Bryant 2011:116). Bryant further offers that an object and action must be susceptible to translation and mediation in order to be involved in an action or event (2011:116). Barad (2007) seems to sidestep this debate about potentiality by suggesting that things come into being through their intra-action. They do not exist in potential.

[42] RDM stands for Remote Device Management, a "language" protocol used by lighting fixtures. "Remote Device Management, (RDM) is an expansion of the DMX512 protocol that allows bi-directional communication between a lighting controller and an RDM compliant device over a DMX line. RDM was created to allow an RDM enabled Lighting console or an RDM controller to send commands to and receive messages from moving lights, dimmers, and other RDM devices in the rig. Commands such as device discovery, remote configuration, status monitoring, and management of these devices are now possible from the controller, because of RDM." (TFWM n.d.)

is introduce themselves and then they take the class attendance using a seating chart with student names. Who is here today, asks the teacher. Everyone raises their hand and shouts “I'm here!” Joshua continues,

> Well, the teacher thinks, that doesn't help me any. I don't know your names, I don't recognize your voices, so this chart is meaningless. Let's say everyone to the left of the middle aisle keep quiet. Everyone to the right, you talk. Okay, now there's still too many of you. And so we divide each of the remaining amount that we let talk smaller and smaller, in half until we get down to one voice. And then its "Oh little Suzie over there in the third row, you know, column A. Fine. I've written you down on the seating chart, I know your name, I know where you're sitting so you can be quiet now.
>
> Now I'm going to let the kid next to you talk again, and they un-mute each student again after giving everybody the mute command if they were left or right of the aisle, or in the back of the row or whatever. As they get un-muted, a little bit of information comes out from where they are sitting and who they are, so you can develop a whole seating chart.
>
> Now you can have dialogue.
>
> The teacher can say to the third kid on the fourth row, ‘Okay, Robert what did you bring in for homework today? Gary did you go on a field-trip last week and what did you bring back from there?’ The teacher can now ask the relevant questions to the right students with the seating chart.

Remote Device Management, like the substitute teacher trying to determine the location of each student, is a similar process to the lighting console trying to communicate with each of the lighting fixtures in the attempt to determine their location, identity and health. This process is called discovery.

> We have to discover what devices are on the rig then we can interrogate them individually, find out more information about them, display that to a user and let the user interrogate the lights for more specifics. Like, what's your circuit address, circuit life? Or, what brand are you? What model? What's your first and last name? Do you have multiple personalities? Not necessarily the same thing as in ‘psychological’ personalities—more like ‘What's your major’.

Multiple personalities of one particular lighting fixture allow it to behave different ways for different needs that you select. And you can select that with the RDM command and find out which one they have currently with those different kinds of dialogue.

So there is a two-way conversation now, because the lighting console is asking questions, and getting answers and also getting the information. The lighting fixture can now say: I'll do what you asked me to do.

In the RDM world for engineers, those are called ‘get and set’. Get the information from it, or you set the information on it. But in my analogy, it is sort of like the teacher talking to the students, finding out what they do, what they’ve learned and what they know. You know, you can tell them to stand up and move over to the other chair and sit there for the rest of the day if you want. In RDM you could say, ‘I'm going to change your starting address to sixty-three instead of seventy-four.’ And once you say that, it's that for the remainder of your show, for all time. With RDM you can ask for sensors to be monitored if the manufacturer built something into their devices. Like how much voltage it gets, or ask, what’s the temperature inside of you?

Laurie: Is the only limit to the language the way the light is designed? Or are there any limits to it? To what the light can communicate?

Well, there are some limitations. It's a little bit robust, but there is a certain amount of built-in structure to it that doesn't get too complicated. It's sort of like thinking of a language that only has verbs and nouns and you don't have adjectives. You can only say so many important things. But a lot of important things can be said, but you're not having them. Does that make sense?

Laurie: Yes

It's a mechanistic and relatively stream-lined set of things that you can do. But it's amazing to have because we didn't used to. But at the same time, it’s not plain English and you can't do everything.

Through RDM, object-object communication lets Joshua in on the conversation between lighting fixtures and a lighting console. As an engineer, he can join the conversation issuing requests or commands, which the fixture can follow (or not). Using Remote Device Management, lighting consoles try to index the lighting fixtures connected within the signal chain and their relative

health and performance. Remote Device Management, although a rudimentary language, enables the translation of requests into actions. When the translation of requests into actions slips and appeals fail to send or be received, the translation becomes rough. When lights (or other RDM controlled devices) begin to act on their own, they prompt speculation into the nature of technical objects.

At NRB in 2010, Joshua was reminded that sometimes, despite the ability to request lights to act in predictable ways, they act like "petulant teenagers off in La-La Land". Signal chains can be nervous and sometimes fragile technical systems. They provide examples of their own forms of rough translation as Joshua recounts in the events where the signal chain became unchained. This nervous technological system was, as it turned out, also lethargic.

A group of lights hung at the TFW Pavilion at NRB 2010 in Nashville, Tennessee. A number of the lights had arrived with broken lamps so there was some concern expressed by Pavilion organizers about acquiring new lamps. However, by the next morning new lamps had arrived. Even with new lamps, the lights were still not operating as expected. One of the lights (of the three working fixtures) "was behaving in a way that was completely unrelated to the signals I was sending to it", related Joshua. The light was cycling through a series of colour changes and Joshua remarked to Kevin (TFWM Editor) that it was "off in la-la land, paying no attention to anybody else, the conversations it was party to, or what was going on around it". Staring at the wall, the light refused to "pay attention" and be a "dutiful soldier" follow the orders Joshua was sending. Joshua was unclear if the light was stuck in a demonstration mode, or if there was another problem causing it to refuse direction. By the next day, a man from the Pavilion production company concluded that the light was "trying to home". Trying to home is a

routine where the light moves through all of the different ways it can turn its mechanical parts, trying to determine what its limits are and thus, what the minimum and maximum of its capabilities are. This light in particular, kept going through this process of turning its parts, cycling its colours and staring at the wall. It kept looking for its "end point", the maximum of its functions, and never found it. Joshua suggested that it is like using a malfunctioning Global Positioning System (GPS) to find your driveway, and it keeps missing it. "It would tell you to go around the block, and keep turning right, keep turning right, keep turning right and keep looking and looking for something that you keep getting closer to but never find because it doesn't know your driveway is there." The fixture was failing to listen to or comprehend the commands that the console was sending—failing to translate a request into an anticipated action. The light fixture's vocabulary of motives, the way it was making sense of the world, became solely indexical of its own behaviour. It stopped listening and sharing the vocabularies of the lighting console. Their shared genres of speech (using RDM) became fragile and nervous and so there were difficulties translating across the Pavilion's signal chain. The light fixtures failure to communicate demonstrates, by way of metaphor, how sometimes dialogue becomes difficult when there is nothing or no one able to facilitate it. Dialogue does not take place apart from the mediations of the world around its speakers.

As it turned out, on the second day of NRB, Pavilion technicians took the light down, determined that some of its wires had come loose during shipping, and reconnected those wires. "I believe that there was a happy ending after that, although I was not there to see it tested. So it turns out it was in that mode, or it was having a hard time finding itself, because it did not have an electrical connection where it should have between one part and another part." Where the

metaphor falters, communication between technicians and manufacturers cannot be mended or smoothed over with a mere re-connection of wires. Disconnection is apt for the description of that relationship.

When electrical signals fail to flow, the light acts in unexpected ways. The light confounds expectations and invites speculation as to the nature of its operation, activity and its experience of the signals it is being sent.[43] Lucy Suchman, writing on the affiliative powers of objects suggests that to appreciate objects-in-action we must grasp that "the material resistances of objects are inseparable from the arrangements through which they materialize in practice" (2005:381). A misbehaving light fixture materializes the fragility of a technical signal chain and offers a reading of the challenges of being a volunteer technical director faced with the potential of technical malfunction. The work speculation does in this instance is to engage the light beyond being a "black-box" (Latour 1987) in efforts to understand the affiliation of the light to the gestures of the console, the curiosity of the technician, or the surrounding of the Pavilion (see also Downey & Dumit 1997).

Speculation on the experience of the light, on the reasons for its behaviour drew Joshua in. He contemplated the meanings of the light's actions, why it stared dejectedly into a corner, scrolling through colours. As I listened to Joshua recount the events, I began to wonder what effect speculations such as these have on the relationship between technology stewards and their

[43] Science and Technology Studies (STS) literature engages speculation and anthropomorphism in a variety of ways. Upcoming publications will seek to capture the intricacies of these perspectives. The following brief list of works have served as an inspiration: On object-centered sociality and the ways that objects mediate human relationships, see Karin Knorr Cetina 1997. Michael M. J. Fischer (2007) offers an engaging review of the anthropology of science and technology studies. One of Fischer's central critiques is that within some parts of STS "the messy surplus of surprises, inassimilable information, interesting but apparently irrelevant anomalies, and similar kinds of "noise" are not only set aside, but over time also become buried and forgotten. (2007:556). Fischer provides a cautionary perspective that I will keep in mind during future analysis.

gear. It became clear as Joshua continued that he had developed a profound relationship to lights and their ability to create spiritual experiences.

Joshua had been in the lighting industry for at least twenty years. After working freelance for a number of years before the millennium, he decided to start his own company. When Joshua finally settled on a company name, Triluminosity[44], he notes, "It's all about how light is a metaphor for spirituality". As he described how he chose to name his company he wove aesthetics and (fictional) philosophy from a 1990s television show Babylon 5, that situated his beliefs about the spiritual importance of light and the role lighting plays in the creation of spiritual experiences.

Lights reveal the truth for Joshua—this is both a philosophical understanding and an aesthetic sensibility that he uses to both name his company and embody his disposition towards lighting. When one of his lights acts peculiarly, that aesthetic falters and he must make sense of his relationship to it. Joshua mused on the physics of lighting, noting that lighting a stage is like the Schrödinger's Cat thought experiment insofar as one must open the box to verify the status of the cat, one must also sit in the audience to determine the type and quality of light on a stage. For Joshua, this was an important way to explain the experience of working with lighting because as he suggested, "there's the danger of the reality . . . living in the map instead of the territory". Working with light requires experience—one can speculate on the nature of lighting designs, but it is in the experience of working with lights that for Joshua fulfills his understanding of "light as a metaphor for spirituality".

The opportunity that malfunction offered to Joshua was a moment to consider the nature

[44] This was changed to protect Joshua's identity.

of the lights' actions, the Pavilion's signal chain, and the role that Remote Device Management as a language plays. When reflecting on his experience during NRB, Joshua remembered other pivotal experiences that framed his philosophical understandings of the role of light and the importance of experiencing light from "the territory". He noted that being in the middle of the events one may find that territory may not correspond to the map you had in mind.

The depth of Joshua's appreciation for the ability of light to create profound experiences leads him to speculate on how lights act. It is an opportunity to understand how translation, even between different technologies, can be awkward, rough or challenge the ways that we think about how shared understandings emerge (even between technologies). Once the light was "reconnected", it began to talk back in predictable ways; ways that corresponded to the lighting consoles vocabulary of motives. Signals can go awry between technologies, just as they can between technology manufacturers and technicians.

Working with lights to engineer worship experiences, as Joshua notes, demands a situated engagement (Suchman 2005, 2007) with the strange and unique world where lights speak, grumble and demand. The life-world of lights exists alongside the worlds of other objects. The "copper object speaks and grumbles. It demands to be given away, to be destroyed; it is covered with blankets to keep it warm", suggests Marcel Mauss, writing about the nature of potlatch objects (2000[1950]:45). Like Mauss in some ways, Ian Bogost speculates on the experiences of objects and notes, "Unlike redwoods and lichen and salamanders, computers don't carry the baggage of vivacity. They are plastic and metal corpses with voodoo powers. But anyone who has ever had to construct, repair, program, or otherwise operate on a computational apparatus

knows that a strange and unique world does stir within such a device" (2012:9).[45]

To speculate on the worlds of technology invokes the landscapes within which they circulate (Appadurai 1986, 2006). Arjun Appadurai has revealed the biographies and social life of things as they circulate in and out of commodity cycles. He argues that, "persons and things are not radically distinct categories, and that the transactions that surround things are invested with the properties of social relations" (Appadurai 2006:15). I wonder: who is doing the investing? The biographies of objects like lights and lighting consoles are, from my perspective, not invested with the "properties of social relations", they play an active role in shaping social relationships—they are lively and animate through "intra-animacy" (Myers 2006:25). Working with the performative "body-work" of protein modelling, Myers suggests that the liveliness of intra-animacy "is a phenomenon that is engendered through modellers' intra-actions with each other, and with their objects and machines. In turn, it animates their imaginations and narratives about the substances of life" (2006:25). Although my research lies far afield from the lively work of protein modellers, intra-animacy inspires my reading of how relationships between technicians, reps, or stewards and technologies form through the embodied attentions of working

[45] Michael Taussig also attends to the "thingification" of things, that: "It was the curious doubleness in Marx's figure of the commodity that was drawn, that quirky flickering unity formed by thingification and speciality, which George Lukas referred to as the phantom objectivity of capitalist culture, the sort of consciousness Marx highlighted in his notion that, thanks to the market and the revolution abstracting labor into homogenous labor power, things acquired the properties of persons, and persons became thing-like" (1992:4). I suggest that the animacy evangelicals identify is not a result of thingification in Marx's sense, but is consistent with a worldview that sees the movement of the Holy Spirit, God and the Devil as forces of animation extending their influence through technological things. Does Marx's understanding of this doubleness account for evangelical approaches to technology as something else with often person-like qualities? Taussig continues, "The matter of factness of production becomes anything by matter-of-fact, and facticity itself is rendered marvelous, mist-enveloped regions of frozen movement, projections at a standstill, in which things that come from the hands of man change place with persons, the inside changes place with the outside as commodities erase the social nexus imploded within and become self-activating spirit, even Godlike, 'things-in-themselves' (1992:5). Hornberg argues "[T]he social condition of modernity has accentuated our anxieties about where or how to draw boundaries between persons and things" (2006:28, see also Kopytoff 1986). If that modern "relatedness" were to collapse, he suggests following Latour, we would confront the "machinations" or political imbrications of our technologies and their environmental consequences (2006:30-31).

with technology. Rather than speculating on life, technicians, reps and stewards consider the narratives of technology's role in worship practice. The animacy at work here concerns how people and things come into being through the bodily work of becoming something together (see also Ingold 2006).

The strange and unique world of lights and other performance technologies become the objects of speculation as they operate (or fail to) within the signal chain of worship practice. A signal chain, like the one connecting the light fixture to the rest of the stage configuration, as we have seen, can be evidence of a fragile and nervous system of devices that hang together and sometimes fall apart. Beyond the actions of lights, evangelicals speculate on the natures of other performance technologies used for worship. Some locate sin within the malfunction of technology—as the evidence of the subversion of the transmission of God's message—or, as the evidence that a technology steward was not committed to the task or cognizant of their technology's capabilities. Speculation and situated practice reveal complex relationships between technicians and their technologies. In the following section, I explore a series of vignettes from Neighbours Church—the local Ontario evangelical church that bring together the realities of technicians and technologies to explore the tensions of worship-in-the-making.

Neighbours Church: A Continuous Discontinuity

The following vignettes re-present elements of a worship service at Neighbours Church through moments where its elements hang together and those where message, meaning and technologized practice occur in tension. This co-existence of realities from different perspectives forms a continuous discontinuity—a nervous system of signals, flows and experiences that begin and end

in the world (Buck-Morss 1992:12). In that spirit, I present moments when the solemnity of the message occur alongside the mocking, joking commentary of the control room staff heightening the sense that bricolage at Neighbours is the assemblage of multiple vantages from which worship practices are often roughly negotiated and translated. These vignettes demonstrate how different genres of speech (i.e. sacred and technical) occur simultaneously. The vocabularies of motives the vignettes embody demonstrate that situated worship practice is an ongoing elaboration of ideas, material-discourses and understandings about the nature of technology and its relationship to worship.

As a small local church combined with a larger online ministry, Neighbours often appeared closed to outside involvement, unless it was denominationally consistent with their beliefs and on their terms. The technical director, Michael, often tried to purchase gear through a church member that worked for a professional technology company. Alternatively, they would try to find low-cost, Do-It-Yourself alternatives to professional gear. During one conversation, where I mentioned the educational benefits of TFWM, Michael scoffed at subscribing to TFWM (despite it being offered as a free subscription and published in Canada). The implication of his reaction was that they were beyond learning at the level TFWM offered. More likely, as there was no established relationship, he did not appreciate the value or see the applicability of subscribing. Because Neighbours maintained attempts to make do with what they had or could acquire at low-cost, many of their technological systems were aging or incomplete. Michael's financial stewardship involved conserving funds because few funds were available. Forced to improvise and rely on free or low-cost alternatives, Michael's nervous bricolage system sometimes acted in unanticipated ways. Despite this, he tried to create a meaningful worship

experience for those in attendance and watching at home. The following vignettes track the moments where multiple realities come together (sometimes roughly) to deliver a message to those in attendance or watching online at home.

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Occurring simultaneously in real time, the live service, the online broadcast and the video and sound feeds to the control room, located on the second floor of the renovated theatre, where I watch and listen. I am sitting on a hard wooden chair, next to an almost-full garbage can. I have a full view of the control room and can see the sanctuary through the video feeding to the bank of monitors that display the different camera angles.

***

Reading from his iPad, William opens the second Sunday service. Hymns have been sung, first upbeat then contemplative to ready the attendees for the solemnity of the message. He reminds those in attendance and watching online of the ongoing theme: codes of conduct. He begins by explaining ideas about the origin of relativism, the idea that, according to William, everything is relative. This, he declares, is wrong. Relativism is "social tyranny that society has created". Absolutes like the physics of a bridge or other forms of engineering proves this to be the case.

***

Meanwhile in the control room the director for this week, James and Michael talk about how they need an audio compressor to keep the audio even (it currently spikes when William speaks louder). As William speaks, they exchange sarcastic exclamations, smile and snicker, at the commonsensicality of William's suggestion that Satan is a fallen angel, not a God.

***

“Is anyone among you suffering?” William asks. “Is anyone among you on the internet suffering? PM (private message) Janet in the chat room” Everyone in the sanctuary seems to know what to do. A line forms stretching from the front back towards the entrance. Each person whispers to William or the associate pastor, Jeffrey, who whispers blessings and prayers back in return.

***

“I really do not like this switcher!” says Michael as he transitions the graphics on the main sanctuary screen from one camera feed to another. “Awesome, great shot Jeremy!” (He is on the camera because the scheduled camera operator did not attend).

***

This week the guitarist is singing a special song he wrote with his father-in-law for his wife. He tears up as he begins. He stops, apologizes, and begins again. As he sings, William texts questions to James in the control booth. He answers back through the in-house mic connected to William’s in-ear headphone. As the guitarist finishes, William retakes the stage: “I’ve got tears in my eyes”. The PowerPoint is back up and the service continues talking about the material distractions of the world, biblical ignorance and idolatry. “You must bring the flesh under control and bring the spirit in.”

***

In the booth the sound engineer makes a joke about falling asleep at the console; the punchline is William will wake him if he does because he is so loud during his sermon sometimes when he uses volume for emphasis.

***

These snippets reveal the contingency of worship practice at Neighbours and the multiple

realities that hang together in attempts to contour worship practice. Multiple energies combine to create something, even when the translation between them is strained. In conjunction with the pastor's message, it is the abilities of engineers while they are framing video shots and switching feeds that creates a narrative for online viewers on which the message is overlaid. This online narrative often, but not always, evens out the roughness of the live worship event.

The technical aspects of the event (the lack of audio compressor) occur in tension with the solemnity of the message William is trying to convey as technological worlds interrupt the progression of the service (especially when devices malfunction). Technological translation is rough when the audio volume spikes if William speaks louder. Attendees feel the hypermediacy of the venue and service. This distraction is what TFW Pavilion presenters would identify as a barrier to relevance and excellence—the implication is that when congregants are focussed on the technology they stop listening to the Word and experiencing the moment. Although, the way the congregation understands a spike in the audio may be different from the technical understanding of those in the control room, the distraction disavows the sacred aspects of the event. At Neighbours, the bricolage of nervous technological systems (nervous because their configuration within an operating signal chain is not complete) occur against attempts by William to create a meaningful worship experience for his congregants. At Neighbours, technical unpredictability is reminiscent of the TFW Pavilion light refusing to talk back, staring off into space. Listening for and translating technological voices becomes part of the embodied aspects of technology stewardship—learned through occasions of malfunction.

Overall, this chapter has explored the relationships between vocabularies of motives and translation in different contexts that have become pivotal throughout the course of my fieldwork.

I have brought technicians, technology representatives and technologies together to explore the complexities of worship-in-the-making and the events that precede it. Within technical, neoliberal and sacred genres of speech, keywords shape the ways that worship products, practices, and performativity bring about certain worship realities where technicians and representatives speculate about the actions and meanings of technology. I have endeavoured to situate how translation between people, technical systems, and across genres, creates difficulties establishing rapport. The challenges of translation alert us to the life-worlds of things that draw attention to themselves in unique ways—like staring off into La-La Land.

The following chapter explores evangelical attempts to create durable experiences—extending from the sanctuary to the everyday—that become a lifestyle of worship. "Staying in the Word", the way a lifestyle of worship is framed at Neighbours, shapes the relationship between the tenets of scripture and daily life. Teaching congregants to negotiate this relationship and live it out in the context of church life is central to drawing in the affective labours of congregants.

5. Get a life: spiritual economies of experience, giftings and the pursuit of excellence

> *'But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.' (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:3)*
>
> *"You cannot find excellent corporate worship until you stop trying to find excellent corporate worship and pursue God Himself." (Carson quoted in Boswell 2013:16).*
>
> *Experientia docet (latin): Experience is the best teacher*
>
> *"Experiences transform guests into participants in the encounter, whether the long-term effects are deleterious or therapeutic. And transformations turn aspirants into 'a new you,' with all the ethical, philosophical, and religious implications that phrase implies" (Pine and Gilmour 1999:183).*

Creating indelible worship and spiritual experiences is the goal of growth-oriented evangelical churches in the U.S.—their expansion is dependent on creating and growing a stable church body of congregants, some of whom will become part of the technical ministry and operate the technology week-to-week. Others will (ideally) carry their beliefs out into the world, adopting a lifestyle of worship where they "stay in the Word", spreading the Word of Jesus Christ. This missional disposition to everyday religion, as discussed earlier, comes from the apostle Paul and seeks to distribute the Word far afield (Stetzer 2013). Within the church, those who take on a lifestyle of worship and actualize their God-given gifts (for using technology well, for example), demonstrate their commitment to living along the path God has set for them. Often volunteers, evangelical technical directors who activate and actualize their gifts within the church offer their affective labour to speak to the hearts of attendees. Technicians attempt to create experiences—stirring the emotions of congregants by using technology to amplify and control sound, create lighting effects, and show videos. The production of worship is a bodily matter, as is the experience of it. Inciting technicians to embody a lifestyle of worship begins, for the technically

inclined, by coming to understand that their gifts *can* and *should* be used in service to the church. In order to establish this understanding, church leadership, and WFX presenter Ed Stetzer, invoke a discourse stressing the importance of living on mission. The missional church focusses on everyday religion as a normal part of the contemporary evangelical church experience. Living on mission is thus the experience of a relationship with the church and God and the embodiment of a lifestyle of spirituality in service to the church.

This chapter explores how presenters during educational events propagate the material-discourses of living a lifestyle of worship. What I aim to draw attention to through exploring this "lifestyle" is the relationship and dialogism between religious practice and neoliberal logics that situate contemporary practice. I begin from the recognition that ways of thinking about the role and mission of the church are not a static assemblage, but rather an ongoing articulation of vocabularies of motives that index the moods and motivations of church leaders, members, and even their production technologies. Living a lifestyle of worship relies on activating the giftings of congregants, but especially technicians or others who work for the growth of the church. The belief, shared by Stetzer and others, is that the church, in an age of consumer apathy, requires active agents to transform it from mere spectacle to life altering lifestyle. I refer to this process of trying to bring technicians within the service of the church as spiritual economies of experience. Spiritual economies refer to technician's embodiment of piety and pious dispositions that serve the interests of the church—in this case, growth. The central focus of gifted technicians is to create indelible, lasting experiences of the divine. Technicians attempt to engineer a sense of proximity and closeness with something that, for many people who are not evangelical, exists beyond the senses—God cannot be heard, felt, tasted or touched. God, for many evangelicals, as

Tanya Luhrmann (2012) attests, is a friend, a confidant that speaks and offers advice, offers a sense of warmth, belonging, and compassion. This contemporary experience of God is markedly different from an Old Testament God that brimmed with vengeance, fire and brimstone.

Using technology to help create a feeling of closeness, first with the pastor who tries to "open the hearts" of those present to receiving the Holy Spirit, and then with the Holy Spirit (of God) that moves through the congregation (see Brahinsky 2012) begins with the labours of technicians.[46] Josh Brahinsky, writing about the nature of Pentecostal sensoriums, suggests that

> Pentecostals put intensive study into bodies, texts, practices, and their interrelationships so as to effectively invite experience of what they call the "Holy Spirit." They construct a veritable sports culture within which specific practices of devotion mutate, abstract, and expand. . . . These shifting practices inhabit and help create something thicker and denser; a culture of sensation, or sensorium, a contested realm that nurtures some practices and distinctions while starving, rejecting, or desiccating others (2012:216-17).

The evangelicals I researched with nurtured the understanding that technology was integral to "a culture of sensation". The educational sessions at the TFW Pavilion and WFX emphasized the role and importance of technology, the ways to create and encourage worship teams, and recognize the gifts of the gifted. Presenters like Stetzer recognize and encourage church members to use their gifts in service to the church, as a form of self-actualization where living a lifestyle

[46] Josh Brahinsky, in a wonderfully evocative passage recounts his bodily experience of a Pentecostal event: "in the two years that I intermittently attended services, there had been little mention of discipline, hell, or sex. I hear that Reverend Shelton is on a campaign to quell partying. I guess this is the first step. Instead of release, yearning, and passion—all so well manifested in the lyrics posted on the screen—this service joins intimate ecstatic devotion to its counterpart in ascetic discipline and biblical single-mindedness. I am not buying the message. So what happens next is certainly not intellectual acceptance. The pastor calls for community participation. All eyes close. He asks us to seek ourselves in his story of desperation. Heads bow; many touch and comfort neighbors. One student puts his hand on my shoulder. I do not reciprocate. He retreats. In the next moment, when the lights dim further and singing resumes, I feel a burning in my thighs down by my knees. As if a flamethrower aims at my legs, a fiery heat rises through to my hips, belly, chest, and I am drenched in an all-out sweat. This is not familiar. Years of epileptic pareasthesia have prepped me for strange sensations, and in fact makes them suspect, but this heat is new, not erotic or esoteric in any usual sense. It feels both separate and within. I can understand how it would seem an outside force. The MRIs of Pentecostals show that they can learn these neurological patterns (Newberg et al. 2006); I wonder if I am learning." (2012:216).

of worship is an acknowledgment and embodiment of the divine plan for their lives. In turn, the church is able to capitalize on the surplus-value of their often-volunteer affective labours. In what follows, I situate how attempts to capitalize on the surplus-value of affective labours occurs with attempts to situate the technologically mediated church—through branding church identity and creating indelible experiences.

Communications scholar and social theorist, Brian Massumi, in an interview on hope and "virtualised" political economies, argues, "[w]hen you consume, you're not just getting something to use for a particular use, you're getting yourself a life. All products become more intangible, sort of atmospheric, and marketing gets hinged more and more on style and branding". It is the "*enabling* of experience that is taking over . . . [like] you've bought into a relationship" (2003:226). When evangelical churches, through the labour of their worship teams and technicians, create religious experiences they attempt to form relationships and connections between congregants and between congregants and God that foster a lifestyle of worship. A lifestyle of worship consumes every day practice and ideally provides adherents with embodied sacred vocabularies of motives with which they make sense of the world. From the perspective of technical education, religious experience relies on technicians and worship teams engineering a memorable, moving, relevant, and excellent event whose impact lingers with the congregation after the service ends. The measure of production excellence is often the durability and "impact" of the experience gauged by how many people "come to Jesus" that week. The measurement of "impact" through congregant's declarations of conversion and commitment and the technical engineering of worship experience is a register of a "surplus-value of flow" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). On surplus-value of flow and the capitalising of movement, Massumi explains

that

> Your everyday movements and leisure activities have become a form of value-producing labour. You are generating surplus-value just by going about your daily life—your very ability to move is being capitalised on. Deleuze and Guattari call this kind of capitalising on movement 'surplus-value of flow', and what characterises the 'society of control' is that the economy and the way power functions come together around generation of this surplus-value of flow. Life movements, capital and power become one continuous operation—check, register, feed-in, processing, feedback, purchase, profit, around and around (Massumi 2003:230).[47]

Living a lifestyle of worship registers the impact of engineered worship experiences on the embodiment of evangelical sensibilities and the harnessing of gifts for affective labour. We can think about the surplus-value of flow in a few ways in this instance. In one sense, impact, as I mentioned, registers as a "life movement", producing momentums (to come to Jesus). In another sense, capitalizing on the surplus-value of flow, evangelical worship teams and technicians seek to create surplus-value through the recognition of giftings, inciting lifestyles of worship and encouraging congregants to live on mission. In yet another sense, the sense that unceasing growth is the most effective measure of success underpins the affective labours of volunteers and the efforts of church technical staff. When technicians attempt to create a sense of immediacy, it becomes an example of a continuous operation of "check, register, feed-in, processing, feedback, purchase, profit, around and around" (Massumi 2003). As such, volunteers often feel immense pressure to push the limits of their technical abilities and the capabilities of the devices at hand in order to produce relevant, impactful, and excellent worship practice that capitalizes on their gifts and satisfies the imperative for growth.

[47] Jay Godzinski, in an article on the contemporary challenges for art education, suggests that "the 'surplus-value of flow,' is … used for market designer research as detection, registration, and then feedback to set up more alluring portholes to pass through and pay, thus redesigning the environment to increase profit margins, but more to the point—to consolidate power" (2008:148).

Among many evangelicals, recognizing and exploring the limits of God-given gifts extends from life within the church to forms of everyday, lived religion—a lifestyle of worship. Exploring the concept of lived religion through a history of practice, American Religious History scholar David Hall (1997), notes that,

> Viewing religion as lived asserts the religious experience cannot be reduced to a belief system, a formal creed, a set of rituals, or regular engagement with spaces deemed sacred. While the relevance of these familiar categories is recognized, religious identity includes much more: specialized language, embodied practices, internalizing and displaying emotions, and doubting, to name a few. Lived religion prioritizes the unceasing efforts of religious adherents to map meaning onto the details of the life-worlds they inhabit [D. Hall 1997:ix] (Beilo 2011:101).

Importantly, we can hear the echoes of Geertz (1973) in Hall's explanation of the ways that religious identity is lived in the minutiae of everyday practice regarding what significance events have. The disconnect Talal Asad (1983) noted, that Geertz adopted a distanced spectator role, is reconciled in this fusion of the mapping of meaning from within social activities and life-worlds (Asad 1983). Lived religion that accounts for the diversity of vocabularies of motives, is thus as Religious Studies scholar and ritual practice theorist Catherine Bell (1992) might argue, a novel direction for the study of ritual that addresses the ritualization of practice "as a strategic way of acting in specific social situations" (67).

I understand lifestyles of worship as strategic ways of acting within broader spiritual economies. Lifestyles of worship, as ways of embodying particular practices, instill modes of self-management and self-actualization. Consider the role of the volunteer technical director who attends their church early week after week to check the levels of the audio console, microphone placement, system configuration, and runs the gear during the service and lingers after to ensure everything is ready for the next event. As a volunteer, this technical director believes that their

role within the church is to run the technology. They are contributing to "growing the Kingdom" through their participation. The opposite experience was common at Neighbours Church. Often I would arrive before the volunteers and many Sundays they never arrived at all. Modes of management often begin through the recognition of God-given gifts—volunteers feel valued and recognized within a church that acknowledges their talents. For the church that acknowledges them, giftings are understood to be latent and full of potential. As unrecognized or unfulfilled capacities of church attendees, giftings become an opportunity to cohere spirituality and service in the production of worship practice (Rudnyckyj 2009:120). For growth-oriented churches, giftings are a potential activated for the needs of the church. The gifted begin to listen to God who is speaking to their hearts (McAllister 2008). Recall Marshall, the TFW Pavilion presenter: he believed that God put the mission to educate church technicians in his heart. He listened and actualized his gift through volunteer teaching at the Pavilion—his affective labour helped TFW to bring technicians together with manufacturers to learn about the latest technologies and how to craft excellent worship.

The belief evangelicals hold about the recognition of giftings suggests that if enough people "live" the evangelical life, they will go out, missionize, and bring others into the church. Activated or recognized congregants will not only attend as passive spectators, but will harvest potential attendees thus becoming active participants in the health and growth of the church. This is a spiritual economy of experience—the attempt to create transformative and enduring dispositions and vocabularies towards living a lifestyle of worship. Spiritual economies of experience contain neoliberal ideals of church growth that proceeds via the affective labours of technicians and other church volunteers. Living through an "activated" vocabulary of motives

ritualizes everyday practice—creating a lifestyle that transcends the confines of the church.

Lifestyles of worship demonstrate how the pursuit of spiritual experiences extends into everyday practice. In contrast, Emile Durkheim (1964[1915]) once suggested that religion is composed by the separation of the profane from the sacred. The sacred, he argued, transcends the facets of everyday life (Durkheim 1964[1915], Beilo 2011:101). Contemporary evangelical worship is, as the material-discourse goes, a lived experience that cannot be set apart from everyday living. "People are able to, and often apt to, sacralise all of life. They take their faith to work, to play, to relationships, and to the most mundane activities" (Beilio 2011:101). When technicians live lifestyles of worship, they embody their commitment to the church, God and their gifts by living them. The volunteer returns weekly to operate gear, reads TFWM in the evening to learn, and flies across the country to attend hands-on training at the TFW Pavilion. These are "habits of the heart". The following section queries how giftings, apart from being an indication of actualization, are also an important source of value for the growth-oriented church. Once recognized, giftings contribute to the creation of a surplus-value of flow when the gifted live on mission and the momentum of their everyday movements carry the church forwards towards the growth of the Kingdom.

All of God's people have gifts; they've been gifted.

Each day of the three day WFX 2010 at the Cobb Galleria Conference and Convention Centre in Atlanta, Georgia, opened with a keynote address from a well-known figure in the (mainly evangelical) community—or from an organization closely serving that community. In a keynote

address on "Mission Ministry in a Spectator World", Ed Stetzer, principal at LifeWay Research, and former pastor described his vision for the biblical church. The entire ballroom venue was occupied with people sitting on the floor and standing against the back wall. I sat on the floor at the end of the central aisle, flanked by long rows of folding chairs. The following selections from Stetzer's keynote track along with the idea that gifts play a central role in the contemporary church. Stetzer also reveals a vocabulary of motives that indexes the translation of the virtues of individual gifts into a resource (surplus-value) for the church. Stetzer began by talking about gifts.

> All have gifts. All of God's people have gifts; they've been gifted. All of them. How do we move from spectators to active disciples, living out the mission of God? Let's take a look at first Peter, Chapter 4, and Verse 10: Based on the gift they have received everyone should use it to serve others. All of those people who have been made new in the power of Christ have received gifts; they have been gifted for service. . . . Everyone is to use the gift they have received. A manifestation of the spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial (for the common good). We see this recurring theme in the Bible. All of God's people are gifted for ministry and service. The recurring theme in our churches is a small percentage of people are living out the call they have in scripture . . .

Stetzer importantly notes the role of the spirit in the endowment of gifts beneficial to the common good and focussed on service. Moving church members from spectators to active participants is, for Stetzer, a central priority of the contemporary church. He continued by noting that,

> [t]here are all these cultural forces telling people to sit and watch rather than go and do. . . . Any system that dis-empowers and de-motivates the people of God is unhelpful and perhaps sinful because the Bible teaches that a manifestation of the spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial.

The role of the church, according to Stetzer, is to be an antidote to the "cultural forces" encouraging passivity and spectatorship. In the pastoral style of lecturing, he repeats the

sentiment that each person receives a manifestation of the spirit. What he is referring to is an outward, performative expression of missional style where one serves by "living out the call". Thus, the activation of gifts of the spirit is central to producing "what is beneficial" for the contemporary growth-oriented church. To accomplish what is beneficial, says Stetzer, is to recognize the church as biblically modelled.

> So the biblical model of church is a body of members connected to one another, living on mission. . . . The biblical description of membership is closer to the medical description, the medical modern use of the term of member, if you think of this; medically your fingers are members of your body. So if your finger is cut off, I'm betting there are people in this room who have lost a finger or a toe along the way; don't raise your hand, it'll creep us out, but I'm guessing that there is some of you who have done that and on that day, it wasn't a good day for you; you were dismembered. So biblically the members of the body, the parts of the body, the Bible says God has knitted together so a Biblical church is not simply its facilities or its tools, but it's a body of people knit together so that they might go on mission together for the name and fame of Jesus.

Interestingly, to tease apart the metaphor of the knit body is to hear the echo of the Latin and Augustinian definitions of religion. Bringing isolated strands (people) together and configuring them into a knit body proceeds through perpetual knotting to bind them together. Binding congregants to live on mission means creating opportunities to elaborate the lifestyle of what it means to be evangelical in a world of competing "cultural forces". Evangelical share the meaning as vocabularies of motives. They make sense of their lifestyle through a framework where shared meanings underscore the value of gifts and belonging. Inciting church members to live on mission thus relies on the affective dimensions of recognizing and valuing unique and personal gifts and offering feelings of belonging and membership. Binding the body of church together is expressly for inciting members to spread the "name and fame of Jesus".

Being missional (by spreading the name and fame of Jesus), is according to James Beilo,

"fundamentally, about two activities: evangelism and learning. As Emerging Evangelicals seek to 'have missional hearts' they construct an imagined missionized Other, the details of which are used to create institutions for fostering evangelistic efforts" (Bielo 2011:136). Beilo also suggests that "[l]ike other Evangelical cultural categories, 'missional' traffics widely through various institutions: local congregations, regional and national conferences, seminars, and parachurch organizations" (2011:120). Moreover, technical conference events like WFX offer evangelicals an opportunity to learn what being missional can mean for technical ministries.

The focus on knitting the church body together in a lifestyle of worship for Stetzer means inciting the "other 80%" of the congregation to participate (rather than merely spectate). The "other 80%" is a maxim denoting that the majority of the labour within the church (and elsewhere) is done by 20 percent of the members. Dr. Scott Thumma, who wrote his PhD Dissertation on a U.S. megachurch, and on megachurches more generally, and Warren Bird—Director of Research and Intellectual Capital at Leadership Network—a non-profit research firm, link church organization and the 80/20 maxim, echoing the sentiments expressed by Stetzer. They suggests that acting with "intentionality", church leaders should attempt to establish particular auditing systems to track involvement, training and service to the church. The affective labour of those in service drives towards creating a feeling of connectedness and community but this aim towards fellowship combines with the growth mandate of the "effective" church.

> Is the situation [an inactive, unengaged congregation] the result of an organizational problem? In part, it is. . . . It requires rethinking the activities of volunteering and committee work within the church. It necessitates the identification of the gifts and callings of all parts of the body: teaching such concepts as the priesthood of all believers, finding places for members to serve, giving them training, and recognizing their role in the mission of the church. It requires intentionality on the part of church leaders to be attentive and to track involvement, to structure accountability measures into how the church operates, to

> reach out to the marginalized, and to confront and if possible remedy the situations that led to separation [from the church] (2011: xxvi).

In a particularly striking example of a neoliberal ethos, Thumma and Bird recommend establishing accountability measures to assess the effectiveness of church structures to ensure they enable the creation of the correct technologies of the self (Foucault 1988)—or a priesthood of all believers committed to serving the church. Foucault argued that of the four "technologies" he identified in the context of studying genealogy of knowledge, technologies of the self "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (1988). By acknowledging their gifts and using them for righteous ends growing the church, technicians aim through service to the church to secure a place in heaven for their immortal afterlife. Their second heavenly life relies on their good deeds and moral dispositions in this life and thus evangelicals feel the pressure to conform to the pious ideals of the church. The degree to which this actually occurs relies on the effectiveness of technologies of the self and willingness of evangelicals to do this affective self-work.

Like Thumma and Bird, Stetzer sees the future of the church in the establishment of material-discourses that surround the transformation of spectators into active participants. This is particularly difficult, Stetzer argues, in an era where excellence has become a method of outlining technical practice. He suggests that, "The side effect of excellence is that consumers are drawn to excellence . . . Excellence honours God but it attracts spectators; you have to ask: how do we get these people from sitting in rows to sitting in circles to going out on mission into the world?" Cultivating living religion by inciting people to "live on mission" in their daily lives

and through their production of worship practice week-to-week wrests "excellence" from solely inducing spectator worship and instead positions it within spiritual economies.[48]

In the pages of *Church Production,* I read an article by former audio engineer and current student pastor Andy McMillan from Turning Point Georgia. McMillan recounts a story that exemplifies the tensions of contemporary mediated evangelical worship driven by a concept of excellence. He speaks to the ways that evangelicals struggle to reconcile the drive towards performance excellence and growth with issues of economic stewardship. I quote him at length to demonstrate how experience and economic stewardship coincide in the quest for excellence.

> We live in a culture that values 'experience.' Americans love to be entertained, wowed, surprised and see a well-thought-out show. This fascination has naturally leaked into the church, where we love to have creative experiences, intentional productions, and generally be surrounded by an excellent environment. However, there is a paradox surrounding this word excellence. Our quest for excellence can be a good thing, but, I believe it can easily become the focus of our ministry rather than a tool to be effective. . . .
>
> A few years ago I heard a story of a church that sat about two hundred people (and didn't quite run that many people) that decided they wanted to upgrade their sound system. However, they did not want just any sound system, they wanted a very expensive sound system. This particular brand is one of the highest quality sound systems money can buy, and its price tag definitely lets you know how nice it is. This church took out a loan they could not really afford to buy this system and have it installed. They allowed their desire for 'The Best' to put their church in a financial bind and kept them from doing ministry the way they had been doing prior to acquiring 'The Best.' This was done in the name of excellence. They could have bought something cheaper that was still very high quality, but they were more concerned with having what they perceived as 'The Best' that

[48] On the other hand, Mark McGee, Bible teacher and Christian Martial Artist, argues that: "Excellence in ministry begins by serving others in the same way Christ served us. . . . God teaches us that our ministry should have its purpose and cause in Love. 'But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' (1 Corinthians12:31-13:3) Love is the foundation for all true service to God and to others. It is 'a more excellent way'" (McGee 2008, emphasis added)

> they hurt their church's budget. When excellence becomes more important than the proper allocation of tithes and offerings, then the tool of excellence has become more important than the reason [to] strive for excellence. . . .
>
> Creating environments that shape the experience can be very important, but if we are focussed on making the audio louder, lights moving faster, and more intense video for the sake of it being awesome we have lost the proper focus (McMillan 2013).

McMillan echoes Stetzer's emphasis on the dangers of excellence while also drawing attention to the tensions of technologized worship that so often become the topic of discussion at conference events. The financial costs of excellence within these spiritual economies puts a volunteer technician in front of a piece of professional performance gear with little or no training and the expectation of an immaculate experience. More often than not, churches that value the gear over those that operate it and do not recognize the relationship technicians need to build with these devices end up with poorly produced worship practice that demonstrates neither excellence nor the appearance of relevance.

In 2011, I attended an online webinar hosted by The Leadership Network, a non-profit research firm specializing in creating collaborative opportunities for church leaders to chart the future. Called The Nines, this webinar featured prominent church leaders speaking for nine minutes each on topics relevant to the contemporary church. JD Greear, with a PhD in Theology and pastor from the Summitt Church in Durham, NC, spoke during one nine-minute segment. In it, he described his understanding of the contemporary evangelical church and the ways that it is now a "factory" for recognizing the gifts of the many:

> It seems that in evangelical world today, we have designed our churches today to highlight the gifts of the few. But, the essence of the church is not a group of people being gathered to share in the anointing that God has given me, but in me

> empowering them to be anointed on their own and take the power of the Holy Spirit out into the community. The Church is not an audience—it's an army! An army of people who are equipped to do ministry in the streets. A New Testament church is not a group of people gathered around a leader—it's a leadership factory.

Greear's method of transforming spectators into participants harkens to the militarized language that permeates much of U.S. popular discourse. Insofar as evangelicals regard the church membership as an army, its mission is "ministry in the streets". Mixing metaphors, Greear then likens the church to a factory producing or enabling leaders. Together, the metaphors of an army and factory speak to the vision of the church committed to production—be it armies or leaders. Moreover, the church that Greear imagines, coming from a Pauline approach to being missional, seeks to sow the seeds of his church far and wide—generating surplus-value from the literal flow and movement of church "planters" from his organization out into the surrounding communities.

In a 2009 YouTube video[49] for the 2009 The Nines conference, JD Greear reveals his plan for being missional and creating his army. He intends to "plant", or found, 1000 churches in the next 40 years. He notes that his proximity to a university, with its wealth of students, makes this goal a possibility with what he calls, the "mormonization of the church" with students serving two years after graduation at a church plant he hopes to incite the momentum of radical church expansion—church plants become leadership factories. Amidst Greear's keen focus on growth, he recognizes that success must be measured by the durability of the experience and whether the congregation's hearts and desires have been changed. In a 2011 blog post on the reasons why the church is an army, not an audience, Greear concludes that:

[49] See for example, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GcvPxPtU1o.

> All in all, I think some churches' success keeps them blind to how little genuine, lasting fruit they are actually producing period. When the glitz and light and sound-show disappear, what really will remain? Jesus told a parable about some seeds that sprang up quickly, only later to be revealed in different conditions as false fruit. When the sun of persecution arises over our members, or the weeds of materialism grow, or the clouds of doubt cover obscure our happiness, what remains? If all we did was dazzle them and inspire them on the weekend, then precious little will remain (Greear 2011).

Greear's focus on planting seeds of change amongst his congregation signals the perspective that religious practice should not be confined to Sunday worship, but something that is lived daily. This example of "living religion" (e.g. see Hall 1997)[50] exemplifies both the shift towards measuring success in terms of people reached or "bums in seats" through counting weekly attendance and attempts to reach the hearts of attendees such that they adopt a lifestyle of worship. Living religion is viral religious practice that spreads through the everyday efforts of those "living on mission", ritualizing everyday practice and through the church's efforts to capitalize on the value of the activation of gifts for the production of worship practice.

In a blog post on achieving the balance between excellent and "good enough" worship production, Greear, like Stetzer, argues that the purpose of production is to draw people into the church and convey the importance of living religion.

> Jesus did not tell us that the power of our ministries would come from our soundboards. The real, life-changing "wow" factor of the church is not in its programs or performances, but in its members living together with the love and generosity of Christ. That's what really opens the eyes of community to the gospel. You can impress people with your programming, but true lasting change comes only through the preached word and seeing the gospel lived out in a church. Building an audience and producing true, lasting disciples whose fruit remains are not the same.

[50] Hall's 1997 edited volume focuses on lived religion and religious change and acknowledges that it is "fluid, mobile and incompletely structured" (xii). He suggests exploring the "modalities of practice" that make certain movements unique and have given shape to significant transitions in church history (xi).

> In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul explained that he deliberately chose not to do his ministry with the "technological wow factor" of his day, which was Greek oratorical flourish. He says, "I did not come to you in wisdom." In those days, pre-technology, if you wanted to pack a stadium, get a Greek orator. It was their equivalent of our emotive worship experiences. And Paul is not against that, per se—Apollos, after all, was described as an eloquent man, meaning he had that ability. But Paul knew the real, lasting power to change lives was in the preached word, not in emotive oratory or savvy production.
>
> It's not that have to choose either the word/incarnational church or technology. We can seek both. Just don't make the mistake of thinking the real power is in the technology.
>
> [R]eal, lasting fruit occurs through the development of leaders within the church. I think it is unwise to spend an inordinate amount of money getting the programming to top quality if its (sic) done at the expense of equipping and empowering people to lead in ministry in the community. The Apostles' strategy was not building facilities or pulling off performances, but in making disciples. Again, that's not to say we shouldn't do top-quality performances or build facilities, just that they should not be at the expense of making disciple-leaders of our congregation. We should seek to pursue these objectives with the weight given to each in the Bible.

Although Greear suggests that the "real power" does not reside in the technology, he nonetheless acknowledges the value of "top-quality performances" as part of contemporary worship. What I find salient for thinking about Stetzer's emphasis on activating personal gifts is Greear's focus on "empowering" disciple-leaders to "lead ministry in the community". As an army, Greear envisions his congregation as a missionizing force determined to achieve substantial growth. The metaphors he uses, such as army, factory, plants, and fruit, reveal the motives of growth, production, and expansion of his church into new frontiers—a hallmark of neoliberal spiritual economies. From gifts to plants and armies, the focus of these evangelicals is on inciting congregants to learn to engage with the gospel and live out that engagement every day.

Having a heart for worship production

> *"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." - Antoine de Saint-Exupery*
>
> *"The experience of the actions of spirits on the mind was intimately tied up in notions of salvation; one did not simply 'believe' in Jesus Christ but also came to directly experience His actions within one's soul, and this numinous experience could be confused with no other" (Schrauwers 2001:437).*

For many North American evangelicals, activating the latent giftings of an individual is a personal achievement that reflects God's purpose for their life. It is also an organizational badge of honour representing a church's ability to be "Christ-like", which they recognize as a literal gospel mandate. The Christ-like church is a place where the true talents of believers are recognized, put to use, and thus activated. Melani McAllister (2008) suggests that evangelicals often describe their own social involvements as "having a heart". She argues that "'having a heart' has been used to evoke a passion that goes beyond mere predilection: it suggests an unplanned moment of contact with an issue that leads the believer to an understanding of the particular work God has in mind for her" (McAllister 2008:870). As ubiquitous as describing one's commitments as having a heart "for x or y" is, it has been accompanied, at least in the world of church technology use, by the language of the gift or giftings. Having a heart for an issue is merely the first step; fulfilling the direction for action that God has planned requires action. While activation relies on the acknowledgement of congregants' gifts, they are most useful if used for the service of the church—to grow the Kingdom. Volunteering becomes a kind of surplus-value—but one not without its own risks. When performance devices malfunction or their use fails to resonate with the congregation, not only can this represent a failure to be relevant but can also appear as evidence of sin.

During conference events, guidance and instruction frame methods to avoid technical malfunction, map or translate church views, values and dispositions into a technologized ritual register. This translation can be a rough process as volunteers struggle to understand exactly how values and church dispositions should affect technical practice. As such, technical education seeks to identify the identity of a church beyond its mission statement. Educators advise that this introspective process should encompass all staff and the pastorate in order to uncover differences in understanding that could fragment a sense of identity. Educators suggest that the process of homing in on the nature of the organization is a crucible for growth. Identity, from the perspective of instructors, individualizes the church, setting it apart from its neighbours and competitors.

At the Worship Facilities Expo (WFX) event in 2010, over 2000 pastors, technicians, and volunteers gathered at the Cobb Galleria Convention Centre in Atlanta, Georgia, for the three-day conference and exhibition. Drawing mainly from the continental U.S., WFX hosted education sessions and an exhibition of over 200 vendors aiming to market directly to the house of worship market. During one seminar panel of church technical directors, all white, late twenties, to early thirties, described the type of people they hope to attract to technical positions. "We hire leaders! If you're on staff at Fellowship you're a leader. We're called to lead so we have to be leaders. We hire leaders, not doers". Another speaker continued, "We hire team builders over tech guys". And the first speaker responded:

> You want to hire people who are natural leaders. You can't teach the arts . . . if you put a guy on the sound console but he doesn't have an ear then he'll be at that level for his whole life. I teach them what every knob does—operational training—you can't beat that. We start there: Sound 101. If they get plugged into the team we watch them. If one guy 'gets it' we take them for advanced training.

> We believe in feel. Does he have a feel? It's something you can't teach, it's a natural [talent] you can't teach.

The dispositions these speakers value point to the sensorial aspects of technical capabilities: *feel* and *having an ear* are poised as the natural gifts technicians bring with them, regardless of their training. For audio mixing *feel* and *having an ear* refer to an inherent bodily, and intensely cultural, understanding of what sounds pleasing. These educators are engaging a kind of "body-talk" were they try to account for what the body and the senses of the ideal technician can do (Latour 2004:205-6). "Body-talk" suggests Latour, makes the body "sensitive to differences", like hearing the difference between a pleasant and horrible audio mix (2004:206). In this case, the evangelical conception of the body is not of a body learning to be affected (through learning to understand the mixing console and its relationship to sound), but rather a unified body that exhibits gifts from God. Nature is something that exists by virtue of God. It is not something one necessarily cultivates, but rather something recognized through communing with God and listening for his voice. As attributes both possessed by technical directors and believed to have originated from God, *feel* and *having an ear* are quasi-personal dispositions. How educators qualify technical directors reveals the emphasis evangelicals place on the recognition of leadership qualities and *natural* aptitudes. Yet, their understanding also reveals how certain qualities, those amenable to both production and building teams are consistent with the technologies of the self of spiritual economies.

At the many seminars I attended, the predominantly male educators advocated an overtly competitive and masculinised process of team building favouring men, where team members are chosen specifically for certain qualities with "spiritual value" (Rudnyckyj 2009). Masculinity, in this context, refers to the situated understanding of the relationship between Biblical

understandings of gender and action. Among many evangelicals, male leadership, rather than shared leadership, and the hierarchy of men over women conforms to their understandings established in the Bible—and extends to the composition of technical teams. Male technicians outnumbered women substantially at every event I attended. Moreover, there were very few women offering education and those that did represented technology manufacturers rather than churches. Interestingly, Gallagher and Smith (1999) argue that contemporary evangelicals employ a "symbolic traditionalism" and "pragmatic egalitarianism" when it comes to marking their place in broader cultural spheres. By symbolic traditionalism the authors refer to the ideals many evangelicals espouse about the role of male headship, mainly concerning the organization of the family. This traditional role of male leadership is, in practice, more complementarian, or pragmatically egalitarian. While believing in the separate and distinctive gender roles, decision-making (within the family) is often a joint effort. Thus Gallagher and Smith argue:

> In the construction of gender, we would . . . argue that the experiences of evangelicals illustrate how actors are not only constrained but equipped (to use an evangelical phrase) by sets of ideals that serve as resources and outlines for possible action. It is in this slippery area between ideals and resources, intended and experienced that we find gender negotiated, managed, and lived. In these processes, evangelicals negotiate gender in much the same way others of different or no religious worldviews do—borrowing from, resisting, and participating in the larger structures of which they are a part" (1999:230).[51]

Marilyn Strathern (1988) argues, in a Melanesian context, that Western scholars cannot understand complex relationships between the masculine and feminine nature of gift exchange through Western lenses of gender. Strathern suggests that we cannot evaluate gender roles and

[51] See for example, the fascinating ethnography by Elizabeth Brusco on *The Reformation of Machishmo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Columbia* who argues that, "In some ways Columbian evangelicalism can be seen as a 'strategic' women's movement, like Western feminism, because it serves to reform gender roles in a way that enhances female status. Specifically, it promotes female interests not only in simple, practical ways but also through its potential as an antidote to machismo (the culturally constructed aggressive masculinity characteristic of the male role in Columbia as well as in other parts of Latin America) (2011:6)

understandings of gift exchange through a transposition of values and ideas: Western to Melanesian (in Strathern's research). Similarly, understandings of evangelical norms of masculinity, as Gallagher and Smith (1999) argue, must be situated from within contemporary evangelical negotiations of what gender means for those who live in, but attempt to be, "not of the world" (Gallagher and Smith 1999:229). During my research, evangelicals negotiated and articulated through technical training understandings of gender norms.

At the 2009 TFW Pavilion, a seminar was offered entitled: "The Role of Technical Director in Today's Contemporary Church". The seminar content advertised the following content:

> Knowing how important the use of technical media tools are in today's worship experience, a leader that can drive the technical media area 'technically', and also build, sustain and nurture 'spiritually' healthy technical teams is equally as important. We will discuss the role that a Technical Director can, and needs to take to achieve success in bridging and supporting the word of God through the use of the technical tools and their teams. We will also discuss leadership qualities, wanted expectations from both the church and the Technical Director, salaries and team building musts.

The presenter, a white, middle-aged, communications consultant, detailed the kind of people that make ideal technical directors to a group of also mainly white men, most in their mid-twenties, who sat listening, some taking notes. Casually dressed in jeans and button-down shirt, the presenter began by noting that, "the paradigm is shifting: equipment is being incorporated into worship but there is often an inability to communicate between architecture and [the vision of the] church". He continued by laying out what he considered to be the essential aspects of creating spiritually healthy teams within the church using a series of acronyms to cluster qualities and strategies. Creating a team begins with discerning the vision and mission of the church. He

explains,

> A 'Vision' statement is something God gives a church. A 'Mission' statement is about church practice. When making these statements there are often attempts from the 'deep pockets', [those who contribute think that can control decision-making] to decide on the message.
>
> When designing a Sunday morning service think of it as a community network: try to cultivate a core message that everyone can recite and repeat your vision state Visibly, Tangibly and Aurally.
>
> When trying to build your teams avoid Tech-ese and Church-ese: these are scary languages, try not to use them and scare them away. Your purpose is to reach the lost. Without a healthy team it is a waste of money for the technology. These are the leadership qualities you are looking for: They have a strategy, they have a dream, and they have a vision for the future. When you are looking for people, start with a prayer: a prayer for the empty chair.
>
> To lead a technical area, they must be a Christian and a leader who embodies leadership qualities out of the Bible. A good leader is a F.A.T. Christian (faithful, available, and teachable). They are also an E.G.R. type of person (extra grace required). They offer constructive rather than destructive criticism. But remember, having a great stereo system at home doesn't make you a great engineer. God gives people an ear [for audio] or he doesn't, he gives you other gifts.

Like the presenters at WFX 2010, this speaker emphasizes the gift of having an ear that is un-teachable. While a leader can learn to lead, having an ear for audio is God-given. Having a heart (McAllister 2008) or an ear is a way of understanding the relationship between personal capacity and the cultivation of an intimate relationship with God. It is also a way, from an organizational perspective, to enlist the affective labours of volunteers through bringing them into the service of the church. The presenter continued by talking about how teams form. In a section of his talk entitled, Birthing out Teams, he suggests that,

> You should try to cultivate an apprenticeship rather than assistant, think of it as discipling. In order to encourage spiritual growth, pray for Godly men and women. What is your plan for feeding them? Laying on the touch, touching them? Ask them, where are you in the Bible? This is a one-on-one deal and an investment in life: 'dig' into them, one-on-one.

> Use the following strategy: V.H.S.: Vision, Huddle, and Study. Cast vision, and get us lit up. Huddle: do group work. Study: allocate the proper gifts to the proper area. Part of it [excellent worship] is the equipment in the ceiling but the audio engineer must have an ear. Remember, the proper tools are important; the technology budget is important because it supports the word of God. Thinking about paying positions? Payment equates to reliability. Most importantly, the word of God must be heard clearly and perfectly every time. You can't compromise on audio. You can kill a moment with a moment.
>
> When there is a problem, use P.I.E: [assess] Problem, Initiate a plan, and Evaluate it. Pray as a team for the church. There should be an overarching, thematic vision guiding team building and management. You can serve God anywhere so they can go somewhere else to be treated better. Half the challenge is the system, the other half is the engineer.
>
> You need to feed the believer and reach the seeker by giving them a place to serve in the church. Technology isn't that hard; it's finding the team.

Creating teams of gifted volunteers or paid staff generate the conditions for church growth through fostering those who also believe in producing excellent and relevant worship. Searching out those who share these ideals and encouraging them to serve their faith, and the church, mobilizes their affective labour[52] under the auspices of spiritual economies. This presenter notes the potential sensorial consequences of selecting the right team when he suggests that, "You can kill a moment with a moment". In this warning, we find the anxieties about filling the role of technicians with those who are willing and able to steward technologies towards righteous ends.

Technicians live out their labour in the productive and performative aspects of worship practice. However, risk looms in the possibility that these affective labours will fail to be relevant; that they will alienate rather than incorporate the church body. Team building is thus a

[52] Hardt and Negri offer that "Affective labor is biopolitical production in that it directly produces social relationships and forms of life" (2004:110). Negri suggests, "biopolitical being is full and consistent, and its border is not residual but creative" (Negri 2003:240). Marx argues that "Labour is the living, form-giving fire; it is the transitoriness of things, their temporality, as their formation by living time" (Marx 1941).

conscious effort to position those with giftings in the appropriate positions. Device failure, ever present in the tenacity and capriciousness of performative technologies and their ability to act in surprising, disruptive and dangerous ways, risks exposing the failure to steward and guide these worship "tools" towards virtuous conclusions—namely the growth of the church. The following section continues by exploring how notions of identity play in the growth of the missional church.

Spiritual DNA and the crafting of church identity

For evangelical churches, "spiritual DNA" is an articulated identity marked by the composed descriptions like mission statements or statements of belief—it reflects the compositional elements of the organization. Evangelicals often speak of their "spiritual DNA" as a form of identity—as a way of making sense of the relationship between the congregational and organization bodies. Identity, however, is also intangible and ephemeral. Identity, from an anthropological perspective, often exceeds the written statements of belief and lives in the embodied aspects of worship practice—such as dispositions towards relevant or excellent technology use. The dispositions that point to aspects of identity may also be reflected in the origin stories of the church. During educational seminars, as we will see, having a story and a unique church identity reflects aspects of style and branding.[53]

The cultivation and crafting of a unique church identity is a popular topic for TFW

[53] William Mazzarella, working through the changing 'aspirations' of India's consuming publics, suggests the production of an "alternative temporality with its own language of progress and evolution" (2003:101) possesses its own particular cultural systems that get worked out and re-worked through changing consumer desires and the globalization of consumer goods. Similarly, evangelical houses of worship themselves often seek instruction on how to cultivate their own durable modes of practice through processes of branding their identity.

Pavilion and WFX seminars. At both events, scientific neologisms combine with branding jargon to produce discourses on the value and necessity of identifying organizational DNA. A keynote speaker and a pastor at WFX in 2009 in Charlotte, North Carolina for example, advised that discerning "who you are as a church" is important for cultivating your "spiritual DNA". Identifying spiritual DNA is a strategy that, in a country of thousands of churches, becomes central as a distinctive story that separates one church from another—creating a distinctive branded style.[54]

The concept of spiritual DNA borrows from a longer and more complicated history of the biological understanding of DNA. Evelyn Fox Keller, Historian and Philosopher of Science, in *Refiguring Life: Metaphors of Twentieth Century Biology*, argues that the way scientists talk about concepts, theories and data matter. The performative aspects of language, like a concept of DNA bring broader social realities to bear in the description and understanding of concepts or ideas. Keller shares that "The body of modern developmental biology is already a new kind of body; it is already 'the body of a new machine'" (1995:xviii). Likewise, Donna Haraway argues that the way scientists conceptualize and use metaphor to describe bodily processes has political, and not just scientific, consequences. Haraway offers, "The era before recombinant DNA technology was hardly an age of social innocence for biology; a quick glance at its major metaphor systems give some hint of the depth of its rootedness in competitive and aggressive social systems. But further "capitalizing" the social relations of biology will only intensify the problems" (1983). Spiritual DNA similarly draws from this "rooted" system as a foundational trope to describe a sense of identity grounded in the congregational body. Harvard Biologist

[54] On church competition and the "Churching of America" see (Finke and Starke 2005).

Ruth Hubbard argues that molecular geneticists have transformed DNA into an "all powerful gene" (Hubbard & Wald 1999: 6, Hubbard 2013:267). The religious significance of this transformation cannot be understated. Hubbard continues by suggesting that "biologists, who are not usually known for their religious commitments, have selected 'the Holy Grail' and 'the book of life' as their metaphors for DNA—not to speak of President Clinton's referring to DNA as 'the language in which God created life' (2013:267). Spiritual DNA doubles up the religious significance and in so doing creates a metaphor with "special status" (Keller 2002:139) as a worship market neologism.

Evangelicals understand using a foundational biological metaphor to describe their identity, grounding them to the biological composition of their membership. Drawing from the authority of science and biology, they build their sense of spiritual identity as the body might be built from the components of DNA.

Key to creating compelling worship, for many evangelical churches, is discerning the components of a unique identity—the spiritual DNA. Also at WFX 2009, during a seminar on creating compelling worship, a man in the audience, cautiously asked the speakers, "Are we selling the church? How do you go about identifying or creating a brand for church?" In response, the first speaker, a woman in the business of branding church identity, suggested, "hire someone to do that; survey staff, members and visitors. What are the five words that describe the church? Are there consistencies? We don't want to think of the church as a commodity but the world has changed as it always does; people are faced with brands. We have to change too". Note that this speaker asks churches to identify the keywords that mark their identity. Their own keywords signal how they make sense of situated practice. Another speaker, the worship

ministry technician at a large evangelical church, continued, "The Church has always had a branded connection to the community. Stain glass windows teach illiterate people the Bible. And remember, the church is a vehicle, a tool to reach people to bring the message to them, to resonate with them". Creating compelling (and I would add relevant) worship, from the content of this seminar, requires an understanding the identity of the church—what constitutes identity, for branding purposes at least—is the creation of a branding narrative that intends to spur church growth by articulating the unique vision, features, and beliefs of the organization.

Style and branding, according to Phil Cooke, author, media strategist, faith-based consultant, TFWM writer and TFW Pavilion speaker is all about stories. From his book on branding (written for churches and non-profits) he suggests that, "Stories help us define who we are, where we came from and where we're going. Stories are like a compass to help us find our bearings, and they provide a place of belonging. That's why stories have become the central focus of the art of branding; and that's how branding has become a religion for a new generation" (Cooke 2008:42). That stories orient, focus, direct, and create a shared sense of commonality makes branding according to Cooke, a way to frame the ethos of contemporary religious identity and style. Cooke defines the relationship between religion and contemporary branding by suggesting: "There's a new school of thought within the branding and marketing community that has connected successful branding with religious belief. The sense of belonging, the feeling of community, the collective rituals, the shared belief systems all point to branding becoming a type of religious experience in America" (Cooke 2008:65). As a marketing and media strategist, Cooke explains why churches call him to help cultivate a brand identity:

> My team gets hired when a church, ministry or non-profit organization has lost its voice.. . . : In spite of doing great works in the community, like building homeless

> shelters, drug treatment centers or food banks, your organization still lives hand to mouth. Or, as a pastor or religious leader who has a genuine calling, you have built a great team, invested your life in the vision with powerful preaching, teaching or ministry, but the spark never happens; growth never takes off or it just suddenly stops. . . . You've lost your impact and lost your voice to the very people with whom you're trying to communicate. I see it happen all too often: Media ministries that just can't seem to grow beyond a local broadcast; churches that hit a ceiling on adding members; humanitarian outreaches that can't seem to break through a certain level of fund-raising. In most cases they are led by qualified, sincere men and women, and almost all have a strong vision for excellence. They spend money on capital campaigns, media equipment, church-growth consultants, marketing, TV or radio time, advertising campaigns and more, but they just seem trapped and unable to grow beyond a certain point (Cooke 2008:13-4).

Because success within spiritual economies relies on growth, the failure to grow and expand, spread the word farther, or convert more people is understood to be evidence of a "flatlined" organization. This way of framing success and failure posits continuous growth (and the search for new frontiers) as a marker of achievement. Keywords like authenticity and relevance, in genres of sacred, technical and neoliberal speech, give shape to the ideas, discourses and practices (and justifications of those practices) that churches and their technicians learn to employ when enacting a sense of identity or style. To be authentic, for example, from a neoliberal perspective, is to create spiritual economies of experience that harness the surplus-value of technology stewardship to increase the Kingdom through the technologized and sensorial aspects of worship. Cooke (2008) underscores this translation of authenticity from "truth" to "feeling" (or experience):

> In a digital age, authenticity may be the ultimate scorecard for success. . . . Authenticity used to be about truth, but today it's about preference. Today, authenticity has to do with feeling. When someone likes you or your ministry, they feel like you're 'authentic.' It has nothing to do with a qualitative decision, research or what is true; it's simply an emotional response. Be very careful when people describe you or your ministry as authentic, because in a postmodern value

> system, its only meaning is that you resonate with a particular person (Cooke 2008:174).
>
> Ask a typical pastor or ministry leader what they want to accomplish with their ministry, programs or products, and chances are, you'll hear the words 'be relevant.' 'Relevance' has become the hot buzzword today—especially in the Christian media world—and applies to church services, TV and radio programming, books, music and outreaches of all kinds. In this culture, everyone wants to be relevant (Cooke 2008:177).
>
> In Acts 17, the apostle Paul gave us the perfect example of how to engage the culture, and it still resonates today, especially when it comes to the media: No matter how brilliant your message, it doesn't matter if no one listens. But when they do listen, make sure you're not trying to chase relevance (Cooke 2008:180).

Relevance, as Cooke suggests, has taken on valences of technical proficiency in a Pauline approach to ministry and missionizing. What Cooke signals, however, is the anxiety that many evangelicals feel about the nature of technology and its influence on the content, on the message conveyed. Chasing relevance with technological sophistication in attempts to reach attendees in ways that are familiar to them, like using TV and performance technologies, can detract from the solemnity of the message, and thus requires, according to many evangelicals, the stewardship of technology.

Styling church identity using discourses of authenticity and relevance is an attempt to create indelible worship experiences that differentiate the church from its neighboring competitors. Relevant and authentic worship experiences for congregants thus rely on the style and level of technical excellence of message delivery, the charisma of the pastor or the talent of the worship band that (ideally) work together to create distinctive worship practice amongst a sea of competitive offerings. Spiritual economies for U.S. evangelicals—where neoliberal understandings focus religious endeavors on church growth—are premised on the creation and nurturing of worship experiences. The experience of church, if crafted and honed with intention,

authenticity and an eye to relevance is focussed on inciting congregants to stay in the word and live a lifestyle of worship. The ritualization of the everyday begins with the acknowledgement and actualization of the giftings of church members. Once acknowledged, a technician's gifts, like an ear for sound or an aptitude for technical systems, are used to harvest their affective labours. Using technician's commitment to growing the Kingdom capitalizes on the surplus-value of their labour to both grow the church and help create opportunities for fellowship and connection. Yet, what happens when surplus-value comes up short, falters and the movements and momentums of technicians and volunteers are not reliable? Moreover, what effect does this have on worship practice? In the following section we explore how Neighbours Church, in their quasi-failing attempts to hold sway through 'staying in the Word'[55], works through the often-tenuous production of worship practice.

Stay in the Word

At Neighbours Church, living on mission is a process of 'staying in the Word'—meaning living by and embodying an understanding of biblical principles. At Neighbours, the practical aspects of worship practice, like having enough camera operators and someone to operate the sanctuary sound console, often outweigh motivations like transforming spectators into active participants. While this is a goal of transformation, the actual experience week to week of ensuring that scheduled volunteers are actually present is a more pressing challenge. The technical director would often fill the camera operator role with whoever was available—either someone from the

[55] The Word (capital W) refers to God's word generally, but in practice, it is the particular, situated understanding of Biblical tenets unique to the congregation.

control room or search out familiar faces in the sanctuary. Each week this messy bricolage of technologies and volunteers came together to attempt to create an impactful spiritual experience.

In contrast to transient volunteers that make the production at Neighbours tenuous, the lead technical director reflects on his calling to serve the church as Jesus did, beginning his ministry in his thirties. Likening himself to Jesus, Michael suggests that he does "what works for us" regarding the use of technology and recruitment of volunteers to operate it. One way Michael and the technical volunteers try to ensure that things "work" is through active prayer. Before services, the technical team would gather in the control room, join hands, and pray for the technology, that it would not malfunction and that the broadcast and live service would successfully bring someone to declare their love and devotion to Jesus.

Michael often emphasized that his position within the church was his calling and as such, he sought an education in video production to pursue it. He described that "working with technology and spreading the Word is a calling—it's required by the Bible". The story he tells about how he came to the church is remarkably similar to many contemporary evangelical conversion stories where an individual feels compelled to declare their commitment to Jesus and pursue a calling after God spoke to their heart. Growing up attending a traditional, conservative denomination, evangelicalism offered a personal relationship with God as mentor, father, and confidant (Luhrmann 2012, Beilo 2011). His grandmother was Seventh Day Adventist and he grew up attending church. He recalls the formative experience—at seven—when his mother sent him to a Christian camp. At camp, he was compelled to "give himself to Jesus". However, his family was sceptical of his decision considering his young age. After attending 100 Huntley Street (where the first Inspiration show also advertised) at fourteen, he gave himself to Christ

again. He knew from that moment that he wanted to pursue worship arts and spend his life in service to the church. When Michael reached college, he worked for the college TV station before pursuing a Bachelor of Education, with a focus on ministry. He struggled throughout his educational career with a learning disability but smiled as he reflected on the certainty and relief he felt knowing that his path, in service to the church, was certain. God spoke to him and told him so. His intimate relationship with God resonates with the experiences of many contemporary evangelicals that speak to and learn to hear God speaking directly to them, advising them (Luhrmann 2012). When I ask about how he could be certain at seven, or at fourteen, about his faith and path in life he bowed his head, then re-met my gaze, and said with certainty: "I'd rather believe and be wrong, than not believe and be wrong".

Fulfilling a calling is a way of living on mission. Michael, like other evangelicals, understands his relationship to life and faith in terms of a calling—a calling that allows him to live the embodiment of a gift. Michael's insistence on fulfilling his calling, recalls Jesus' calling to found the church, a legacy and mission of which Michael sees himself a part. Michael felt that 'being called' to serve the church was a way of understanding with certainty that they are fulfilling God's plan for their life. William spoke frequently about living out faith, like living on mission, attempting to frame ways for staying in the Word after the service was over.

Staying in the Word becomes a way to think about a relationship to God outside of church but also informs dispositions towards technology by orienting practice towards Biblical ends. When Michael and his team pray over the technology, they reveal their uncertainty about the nature of mediated worship and the way that having a calling for worship production frames technology use.

At Neighbours Church Pastor William emphasizes staying in the Word after the church service finishes. William extolled his own reading, interpretation, and analysis of scripture to provide a guide for staying in the word. He often emphasized the virtues of proper Christian behaviour: if a wife, one should honor and obey your husband. If a husband, one should honor your wife. Even as William often spoke about his friends of other faiths, regarding marriage he advised the congregation to abandon relationships with non-Christians, suggesting that he was tired of hearing about the intention to evangelize them. One Sunday, as William announced his belief about Christian/non-Christian relationships, Michael turned to me and noted, "It never works" (with reference to evangelizing a non-Christian while in a relationship). William emphasized that marriage should comprise the companionship of fellow soldiers for Christ because the values of non-Christians are different.

The moral of William's sermons comprised the message for the week. Using different examples and details to instruct congregants, William identified that his congregation were people set apart from those of other faiths or those of no-faith. It became clear that William was deeply suspicious about the intentions of non-Christians, politicians, academics, doctors, the media, and the government. He regularly criticized those he felt had too much undue influence on the morality, actions, beliefs and practices of his flock. While this type of criticism is common in conservative evangelical churches, William's disposition towards those outside the church underscores what staying in the Word means for members of Neighbours Church: the community must respect certain boundaries, identifying who belongs and who does not. He actively attempted to identify the *other* as non-Christian, but also denominationally *other*, often commenting on what other churches were doing or the messages they were conveying to their

congregation. In particular, William was continuously and vigorously critical of churches that welcomed lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) members. Michael also, in one of our long conversations, expressed his displeasure with the idea that any of Neighbours members were also LGBT. To his mind, one could not be LGBT and a conservative Christian because the Bible, he said, clearly disavows same-sex couples or homosexuality generally. It is a sin, he said. Michael tried to make clear that reading the Bible literally supported his perspective. Advocating being in, but not of, the world—a common theme among conservative evangelicals that denotes their own belief structure apart from "secular" society—Michael and William order their world based on a series of exclusions and creatively use the Bible to support their views. Many conservative evangelicals read the Bible and interpret it as though it is free of context and invoke sections from different events and time periods as though they can be read together to form new narratives that speak to contemporary events and ideas. William often based his sermons around this practice of narrative montage. He selected particular passages that he read in sequence to emphasize the theme of the weekly homily. His creative use of scripture provided a method for embodying what William considered an evangelical way of life. The guidelines he advocated offered ways of being, technologies of the self (Foucault 1988), for his flock.

On the technologization of religious practice, Michael supported the use of performance technologies, considering them consistent with Biblical precepts about growing the church. Nevertheless, he regarded and reviewed other churches as "too secular" and "too focussed on selling the Gospel" if their practice tipped over into exuberant performance. The implication is that while attempting to create a virtuous worship environment, its mediation must be modest, moderated, and seated in Biblical principles. As cultural anthropologist religious studies scholar

Birgit Meyer (2011) and anthropologist Matthew Engelke (2007) have written extensively on contemporary forms for Christianity. They note that the presence of mediation becomes a problem when practitioners attempt to create a direct divine, albeit mediated, encounter (Meyer 2011, Engelke 2007). This problem of presence is recurrent as Michael, like other technology stewards, try to reconcile the desire for divine presence and the immediacy of sacred experience with the necessity of mediation. It also points to the tensions of technologized worship specifically at Neighbours where being in the moment live and present in the sanctuary, is a wholly different experience than watching online.

Up in the control room, Michael crafted the online broadcast by directing the camera operators to focus on particular people, actions, and depictions of the live worship. Focussing in, with a tight camera shot that framed the upper body of the pastor, the director concentrated the focus of the online coverage to a single frame. As the service continued, and another song was sung, its lyrics projected onto the front screen, the director advised one of the camera operators: "I don't want to see anyone praying so if you see that, pull up". Embodying praying and exuberant worship in this church often meant waving hands above one's head. For the online broadcast, to see disembodied waving hands would distract from the gravity and seriousness of the song.

The look and feel of the online service is at the discretion of the director whose mission is to use the live service to compose an online alternative experience. The experience of web-mediated worship relies on establishing the pacing of the service for a viewer at home. In the sanctuary, during a live service, fellow worshippers, the smells, sounds and textures of a live event surround congregants. At home, building a narrative of the event using the components of

live worship, such as focussing attention on the pastor or singers, or switching to displaying the presentation slides composes a worship experience. During one service, Michael inadvertently switched the video feed to one of the graphics feeds breaking the narrative flow of the broadcast. Unexpected or ill-timed switches are common during Neighbours online broadcasts, lending an aura of discontinuity to the flow of the service. In addition to the jarring effects of video mishaps, the sound of worship plays an important role in creating an experience for viewers. Microphones within the sanctuary transmitted sounds of the sanctuary to the control room. When the worship band played out of sync or the singers sang off-key, those dissonant sounds made their way into the online broadcast. The audio and video feed together composed the online experience. As two separate digital feeds, the audio and video often fell out-of-sync during Neighbours broadcasts, with the audio trailing or preceding the events or graphics. Making use of what was cost-effective and available often meant that the equipment Neighbours used did not always integrate well, or form a cohesive and smooth signal chain. In Neighbours case, a signal chain is more like a palimpsest. I have shown that the messy bricolage of worship at Neighbours highlights the ways that the relationship between technicians and the technologies at their disposal affects the modalities of worship experience. Together, technicians and technologies demonstrate the rough translation of understandings of intention and vision into action. Putting the ideal of performance excellence into practice faltered at Neighbours even as Michael attempted to do the best with what he had. Striving for excellence and relevance is often very different than achieving it, at least at Neighbours Church. Yet, these two ideals still have meaning in local practice even if not achieved. Michael and his team of volunteer technicians

created a relaxed style of worship where the flow of the event depended on the reliability and abilities of volunteers to embody and stay in the word during their labours.

At Neighbours technical training was informal and often through loose mentorship. The director would often seek volunteers from the teenage attendees. Even though the training was informal and combined with an assortment of technical systems, the result—worship practice yearning for connection with viewers and attendees—had the gritty realness of off-the-cuff worship that is at odds with the highly produced and technically excellent worship practices of larger, better-funded churches. Excellent worship bears the hallmarks of professional production: cues are well timed and precise, the sound is properly mixed and pleasing to the ear, the video is expertly produced and seamless, and the whole endeavour comes together as a well-though-out narrative might, with a beginning, middle and end that invites the congregation to live in the moment. A worship experience at Neighbours invokes the particular modalities of *their* spiritual economy of experience: premised as it is on creating a familiar environment through which they invite attendees (and online viewers) to stay in the Word and adopt a lifestyle of worship that is more about affirming lived, imperfect experience as it is about stewarding technology towards excellence. In its "imperfection", Neighbours staff, volunteers, pastor, congregation and technical systems created and contoured worship practice—they fashioned connections between those in attendance through a shared experience of the momentums and movements of technical systems that hang together precariously.

This chapter has explored the ways that spiritual economies of experience, the ways that gifts are foundational for the growth of the church. I have explored the impetus towards excellence and relevance in the fieldsites where I engaged with technical education and worship

production. For the evangelicals I researched alongside, creating a lifestyle of worship or staying in the word means recognizing the gifts of congregants in order to mobilize their affective labours to grow the Kingdom—through living on mission in the broader community. When evangelicals live out their affective labours, in service to the church, they produce a surplus-value of flow—where their movements and momentums become imbricated with the growth-oriented natures of church spiritual economies. In the midst of these economies, technical directors, like Michael, attempt to steward their performance technologies to provide meaningful experiences for attendees by creating habits of the heart. Through attempts to create these experiences, evangelicals speculate on the effects (and affects) of technical devices as they attempt to incorporate and embody dispositions towards managing seemingly lively technologies and negotiating through stewardship the promises of the numinous, and threats of the nefarious, in the propensities of technology.

6. "Does it point our hearts to God?": how stewards learn to understand their gifts

"We are shaped and fashioned by what we love" Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"Leadership is stewardship—the cultivation of resources for God. The Bible tells us one of the main resources God has given us is our gifts, aptitudes, talents, and abilities. Christian leaders faithfully steward the gifts they receive from the Holy Spirit, and they help those they lead to do the same" (Keller 2007:1).

"For what is idolatry if not this: to worship the gifts in place of the giver himself?" (Calvin [1845]2002:857)

When evangelical technicians learn to steward technology they embody the tensions and understandings about the relations between people and things, the sacred and secular, reverence and idolatry, and ownership and use. Technological stewardship is the management and negotiation of performance technology used for worship. For technicians, stewardship becomes the way to frame speculation about the capacities and proclivities of technologies when used to create immersive worship experiences. Technology troubles the understanding that devices, like audio or lighting consoles, microphones or speakers, are neutral components of religious practice by making their presence felt. Congregants looking for an intimate relationship with God desire the immediacy of worship—where technologies are rendered invisible—but this experience is often confounded by the hypermediacy of technologies making themselves felt. Stewards attempt to use and manage their devices to keep them from intervening in the continuity of the event. Stewards, in some cases, also attempt to manage the technology purchases to ensure responsible financial stewardship. As we have already explored, training events like the TFW Pavilion or WFX are also an opportunity to source and research potential technology purchases and

investigate new and upcoming technical systems. This chapter principally explores the competing notions about how one should go about being a technology steward and what the underlying beliefs informing the position reveal about the tensions many evangelicals experience through the "mediation" of worship practice; it is important to note how financial stewardship—the management of church funds—is coupled with the actual use of technology. I begin by exploring the conceptualization of stewardship during conference events and within pages of trade publications. I discuss aspects of financial stewardship at key points to situate the ways that the management of church funds (for technology purchases) is an example of how stewardship and spiritual economies intersect and potentially abrade.

Crafting material-discourses around stewardship, like other forms of power, "doesn't just force us down certain paths, it puts the paths in us, so by the time we learn to follow its constraints we're following ourselves" (Massumi 2003:223). The power of "paths" appear during technicians' everyday operation of performance equipment and in the discourses and vocabularies that shape its use: these paths contour the bodily dispositions of technicians and their use of technology for worship practice. Speakers offering keynote addresses, seminars, and writers in trade publications frame the importance and dangers of technology as its use erupts in ways of doing things, in crafting densely mediated worship experiences while trying to erase the presence of mediation.

Literary critic Kathleen Hayles who has charted the turn towards the "posthuman" or the decentering of the human subject, suggests, "embodiment mediates between technology and discourse by creating new experiential frameworks that serve as boundary markers for the creation of corresponding discursive systems" (Hayles 1999:205). Combining discourse and

embodiment Hayles suggests that,

> when people begin using their bodies in significantly different ways, either because of technological innovations or other cultural shifts, changing experiences of embodiment bubble up into language, affecting the metaphoric networks at play within the culture. At the same time, discursive constructions affect how bodies move through space and time, influence what technologies are developed, and help to structure the interfaces between bodies and technologies (Hayles 1999:207).

Stewards, as they move through "space and time" embody ways of thinking about technology and acting towards it. As these practices take hold and become the normal, stewards and those writing and speaking about stewardship reflect on what the position of steward means. As Hayles suggests, "changing experiences bubble up into language" (1999:207). *Worship Leader Magazine*, for example, in 2010, honed the sentiment that exists within the contemporary evangelical community and produced a themed issue devoted to stewardship. Before exploring the pages of *Worship Leader Magazine*, we return to WFX 2010.

Turning to the keynote address by Ed Stetzer during WFX 2010, we can begin to unravel the complex notions of stewardship that evangelicals negotiate. If you will recall, Stetzer envisions the contemporary evangelical church as predominantly a spectator church. He sees his mission as inspiring the broad revitalization of the evangelical church, transforming passive spectators into active participants. During his keynote, Stetzer, speaking as a pastor might, commands and focuses the attention of those in the room, joking, "closer to the front is closer to Jesus". Laughter trickled through the room. Moving from side to side from the centre of the stage, Stetzer held the crowd's attention through the inflexions of his voice, ending his thoughts on the core sentiments that he would then repeat. His sermon-like style resonated with the attendees as they nodded their heads along with his points. He suggested that in order to activate

the church body it must be recognized that all church members have gifts, in contrast to what he sees as the current disposition: "pay, pray and get out of the way". In order to be a "transformational church" recognizing and activating the gifts of the church body becomes the key strategy to moving from passive to active participation. Considering the venue and audience, Stetzer reminded the audience that in this move from passive to active, towards a transformational and "missional" church, that "tools can be helpful . . . [but] we need to remember that tools are not the goal".

The role of technology, Stetzer notes, is to accentuate God-given gifts, but not replace them. He explains that: "technology can't glorify God. Technology is a tool that when used well can equip people to glorify God. It is part of a strategy. But when it's no longer a tool, it is an idol—this is when a good thing becomes a God thing, becomes a bad thing." These "bad things" trouble attempts to create immersive experiences, transforming the transparent immediacy of the event with the intervention of technological hypermediacy—or when technology makes itself known and felt by making its act of representation visible (Bolter & Grusin 1999:33).

At events held by WFX and TFWM, technicians learn that negotiating the tensions around technology use often coincides with the inability to forestall every event of technological failure and mitigate every act of technological capriciousness. For technicians the role of stewardship is the disposition and attunement towards crafting worship through trying to understand the nature of technology and the reasons for its occasional failure. The threat and potential of idolizing technology heightens their awareness that technology holds the capacity to draw attention to itself, away from God, and away from the message it conveys. Technicians understand that technologies openness to making its presence felt means it has the potential to

manifest both the presence of God's voice through scripture or the subversive and disruptive forces of a spiritual *other*, namely the devil. Thus, the gravity of the position of steward is immense—they learn to recognize the propensities of devices and think about them in biblically correct ways (as a tool and not something to be idolized). Since they recognize the forces that can cause devices to act, technicians to learn to attune to technology's capriciousness.

The importance of technology stewardship populated the entire *Worship Leader Magazine* issue from June 2010. *Worship Leader* is a trade publication devoted to educating readers on incorporating and selecting contemporary music, technology, and dramatic elements, into their productions, while still remaining consistent with their interpretation of biblical scripture. A series of questions framed their treatment of the idea of stewardship: "What does it mean to steward technology? Who or what is a tech steward? What does the role require and what does it look like? How do you decide what technologies to use and not use? How will our worship be enhanced and our community be strengthened when we steward technology?" (Worship Leader Magazine 2010:29). Meant to frame a roundtable discussion between the magazine's network developer and publisher, the questions reveal the aspects of negotiation that frame understandings of stewardship and its role in the creation of immersive worship environments.

The person selected to embody the role of steward must, according to the publisher, "be comfortable with learning new technologies, not tech-phobic, and also embody a pastoral perspective for the community's network of relationships" (Worship Leader Magazine 2010:30). Stewardship as embodied practice speaks to the understanding that being a steward is something lived out in the process of attuning to the working of technologies (as they also attune to their

interlocutors). For their exclusive on stewardship, *Worship Leader* also solicited input "From the Trenches", from house of worship technicians, pastors, and academics. Their responses swing between the recognition of the body as a technology to the more facile and rigid distinction between humans and things. One respondent, a Chair in Faith and Communication at a religious college, aptly discerns that "The key [to effective tech stewardship] is recognizing that nearly everything we do in worship is technological, from instruments to banners to the use of our bodies" (Worship Leader Magazine 2010:30). The implication is that being a steward is the recognition of a gift, an aptitude or disposition, for understanding the dynamics of technological things, even insofar as the body becomes technological. The becoming-technological of stewards is juxtaposed in the following declaration where the rigid distinction between people and things is reinforced. "We serve people, not technology," declared a communications director of a U.S. church. It is implied that while technologies may affect and be affected, the bodies that *matter* are human (cf. Barad 2007); namely humans with latent gifts. The communications director continued by asking about technology procurement, "Are we falling victim to geek and gadget lust or empowering people to release the best out of them?" (Worship Leader 2010:30). Moreover, perhaps most evocative are the contributions of a worship designer at a large U.S. church:

> The skills of a production lead should be: one, love Jesus above technology (sounds obvious, but it's not surprising that gadget geeks are prone to idolatry in this regard); two, be a champion of the congregational experience (this is a servant's-heart, truly desiring that the glory of God is experienced by the congregation with the technology being used); and three, deep technical knowledge and attention to details (they've got to know the tools they're working with and be able to troubleshoot quickly and they've got to catch all the little things from sound to lighting to lyrics on the screen, etc.) (Worship Leader Magazine 2010:31).

"Having a [servants] heart" (McAllister 2008) for the congregational experience, stewards learn to regard technology as mere tool, to keep it "fixed" and purified as technical object. Yet, technologies continue to lure stewards towards idolatry that again disrupts the transmission of the true Word. When stewards attempt to create an excellent and relevant experience their success is hinged on their embodiment of stewardship—the steward is a facilitator of experience and gatekeeper of technical wilfulness with deep technical knowledge, but regard for Jesus above all else. The risk of idolization looms when stewards become intimately involved with the dynamics and capabilities of things. The anonymous author of the *Worship Leader* article titled "Re-centering the House" articulates how technical things tend towards drawing attention to themselves, disrupting the immediacy and transparency of the worship experience.

> The point is that in our era, the technology of communication and all the various creative and listening devices has taken center stage. Perhaps even to the point of technology trumping the Text. It is not unheard of for a worship leader to spend 20 hours putting all the editing touches on a 3-minute worship video vignette, or a similar amount of time with pro-tools generating the perfect background music. Becoming media literate takes time and may even draw us away from the Text, or even worse, become the Text. In a strange and tragic twist of irony, the story of Jesus we are sharing becomes a sub-text to the story of the manner we are telling the story. The audience for our worship is not God, but rather the audience is god**.** This is a basic distinction between secular forms of entertainment in other houses and the use of performing arts in God's house. In God's house the performing arts work for transparency. The purpose of the music is to serve the community in its active listening and dialogue with God. It is His Speech that generates faith (Worship Leader Magazine 2011).

The medium is very literally the message, according to this author. Poignantly, this passage highlights the tensions that many evangelicals find inherent in technology use: they have the potential to become more visible than the message they convey. The caveat is that through their managed and stewarded use, they can be rendered invisible to provide a transparent and clear

transmission of "His Speech that generates faith". Nevertheless, even as technology is accorded the capacity for pure transmission (Morris 2000), work is done to continually render it as mere object divorced from the divine. Pastor Chuck Smith Jr. (son of Calvary Church founder Chuck Smith), like Ed Stetzer, argues that "[t]echnology is not a vehicle for taking us into the presence of God, but merely a tool, and like any power tool, it can be destructive if not handled with care. In fact the most important lesson regarding technology is to know when to unplug" (Roberts & Smith n.d.).

Sentiments like "knowing when to unplug" signal the tensions inherent in the attempted compartmentalization of evangelical technology use; while it is a requirement of many worship spaces that seat hundreds, if not thousands, of visitors, technology used to amplify, accentuate, and extend the Pastor's message harbours a capacity to simultaneously augment and upset its transmission. While it is necessary, it also unnerves discourses of a pure, unfiltered transmission free of interjection. It is as though technology carries a potential—an ability to inform the message it coveys—to exert itself, or be open to the vexations of spirit *others*.

Stewards learn that negotiating the tensions around technology use coincide with the inability to forestall every event of technological failure and mitigate every act of technological capriciousness. Attempts to "vision-cast" and arduously plan the details of a worship event often meet with unforeseen events, like device failure or malfunction.[56] In technical education sessions, like those at WFX and those offered by TFWM, stewards are cautioned to plan, to anticipate failure, to develop a mastery of the dynamics of sound, light and the composition of a

[56] In the most striking examples of malfunction, pastors and performers have perished (As I noted in an earlier footnote, the event of a pastor's electrocution during a baptism is a poignant and tragic example of poorly engineered worship practice: http://www.wnd.com/2005/11/33258/. The sermon that week was "Surprise me, God").

worship space, and also to cultivate biblically-based dispositions towards technology stewardship. After the 2010 *Worship Leader* issues devoted to stewardship, it continued to be a popular topic. In a 2011 *Worship Leader* article on stewardship, former Presbyterian Senior Pastor Mark D. Roberts argues that:

> We who lead worship use technology for a variety of reasons. Sometimes we like it because it's trendy. Sometimes we imitate 'successful' churches. Sometimes we think of it as a hook to catch younger, technologically-savvy people for our worship services. Sometimes we use technology simply because we can. Psalm 8 urges us to be good stewards of technology, not to let technology rule over us. This is not as easy as it sounds. If we're going to be effective stewards of technology, we must think carefully about what we are doing and why. We must consider unintended consequences of technological innovation, such as trivialization, depersonalization, and distraction. Psalm 8 encourages us to place two factors at the center of our consideration. First, does our use of technology actually help people participate in the praise of God, even and especially 'children and infants,' those who tend to be left out? Second, and most importantly, does our use of technology reflect and magnify the majesty of God? Does it point our hearts to God? Or does it actually draw attention away from God, causing us to focus on ourselves, our friends, and our technological toys? If we are truly good stewards of technology in worship, then, in the end, those we lead in worship will be more eager to exclaim: 'O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!' (Roberts 2010a)[57]

For Roberts, intention becomes as important as action as the motivating force making sense of worship practice. When Roberts invokes Psalm 8, it suggests that to be a steward is to not only manage technological resources but also to rule-over technology, while being mindful of the potential for idolatry that travels with contemporary technologies. What Roberts assumes is that if not minded technology will slip the ontological confines that declare its inertness and

[57] "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet. . . . Psalm 8:1-6" (Roberts 2010a).

exhibit its own force upon the message it conveys. Such an understanding was suggested in a 2010 *Worship Leader* article where the anonymous author argues that, "the medium (whether human, machine or cyber) does interact with and can potentially shade or even change the message if the tool is not stewarded. Then it no longer serves the gospel and the worldwide community of believers, but rather people become its servants" (Worship Leader 2010:28). In the reversal that exemplifies a technological determinist fantasy, the idol (technology) becomes God and submits its users to servitude, changing the nature of the message towards its veneration rather than deference to God.

Stewards discipline themselves to distrust technology's fickle, capricious nature. The understanding that technology-as-automata must act predictably is confounded by the experience of uncanny effects, unpredictable actions, and unintended consequences. Lucy Suchman suggests, "objects are not innocent but fraught with significance for the relations they materialize" (2005:379). For evangelicals, the relations that technologies potentially materialize involve nefarious spirits, like the devil. Evangelical stewardship is suspicious of the fusion of humans and machine. Feminist theorist Donna Haraway argues that the image of the cyborg, "a hybrid of machine and organism" (1991:149) throws the boundaries of nature and culture into question. Amidst the anxieties of technologized worship and uncanniness of technology, evangelicals attempt to keep the identities and boundaries between steward and machine anchored. They attempt to concretize identity by continuously emphasizing what the embodiment of stewardship feels and acts like. Haraway anticipates the feeling of identity slippage between humans and machines and qualifies the contemporary technological moment:

> Pre-cybernetic machines could be haunted; there was always the spectre of the ghost in the machine. . . . Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly

> ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert (1991:152).

The blurring of distinctions between machine and human, natural and artificial, create anxieties for evangelicals who see the potential for autonomous objects that do not share their morality, ethics or commitment to faith. As such, evangelicals endeavour to purify the delivery of the message through keeping technology in-check. These attempts intensify in the attempts to understand and engineer "technically transparent worship".

Technically Transparent Worship

> *"It is essential to see the things and the people who are primarily unseen and banished to the periphery of our social graciousness. At a minimum it is essential because they see you and address you" (Gordon 1997:196).*

Technology stewards learn to navigate the pitfalls and triumphs of a mediated worship environment. The ultimate achievement for a technology steward is to erase the presence of technology as they integrate it into a worship environment. Technically transparent worship is the culmination of adroit stewardship and technician's dispositions towards technology that maintains control and mastery. The seamless integration of audio, video and lighting technologies into a worship space results when church attendees are not reminded or made aware of the level of technical sophistication (which usually occurs through malfunction). Although the sophistication of devices may be "blackboxed"[58] from the perspective of congregants, hiding the

[58] Technology manufacturers attempt to both reveal the inner workings of devices through hands-on and technical education but also "black box" them through obscuring the proprietary machinations and computations that perform unique functions (i.e. proprietary Codecs—a program that encodes data, such as a video stream into another format

"multiple components and inner workings of the machine, presenting the impression of a singular object without elaborate controls" (Suchman 2005:384, Latour 1987), stewards learn to become wary of these boundary-making practices through experiences of failure. They learn that to "understand objects-in-action . . . [they must acknowledge that] the material resistances of objects are inseparable from the arrangements through which they materialize in practice" (Suchman 2005:381). Technologies used for worship materialize evangelical uncertainties and tensions about the nature of objects. The uncertainties of technician's intensify when technologies resist attempts to erase their presence.

As I have already explored, technicians learn about the virtues of being a technology steward and the right ways to use and think about technology. Taking technology for granted, or worse admiring it above God, threatens to tear the fabric of worship woven by the pastor and worship team. It is not the manufacture of the suspension of disbelief that stewards are attempting to create. Rather, it is the cultivation of a thick sensorial ecology, poised to offer an immersive experience that engages the bodies of the congregation—by speaking to their hearts.

Many evangelicals, at least the ones I learned and spoke with, harbor a keen concern about the nature of technology and its ability to distort or confound the true word (see also Schmidt 2000). Schmidt, writing on the relationship between auditory technologies and the training of the ear during the crucible of secular modernity, recalls the review of Edison's phonograph with the following "revealing phrase": it possessed the "the illusion of real presence" (2000:113). The sense that technological mediation offers illusion in place of the tangibility of "real presence" is a trope that travels alongside the understanding many

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or as an encrypted file or decodes data. Haivision, for example was a TFW Pavilion Partner and offered a range of products to encode and decode video transmissions).

evangelicals share about the nature of technology and about its power and presence for worship practice.

Through research with TFWM, I learned about the concept of technically transparent worship and found Brian Gowing, self-professed "techie", who assists churches who have difficulty operating their media equipment. Gowing explains that, "[t]o me technically transparent worship means that someone coming into your church for either the first or the 1,000th time will not encounter technical or artistic issues that will interfere with providing them a total, enveloping, immersive worship experience that prepares their mind and soul to be impacted by God. This is an ideal or a mission statement, if you will" (Gowing 2010). From Gowing's perspective, technology can have the ability to prepare the body of the congregant for impact. Like a crash position during flight, technology readies the body for the power of God.

Technically transparent worship requires a process to enact and perfect it. Gowing suggests that this begins with "Vision-casting", planning, organizing, practicing, implementing and troubleshooting. Vision-casting is,

> when the team responsible for the Sunday service environment sits down together and determines how the environment should be set up to reflect the message that is going to be given. Vision casting starts with the pastor explaining what the content of the sermon is about and what the main point of the message is. Bottom line: WHAT DO WE WANT THE CONGREGATION TO TAKE AWAY AND RETAIN? Once the team (pastor, worship leader, technical leader, design leader) understands what the point of the message is that's when the fun begins (Gowing 2011b, emphasis in original).

Stewards learn to erase their own presence through the attempts to render the technologies they manage invisible. Gowing reminds:

> Remember, the tech team ministry is unique. We have the ability to impact the entire congregation, either positively or negatively. While a musician can miss a

> note and no one will probably notice, if we miss a cue to turn on a mic or play a video, everyone notices. We are the invisible ministry. If we do our jobs correctly no one should ever be aware that we're doing anything (2011a).

Gowing understands technically transparent worship as the attempt to keep technologies in control through stewardship in order to mediate worship. Technicians who subscribe to this notion of transparency learn to conceptualize technology as inert and capricious, as enabling and subversive, as objects that require attending to and eschew attempts at control. Ultimately, this is a way of seeing and understanding objects. Moreover, understanding technology as lively means that technicians also act and embody dispositions towards technology to reflect this belief in its capacities. I recall a conversation at the TFW Pavilion during one of the conference events: a man named Samuel[59] sat down beside me and pulled a picture out of his shirt pocket. He was examining it, running his fingers over its frayed edges. He met my gaze and began to explain that the picture was of his audio console at his church. He carried a picture around so that he could show those he met the console that he mixed audio on. Obviously proud of his gear, he recounted a story of a strange buzzing noise that kept occurring. The buzzing noise came through the sanctuary speakers during Sunday services—this was unacceptable. Samuel was determined to understand what was happening. He checked every connection, replaced cabling, and even opened up the console to check if there were any loose wires. Nothing seemed to make a difference. The buzzing noise continued. By this time, the pastor had come to talk about the noise. Samuel was getting desperate to fix the problem. As a last resort, Samuel checked the current flowing though the buildings electrical system. He found that it was what he called "dirty power". It was inconsistent and the outlet into which the console plugged was not grounded

[59] This is a pseudonym.

properly. He was so relieved to have solved the problem and kept the picture in his pocket as a provocation to share his story. Samuel's story demonstrates how his console required attention—how it was making itself felt by sending a buzzing noise through the system. Samuel learned what a disposition for listening to the console could mean for creating "transparent" technologized worship.

The motivation to engineer immersive experiences that presence God and erase technology come from the understanding that "technology has a tendency to draw attention to itself" (Roberts & Smith n.d). Although former Calvary Church evangelical pastor Chuck Smith Jr., sees the value of "the culturally relevant, rock-n-roll worship, hippie church" by treating Christianity as a dialogue (Goffard 2006), he still questions technology's role:

> One of the inherent dangers of technology is that it can be used to fabricate an experience. Worship that stirs the emotions always runs the risk of going no further—i.e., we are supposed to worship God in spirit. An experience that is driven by technology runs an even greater risk of leaving worshippers spiritually dry if the important elements of worship have not been incarnated. God uses people to lead and inspire people. A godly worship leader has an effect on the hearts and spirits of the worshippers that technology cannot duplicate (n.d.).

From this vantage, technology is the lifeless and cold antithesis to the effects of a "godly worship leader" or God's "Speech that generates faith". Again, we are reminded that technology is a tool; yet it contains capacities that trouble its definition as mere tool. Smith notes that technology can fabricate an experience. In one sense of the word fabricate, technology creates, assembles and constructs. It also carries with it a second meaning of fabricate, from Smith's perspective, to forge or fake. I understand this duality of assembly and forgery to signal a powerful motivation behind technically transparent worship: as technology assembles, its presence threatens to overwhelm the worship experiences, pushing it towards the stirring of

emotion, but no further. Only when technicians erase technology's presence is the relationship between worship practice and performance purified (Latour 1993). Purification, says Latour, "creates two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand; that of nonhumans on the other" (1993:10-11). Technology stewards, through embodied attempts to ensure the purity of the mediated message through rendering technology transparent, attempt to reinforce the separation of people and objects in the production of worship practice. The control of devices is a sacred act.

Church Smith Jr. also cautions his readers about the power of technology to embolden the effect of worship: "Technology can also exaggerate our experience. The role of technology is to enlarge and enhance—for example, it sends our voice further and perhaps gives it more force. Therefore, technology can give significant energy to a worship service that is poorly planned, mediocre, or may not even be biblical" (Roberts & Smith n.d.). Again, he locates the power of technology as a force, albeit ambivalent, that amplifies regardless of content or quality. Keeping the force of technology at bay then becomes one of the goals of technically transparent worship.

In contrast to Smith, Brian Gowing, advocating for technically transparent worship, locates the ability of technology not in the ability to forge experiences, but in its capacity to create the possibility for "impact". Gowing appears to see no conflict with technology as the catalyst for immersion, in contrast to Smith who locates that ability in a "godly worship leader" (Roberts & Smith n.d.). What can technology do and not do? Smith and Gowing, read together, distinguish the complexity of technology use for many evangelicals: its presence requires stewardship, management and often attempts at erasure. Conceptualized in multiple registers then, technology elides qualification as mere tool in order to elicit impassioned responses to its

presence and use.

A sense of uncanny activity permeates the relationship stewards build with their audio, video and lighting devices and precipitates attempts to erase or render transparent the work that technologies do in the production of worship practice. Yet, technology is animated in sometimes pernicious ways by spirit *others* and so Gowing relates that, "After 15 years of working in the technical field I am a firm believer that Satan inhabits electronics. If anything can go wrong with electronics it usually happens at the worst possible time!" (2011a). When things go wrong it hints at the life and vitality of technical objects and evangelicals speculate about the nature of that life and vitality in attempts to contour what it means to be a technology steward. Technologies animacy, at least from the perspective of many U.S. evangelicals, exceeds their capacity to conceptualize the worlds in which they operate (Bogost 2012, Bryant 2011).

Stewards understand that technology harbors an uncanny ability to act in unintended ways and that this insight must guide their technology purchases towards righteous ends. Creating a transparent worship experience requires the right technologies or tools to effect the erasure of their use. Anthony Coppedge is a church market consultant, TFWM writer, and contributor to Rave Publications House of Worship Market newsletter. He has argued that there are two kinds of churches: those who are small and have few funds and those he calls 'cheap churches', "whose finances are run by a group that hides under the phrase 'we're just being good stewards' to justify the efforts of getting blood out of a turnip" (Coppedge 2013). Coppedge suggests that responsible stewardship, unlike cheap church stewardship, has "less to do with how much money they save and more to do with how much money they don't waste trying to fix the original problem with additional repeated purchases" (2013). This 'responsible' understanding of

stewardship, that value trumps cost, competes with the cheap church mentality that products and services should be provided free. Coppedge offers the following advice to technology manufacturers and church consultants on how to avoid the cheap church: "Marketing efforts aimed at churches need to identify the demographic, speak their language without speaking down to them, and provide a solid value proposition to keep price from being at the center of the discussion" (2013). The crux of Coppedge's advice hinges on the ability, as we have already explored, to translate device specifications into capabilities that will be valuable for church practice. The "solid value proposition" reflects this emphasis on how the technology will contribute to the goals of the church—namely growth. Financial stewardship thus takes on multiple valences, depending on the church and its dispositions towards the role and management of technology—it can reflect the abrasive attitudes of the cheap church or speak to the responsible management of church funds.

At Neighbours Church, for example, the realities of financial stewardship and the need to stretch limited funds are a source for creativity and frustration. Michael, as we will hear in what follows, attempted to create technical systems from the technologies-at-hand—or using low-cost consumer (versus professional) grade equipment. Stewardship at Neighbours—from a financial and technological perspective—provides a glimpse of situated understandings of objects-in-action. As Lucy Suchman suggests, and this is relevant for human/technological relationships at Neighbours, "persons and machines as contingently stabilized through particular, more or less durable, arrangements whose reiteration and/or reconfiguration is the cultural and political project of design" (2007:285)—in this case, the design of a worship environment. As I explored the design and configuration of worship systems at Neighbours, it was an opportunity to see the

ways technology use contingently stabilizes the relationship between technician and technology. Talking about the nature of technology offered an opening for Michael to clarify and situate himself in relation to the devices he uses.

Neighbours Church and stewardship: "It's not the technology, it's the people"

Michael, technical director at Neighbours Church, followed his heart to worship production. When God spoke to his heart as a young man, he committed to learning to use technology to spread the word of Jesus. After working to create a quasi-stable worship production system at Neighbours, Michael espoused two conflicting viewpoints about the role and capacity of technology at Neighbours that more broadly exemplify the tensions of technology use for worship. On one hand, technology is a mere tool with no other special capacities—something that becomes part of a pieced-together system of devices. On the other, at Neighbours technology is something that invites prayer and deliberation to ensure it functions properly. Even with prayer, devices often act in unintended ways. The sense that Michael and others at Neighbours make of these malfunction events invites us to explore how technology stewardship takes shape in a local context amidst the pressures of quasi-failing nervous technical systems and financial stewardship.

As I noted earlier, Michael's role as a technology and financial steward was complicated due to the scarcity of funds available for purchasing and implementing new technologies at Neighbours. From his perspective, Michael became adept at using or creating do-it-yourself alternatives instead of professional performance gear. Arguably, his quasi-failing system, while financially responsible, did not represent responsible technology stewardship. If technology

stewardship means using technology to create immersive, excellent and relevant experiences, then Michael's system failed. Michael demonstrates that for small churches with ambitions for growth, the inherent tensions in the dialogism between technology and financial stewardship creates a technical system that defies expectations about excellent worship practice as often as confirming them.

One cool, rainy Sunday morning I arrive at Neighbours early to be present as many of the congregants arrive for the second service. Michael walks around chatting with people. When he makes his way to me, we chat about the turn in the weather and speculate on when the first snow will arrive. The conversation turns to my research and I pose a question to him, the content of which animated my early thinking on the topic of religion and technology. I ask Michael his perspective on the idea that feedback is the evidence of sin (a common understanding for those at the trade events and in perspectives we have already explored). He looks annoyed and remarks, "that's a technical, not spiritual, problem. Everywhere gets feedback sometimes. Sin manifests through evidence of wrongdoing—like drug addiction—because it's addictive bad things will happen to you but [sin won't manifest] through technical malfunction. That comment is based on fear, on creating fear, when everyone is really a sinner. When something goes wrong it's not the technology, it's the people". Humans are fallible, according to Michael; subject to the whims, desires, and temptations of the world. Technology stands apart yet is subject to human error and author of potentially transformative experiences. The effect of technology use depends, indicates Michael, on the way it is being used.

Michael orders the world based on the understanding that the bible is a literal source for guidance and direction, but where it does not address an issue, he improvises. When I tell him

one day that I am going to Australia for a trade show, we begin talking about Hillsong Church (a world-famous Australian evangelical church). He is critical of their use of technology as "too secular". I am not sure what he means, so he explains that they are "less into the substance of the gospel and they are using the gospel to sell". What he means is "people leave church when they hear something that talks about their sin. Then they leave and go to a different church. They have no loyalty, it's too easy." What Michael is referring to is the contemporary move in some churches towards emphasizing the "good news" gospel, focussed on God's love and acceptance rather than the legacies of original sin. His understanding of the correct ways to use technology—religiously not secularly—informs his stewardship and ability to confront difficult topics, challenging a congregant to confront their own actions as sinful and seek redemption.

Michael's denouncement of particular modes of use signals the trouble many evangelicals have with technologized worship. It can augment, extend or exemplify the Word or it can slip into modes of performance that do not properly attend to the dedicated work involved in bringing someone to Christ. By invoking the notion that performance is "too secular" it recalls popular ideas that technology itself is a disenchanted product of modern technological development. David Noble, a historian of technology and its relationship to religion, in contrast argues persuasively that:

> For modern technology and modern faith are neither complements nor opposites, nor do they represent succeeding stages of human development. They are merged, and always have been, the technological enterprise being, at the same time, an essentially religious endeavor. This is not meant in a merely metaphorical sense, to suggest that technology is similar to religion in that it evokes religious emotions of omnipotence, devotion and awe, of that it has become a new (secular) religion in and of itself, with its own clerical caste, arcane ritual, and articles of faith. Rather it is meant literally and historically, to indicate that modern technology and religion have evolved together and that, as a result, the

> technological enterprise has been and remains suffused with religious belief (1997:3).

The perspective that has taken root at Neighbours suggests that the history that Noble articulates resonates, at least tangentially, with Michael. Considering his calling to head a technical ministry within the church, he recognized the importance of using technology for worship early in his life. Finding no contradiction with technologized worship, he pursued his position within the church.

At Neighbours, Michael's understanding of technology still leans towards its latent ability to intercede in worship events through malfunctioning despite his assertion that malfunctioning equipment is solely as result of human error. As such, I often observed Michael and his team begin a service by praying over the gear as a weekly ritual to ensure that it performed properly. Despite prayers and the best intentions of Michael, sometimes things happened that disrupted the service. These events provided an opportunity for Michael and his team to make sense of their relationships with technology as they negotiated them in practice.

During the second service one Sunday the main sanctuary projector began to malfunction. At first, its light bulb began to fail and display the PowerPoint slides dimly on the screen behind William. Then it began to cut out and fade to black. In the control booth, Michael scrambled to reset the projector. Michael mused that it was lucky he had a spare bulb on hand considering their cost. In the meantime, while Michael worked to swap the projector bulb, William related an anecdote he, and the congregation, found quite funny. One of William's friends decided to leave a radio on in his shed. He left it tuned to Neighbours radio station. Sometime during the night, a skunk made its way into the shed where it subsequently died. William's friend relayed this story to him and they mused that maybe it was one of William's sermons that had struck the skunk dead. As the group chuckled at the suggestion, William

continued that it was his sermon that killed the projector. Albeit in jest, William speculated on the nature of the technological trouble and reveals that to him, technology may possess an openness to influence and the capacity to convey a force that can kill skunks and respond to the dynamics of his sermon. The death of the bulb was a breach in the progression of the event, an open liminality where speculation on the nature of things was possible and a juncture at which financial stewardship and technological stewardship intersected—heightening the awareness that their system was fragile. Their speculations on the death of the projector demonstrate how an integral part of stewardship at Neighbours is speculation about the lives and deaths of devices. Malfunction, despite disrupting the service, made their speculation possible and helped to reveal the relationship the projector has with all the elements that surround it. Akin to the speculations at Neighbours, in the following section, I situate the nature of technology use and its capacity to trouble the sometimes-uncanny relationships between steward and device.

"Technology left unexamined"

> *"The anthropologist leaps to decoding the ritual for its meaning so quickly that the means of accomplishing it, the material stuff by which ritual is effected, is glossed over" (Meneley 2008:307).*

> *"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." Arthur C. Clark (2000 [1962]).*

Performance technologies, the material stuff of ritual practice, call to stewards, eliciting their involvement in the production of worship practice. Stewards like Michael from Neighbours, attempt to manage and control technologies, keeping things in their proper place and in good working order despite financial scarcity. For evangelicals, like Michael, the tensions of

technology use manifest in the shifting conceptualizations of the role, import and capacities of technologies. I understand these uncertainties as situating practitioners within a material-discursive milieu that reveals an embodied mode of apprehending, not only the tool-being of technology (Heidegger 1996[1953], Harman 2010) but its potential, its openness, and its latent vitality (Bogost 2012, Bryant 2011). How practitioners learn to produce worship practice depends on how they apprehend the nature of technology: is it merely a tool or does it reject its own disenchantment? How do stewards negotiate this juncture?

The uncanny nature and becoming-idol of technology shifts attention from God towards the technological experience. The evangelicals I spoke with recognize the potential for technology to trouble the idea that it is mere tool. As a result, they devote considerable effort through training and education to quarantine technology through their material-discourses, repeating and reaffirming its status as a tool and nothing more. Jeremy Stolow has explored the relationship between religion and technology and through analysis of 19th century spirit communication. In the introduction to a volume edited by Stolow devoted to religion and technology, he suggests that the repression of magic, the "purified" middle ground between "the tangible and merely ponderable" of science and religion, has laid

> the groundwork for further elaborations of technology as a 'disenchanted' realm of tools, devices, techniques and expert knowledges governed by its own internal logic: a realm religious actors can only approach from the outside. And yet magic, the excluded middle, has never simply disappeared. As emphasized by a growing body of scholars . . . modernity is pervasively haunted by its very effort to disenchant the world (Stolow 2013:9).

The impetus behind drawing attention to the pervasive haunting of modernity is for Stolow to show how magic and technicality have been set in opposition by thinkers such as Weber and Heidegger. In so doing, divorcing magic from ritual practice, the technical aspects of

religion become spiritless. This is seen, says Stolow, in "interpretations of religious fundamentalism, which is often castigated for its 'spiritless' textual literalism and its emphasis on the 'machine-like' precision of ritual practice" (2013:12). Moreover, it is the modern realm of disenchanted technology that is based on "a fundamental divide between human and nonhuman agents. This is what makes technology threatening for authentic human experience, including the modes of ethical living that are said to shape religious ways of being-in-the-world" (Stolow 2013:13). I am not arguing that humans and technology occupy distinct categories, merely that these categories are the topic of speculation among evangelicals who work closely with performance technologies. The speculations of technology stewards on the nature of technology alerted me to the sense that enchantment, or the continued liveliness of objects, persists when stewards learn to commit to the everyday interactions with machines they may not fully understand. Anthropologist Alfred Gell suggests, "The enchantment of technology is the power that technical processes have of casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form" (1992:44). What he means is that the ways objects "come into the world", their biographies if you will, are their "source of power" (Gell 1992:46). For evangelicals, especially technology stewards, examining technology means trying to understand the role it plays, its history and purpose, and the ways its arrival on the worship scene can change worship practice.

Through research on stewardship and contemporary evangelicalism, I encountered the writing of John Dyer, a curious mix of theologian and computer programmer. In his writing, he attempts to come to terms with the nature of technological change and its relation to shifts in cultural and worship practices. Following the cue of Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman, Dyer examines the "media ecology" (Dyer 2011:16, cf. Helmreich 2007) of US evangelicalism and its

relationship to technology. Recounting a story of his experience as a Youth Pastor using a projector and screen to talk about the Scriptures, Dyer relates that,

> this situation opened my eyes to how the technologies that surround us can have an impact on something as intimate as how we encounter the Scriptures. I imagined that the projector would level the playing field and give everyone equal access to the Word of God. In my mind, a projector was a perfectly normal thing to bring into a church. All I was doing was taking the unchanging, eternal, inerrant Word of God and transferring it to a newer, better medium that had the power to reach more students. I never considered that the projector would completely transform the way my students encountered God's Word. . . . Whereas I initially considered not bringing a Bible to church a tragedy, I soon realized that believers have only been doing this for the last few centuries. . . . Looking back on what happened in my youth pastor days, the projector had actually allowed my kids to experience God's Word in a way much more similar to the pre-printing press era. (2011:23).

Dyer poignantly conveys the mode of embodiment that technical stewardship presupposes and he advocates a keen eye to the effects of technology while attempting to situate and recover it within theological precepts. While trying to negotiate an amorphous and universalized view of technology, he continues to locate it strictly within a technological determinist framework. For Dyer, the cultural effects of technological change must be weighed carefully against the potential for technology to drive change. Dyer argues that,

> While God's words are eternal and unchanging, the tools we use to access those words do change, and those changes in technology also bring subtle changes to the practice of worship. When we fail to recognize the impact of such technological change, we run the risk of allowing our tools to dictate our methods. Technology should not dictate our values or our methods. Rather, we must use technology out of our convictions and values (2011:25).

Moreover, situating technology as something with the ability to determine methods or change worship practice, Dyer concludes, "[w]hen technology has distracted us to the point that we no longer examine it, it gains the greatest opportunity to enslave us" (Dyer 2011:28). From this vantage, technology appears to have the capacity to exert some force on its users, on its

interlocutors. More than merely tool, it extends itself into the affairs of worship practice only for stewards to regard it with doubt and derision. Dyer's perspective speaks to the uncertainty latent in evangelical uses of technology—there is the underlying sense that, in a determinist fashion, the technology will act on its own, or worse, through the machinations of evil spirit *others*, act in ways that undermine the Message. Although, if you will recall, Michael notes, it is not always the technology responsible for failures; it can be the people too, because "people are sinners". What Michael's perspective reveals is the gravity of stewardship: it concerns the nature of the person as much as it considers the nature of technology.

In practical terms, for those stewards working with technology within the church, there is an understanding that they should regard its nature and capacities carefully. Churches purchase technology because of its capabilities, but those capabilities can present a source of uncertainty or concern: the feeling among evangelicals is that the greater the technological complexity the more its operators have the potential to lose control. Only the truly devoted should operate technology and that those in contact with it must be ever vigilant to ensure it remains within the kingdom of control. A praise and worship composer, leading member of the Jesus Movement and founder of the Vineyard Church, and former member of the Calvary Church movement put it this way:

> I've learned it [technology] has amazing benefits that enhance my ability to connect with and actually build the Body of Christ. I've also learned it has the potential of taking over my life and—via one simple click—even opening doors to all kinds of insidious evil. Technology is like money. It can be used by a surrendered disciple of Jesus to accomplish amazing things for the kingdom, or it can be used by the enemy who seeks to destroy that kingdom. May we always be alert to discern whose idea any given technology is at any given time—and that its use in our churches is a means to advance the Kingdom of God to His Glory. (Gulliksen 2010: 34).

According to Gulliksen, technology becomes a threshold through which any number of forces may pass. The technology steward manages the potential for passage. If you will recall, Massumi suggests that contemporary forms of power "puts the paths in us, so by the time we learn to follow its constraints we're following ourselves" (2003:223). The *path* on which stewards walk, the *path* that they embody disposes them towards technology use in a way that forces them to recognize the latent potentials of things. Their sense of embodiment is heightened through conceptualizing and attempting to control devices that both submit to and avoid attempts at absolute control. Stephen Pattison (2012), Professor of Religion, Ethics, and Practice, writing on the sensorial aspects of living religion and its relationship to the material world, suggests that it is these *intimate interactions* with objects that shape religious life. He notes that,

> [w]ithin religious traditions, even those that claim formally to be non-materialistic and anti-iconic and anti-idolatrous, there are rich veins of person-like relations with artifacts that help to mediate and make real religious reality. People become imbricated and tangled up with artifacts, sometimes surprisingly or accidentally, in such a way that it becomes possible to say that they are having meaningful relations in which many of the qualities of relationship that characterize relations with humans, including intentionality, agency, and affection, are apparent. Indeed, some people become more engaged with intimate artifacts and possessions than they do with other people (Pattison 2012:198).

As Pattison notes, technology can elicit an engagement that vies for the attention of stewards, sometimes becoming an idol. Stewards get tangled up with things as they attempt to use these sophisticated technologies to augment sound, suffuse a room with light and shadow or stream a crafted video. Stewards must to explain when devices malfunction and so pre-service rituals like praying over the technology are a means to pre-empt the brash visibility of technology and disruption of the worship service.

Engineering sound is never solely about sound itself. For stewards, "spiritual aspects" situating sound in relation to scripture together with the "unchanging truth" of the Message, inform engineering sound. Ensuring consistently "good" sound is a challenge for even experienced engineers. Understanding that *relevant* and *excellent* worship practice is as much a demonstration of faith as it is of gifted capacity was the subject of Troy Reit's sound engineering manual. If you will recall, I found the manual Troy had written in the TFWM office one day, held precariously together with a binder clip.

Reit, like many of the other evangelicals I met, took a Pauline approach to ministry by situating his sound engineering advice through exploring Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians, where Paul acknowledges the giftedness of all church members. Similar to WFX presenter Ed Stetzer, Reit suggests, paraphrasing Paul's message, that

> No one part of the human body can do without the other: a hand would not be able to go anywhere without the feet, and, even if it could, it couldn't do anything without a good set of eyes to guide it. In the same way, worship and ministry teams are made up of a variety of people, each with different gifts and abilities that contribute to a whole ministry. With each of the gifts comes an inherent level of visibility, depending on what role a person is filling (2005:7).

Recognizing and activating gifts insofar as it leads to "visibility" within the church, ironically relies on rendering technology invisible or transparent. Reit also understands the characteristics of a good audio engineer, which he lists as, calling, communication, giftedness, experience, musical background, heart, and passion (2005:7-11). To be called to serve in the technical ministry, Reit suggests, is more than merely be called to volunteer: one must be called by God specifically into a technical position lest one waste their time or worse "disobey Him" by pursuing a position contrary to their gifts (Reit 2005:8). Communication is a skill, that if lacking, Reit attributes to the dissolution of many technical teams. Giftedness, as in prior chapters, says

Reit, is God-given and activated through attention and devotion to its dimensions. Experience is the aptitude that comes from practice and repetition. Musical background, Reit notes, can simply be the experience of listening to the radio and is not tied to music performance. Heart encompasses service, humility and assertiveness; heart is the sense that one serves in a team with others that will sometimes offer challenge to the ways things are done. Passion is both an asset and a lure:

> Passion drives a technician to look for better ways of doing things and ignites creativity with new missional styles, special effects, and more effective ways of communicating to people. Passion is what takes the technical portion of a service beyond the ordinary, expected or mundane and makes it a true creative expression. . . . [A]ny creative expression [however,] needs to fall within the vision of the overall service. When your creativity turns from an enhancement of worship into a distraction from worship, . . . you've moved from being creative to being a nuisance (Reit 2005:11).

As I explored in prior chapters, many evangelicals consider cultivating, recognizing and enacting vision as a guiding force for worship practice. As Reit notes, understanding vision means negotiating a path between enhancement of worship practice and distraction from worship. Reit concludes, "the spiritual aspects of sound really provide the biggest checkpoint in this series to see if you're cut out for the technical stuff. The only exam is issued by God and is between you and Him. If you pass . . . then it's time to dig into the fun stuff!" (2005:12).

Sound is never merely the impressions of vibrations; for technicians the spiritual aspects of sound extend from a personal recognition of a calling or gift for engineering sound. For technicians the spiritual aspects of sound begin when their hands touch the mixing console. Endowing the appropriately gifted people with control of sound is a vetting process that, at least in this training course, begins through a personal recognition and commune with the "still small voice" (Reit 2005:12).

Listening to the still small voice and the voice of one's heart becomes an intimate of way mobilizing affective labour by disposing stewards towards forms of self-reflection and management. Stewardship heightens the sense that volunteerism is not simply exploitative affective labour; it is, in fact, a biblically sanctified position that, if performed well, demonstrates a commitment to biblical principles and faithful exaction of those tenets. As previous chapters argued, these spiritual economies within which stewards work often involved "reconfiguring labor as a form of religious worship . . . work in the world demonstrated one's devotion to God" (Rudnyckyj 2009:123). Creating durable dispositions to live out faith through labour "entail inculcating the ethical dispositions deemed conducive to market success" (Rudnyckyj 2009: 130). Stewardship, as Reit teaches, embodies dispositions that lend themselves towards the successful (and sometimes unsuccessful) use and management of performance devices.

As stewards learn to become accustomed to using a device they attempt to understand the dynamics of sound, light and shadow; the role of video or image, and the spiritual aspects of performance engineering. Jane Bennett, like Tim Ingold and his understanding of animism and the relational and mutual constitution of people and things, suggests that: "Instead of formative power detachable from matter, artisans (and mechanics, cooks, builders, cleaners, and anyone else intimate with things) encounter a creative materiality with incipient tendencies and propensities, which are variably enacted depending on the other forces, affects, or bodies with which they come into close contact" (Bennett 2010:56). Evangelical stewards learn to develop the familiarity with technologies under their charge that alerts them to technologies propensities.

Evangelicals seek to understand the point at which immersive technologized worship becomes more about the feeling of the immersive experience itself, and less about being moved

by the Spirit. They trouble the easy formulations of people and things that isolate and contain the limits of what is possible for worship practice. Their understanding of the world as composed of things unseen with which one can interact, which as Tanya Luhrmann (2012) persuasively argues, comes amidst great commitment and learning to see, hear and feel God in everyday life. I suggest that learning to interact with things unseen is not limited to personal relationships with God but inflects their technological worldview. Attempts to keep technology in its place presuppose a particular understanding of not only its role, but of its techno-ontological status (Turnbull 2009).

In this chapter, I have explored the role that technology and financial stewardship plays in the engineering of worship practice. I have traced the complexities of stewardship. Espoused during conference events and in the pages of trade publications, material-discourses of stewardship reveal that stewardship creates an opportunity to speculate on the natures of technology, on the causes of device failure, on the responsibilities stewards take in their management, and attempts to erase the presence of things at the apex of their participation in worship practice. At Neighbours Church, I explored how technical and financial stewardship intersect with speculations on the nature of technology use amidst occasions of malfunction and failure. The following chapter turns to the sensorial aspects of worship practice that is the elaboration of modes and methods for stewardship. It continues to track conceptualizations of excellence and relevance as it explores aspects of worship production and its relationship to idealized immersive experiences.

7. Sensorial forms of experience: the juncture of relevant and excellent worship

> *Technology is a tool. It is not God, but it seems that people are worshipping technology as a God! Nothing can take the place of a human person. That is my bottom line. Does not mean that I do not believe in technology but it does mean that I must know how to use technology to serve me. The technology is a servant, not a master. (Protestant seminary professor) (Kluver & Cheong 2007).*

For many evangelicals presencing a living, attentive God takes effort, practice and a concerted desire to engineer culturally relevant and excellent experiences. Performance technologies, like lighting consoles and rigs, audio capture, amplification and control devices, and video projections systems are configured together to form technical signal chains. These chains have the potential to engage the senses of the congregation insofar as they can speak and translate the signals they are sent. These sensorial technologies operate based on understandings of bodily capacities, limits and tolerances by modulating, amplifying, and augmenting sound, light and colour. Operating within what manufacturers and their engineers consider to be colour spectrums and decibel ranges that are consonant with the capacities of human senses, these technologies aid attempts to create a surreal and immersive sense of the divine within worship spaces.

The previous chapters explored the creation of house of worship and their reliance on education. I have also situated how translation, keywords and vocabularies reveal the relationship between spiritual economies and worship experiences, and the complexities of the role of technology steward. The present chapter turns towards considering some of the methods, the *sensational forms*, for engineering of worship practice advocated during conference and trade events and by worship market insiders, such as Donny Haulk, who is the owner of the production company that helped facilitate the TFW Pavilion during my research.

Evangelicals using performance technologies for worship practice try to speak to the heart of congregants; they try to create worship experiences that make congregants feel as though they are in the presence of God and the Holy Spirit. Anthropologists Birgit Meyer and Jojada Verrips (2008), writing on the anthropological turn towards the aesthetics of religious practice, offer the notion of *sensational forms* to "grasp the link between aesthetics and experience" (27). Meyer and Verrips "take as a starting point those religious forms that organize encounters between human beings and the divine, as well as each other, and make individual religious experience intersect with transmitted, shared forms" (2008:27). They suggest that these "forms" are "relatively fixed, authorized modes of invoking and organizing access to the transcendental" (Meyer and Verrips 2008:27).

The present research departs from Meyer and Verrips in some key ways. Within U.S. evangelicalism there is a fluidity of worship practices that are "authorized". The most common shared aspect is the pacing of a service: its peaks and valleys of sentiment and tempo, which prepare the congregation to receive the Word are often similar between churches. However, the methods used to pace the service differ and are not "relatively fixed". Some churches may, for example, use contemporary pop songs instead of hymns or have their own worship band play original compositions during the service. Some churches show videos they have filmed and produced themselves to demonstrate the themes of the service, while others are content, like Neighbours, with using PowerPoint slides. Many churches use their sound systems as a way to "impact" the body of the congregant with sound, while others prefer to keep the volume low and subdued. Other churches may use their lighting and projection systems to "paint" the walls of the sanctuary transforming the space from drab and colourless to suffuse with colour and imagery.

Still others, like Neighbours, hold, by choice or circumstance, pared down events with few lights and no comprehensive sound systems. All these methods (and many more) make up contemporary evangelical worship practice and are all, in a sense, "authorized". The diversity of acceptable practices makes U.S., and potentially global, evangelicalism unique. That is not to suggest that evangelicals, like Michael from Neighbours for example, do not police the boundaries of acceptable practice, but criticism does not authorize or deny any particular set of practices more broadly.

Donny Haulk, in his book: *God's Laws of Communication: Exploring the physiology and technology of worship*, explores the sensorial aspects of worship engineering. He has refined his ideas through presenting widely throughout the U.S. and Europe—I attended many of his seminars during research at the TFW Pavilion. Donny's company, incidentally, in addition to being the production partner for the TFW Pavilion also became a production partner with WFX during my research. His company produced the keynote during which Ed Stetzer spoke in 2010 as well as all of the TFW Pavilions from 2006-2010.

Engineering relevant, impactful worship according to Donny Haulk, is underpinned by ideas about the body and the senses. Haulk understands "The body" to have certain stable capacities, certain tolerances and the manipulation of these capacities or tolerances can produce an affective engagement. The senses, for Donny, resolve into discrete channels: hearing, seeing, smelling and touching. Donny often placed a more concentrated focus on sound and hearing because he trained and toured as a professional musician (Haulk 2011). During the Professional Lighting and Staging Association (PLASA) event in London, UK in 2008 I heard Donny talk for the first time about culturally relevant worship environments and the importance of cultivating

particular understandings about the physiological import of worship practice, although he had presented at conferences I had attended prior. In the years that followed, I had occasion to hear Donny speak in detail about his understanding of the relationship between technology and the body as he taught seminars during events at the TFW Pavilion.

At PLASA 2008, on the dimly lit show floor at Earl's Court Convention Centre, Donny led a seminar on the relationship between the body of the congregant and the way that technology creates worship experiences. With all the seats occupied during his talk, more attendees gathered to stand around the training area. Similarly to U.S. events, the majority of attendees were men, notebooks in hand, who listened attentively as he spoke. During one memorable moment in the seminar, Donny declared, "The chest cavity resonates at 80 Hz". The ideal audio system, he suggested, can *impact and literally resonate* the body of the congregant or visitor using certain frequencies and volumes. Donny argued that the impact of worship engineered in this way is both impact in the sense of being emotional or spiritually "moving", but also direct impact in the sense of collision: that is, the physical resonation of the body by sound produces an impact.

Haulk's model of the senses reifies the body as a stable materiality that is distinct from the world around it—he likens the body to a "human machine" (Haulk 2011:34). The "human machine" he suggests, is one machine among many in technologized worship. In one respect his understanding of the body as a "passive receiver of sensation" (Crary 1990:75), is not unlike nineteenth-century identifications of the body that do not yet recognize "a subject who was both a site and producer of sensation" (Crary 1990:75). In another respect, Haulk acknowledges the body's embeddedness in the world around it. Yet, while the body may be part of its surrounding,

Haulk understands there to be "The body" and "The world" around it. Donny's mechanical model of the body is consistent with the design of performance technologies. Their capacities rely on the understanding that any audience shares and embodies stable tolerances. A technology's "impact" relies on understandings of physics and its relationship to this unified and stable body.

In Haulk's 2011 book, he suggests, "[s]ound comes to us in waves that reflect off our head, shoulders and outer ear. When those waves bounce more than once or interfere with other waves before reaching the tympanic membrane, it causes changes in volume and quality" (2011: 51). Haulk suggests that the directness of the transmission, how quickly and efficiently it can reach the inner part of the congregant's ear, ensures clarity and sound quality—enabling them to experience the "impact" of the Word. Erasing distance through audio clarity makes the congregation feel as though the pastor is speaking directly to them, encouraging a personal relationship with God.

Anthropologist Stefan Helmreich (2013) explores how scientific understandings about potentiality and wave energy format conceptions of bodies and the quantification of human life through electromagnetic resonance scans of hearts and brains. Helmreich pays "attention to how dynamics and models of "waves" of energy format the way scientists apprehend bodies and bodily processes as emplaced in time" (2013:S140). Using Helmreich's consideration of the formatting of bodies through the cultivation of particular kinds of attention, I continue to explore how, for Haulk, creating a worship environment with sound relies on "fixed" apprehensions of the ways sound works in spaces with "good acoustics".

> Good acoustics refer to an environment in which sound behaves in ways which we intend—where verbal and musical communication is, well, pleasantly

> intelligible. How does this occur? Sound waves travel in straight lines, and depending on the texture it hits, will either bounce or become absorbed. Listen to a person speaking in a cavernous stone room; their voice, without much vocal effort, will bounce a long time before it fades. Compare that to someone speaking in a bedroom with soft walls, blankets, pillows and drapes. You won't hear much reverberation at all in this plush atmosphere. The amount of time it takes for sound to die, also known as 'decay time,' is much shorter than in the big, stone room. In general, shorter decay time in sound equals a higher sense of perceived intimacy (Haulk 2011:105).

Haulk's understanding of sound posits a body that perceives intimacy through the erasure of distance in the sanctuary that surrounds the congregation. Church sanctuaries are composed of reverberant surfaces that both absorb sound and refract it making direct, clear transmission an act of concerted effort and engineering on the part of technicians. Contemporary performance technologies, like wireless microphones for example, make intimacy in a large space possible.

Andy Crouch, author and executive editor of Christianity Today, a periodical started by Billy Graham, and one that has informed the content of this project, suggests that the power of wireless microphones, looped over the ear and hidden, is profound. He suggests that,

> Not every preacher, to be sure, uses this kind of earpiece. In many Pentecostal churches, the microphone itself becomes a valuable prop, held aloft or pulled close to the lips or, at moments of maximum intensity, held a foot away from the mouth to avoid overdriving the speakers. In these settings the microphone is used to deliver sonic force, to tangibly amplify the voice of the preacher. It becomes an instrument in its own right, part of the preacher's panoply of rhetorical power.
>
> But in many churches, the wireless headset sets a very different tone. Its goal is not volume—it is intimacy. An audience of thousands hears not the thundering strains of a dramatically amplified voice; instead, they are able to hear a single person speaking as if that person was talking directly to them, face to face, friend to friend (Crouch 2013).

Together sonic force and rhetorical power, suggests Crouch, are premised on creating intimacy. The closeness and concentration of a "single person speaking", enabled by a wireless, over the ear microphone creates, as Haulk would say, the opportunity for the Word to reach the

inner ear quickly and directly. What Crouch and Haulk point to is the relationship between technologies, worship practice and the bodies of the congregation. This interplay or forces (technology, practice and bodies) together create something potentially transformative or fail to find a route to the heart.

Using Haulk's understanding of engineered worship, the congregational body is composed of individuals with abilities to sense in similar ways. A wave of sound passes from the speakers and contacts bodies using the chest cavity as resonance chamber. The personal bodies of the congregation experience disciplining in a contemporary media and worship style designed around relying on and producing regularities. "It's pretty amazing," suggests Haulk, "how God designed us to be able to see, hear, experience then react to the environment that surrounds us. As a designer of thousands of worship spaces, I have spent years studying people, how we absorb information, and how we are affected by various stimuli in our environment" (2011:53). From Haulk's perspective, the capacities of technology and of bodies must be consistent in order to construct a technical signal chain in a church reliably. However, neither bodies nor technologies always act as anticipated; they both bring their bodily biographies to bear on the worship event.

Technical devices, like the congregation, also move and become disciplined. They become accustomed to certain positions, as audio faders are adjusted, set, and programmed. Volumes are set and reset and buttons show their use. Coffee spilt by technicians becomes part of the character of the soundboard. The lights fail or stare dejectedly at the edges of the room for reasons unknown to the technical crew. These configurations, bringing technologies, bodies, practices and spaces together portend the potential for sensory engagements that author a sense

of immediacy (Bolter & Grusin 1999). These configurations are not static, nor are they evenly distributed through the evangelical landscape; they are multivalent and trace the shifting distribution of power as it informs ideas about technologized worship.[60]

Haulk suggests that interaction within a space occurs through the technical arrangement and augmentation of the environment. With deliberate engineering, the senses of the congregation converge in the textures, densities and atmospheres of the worship environment.[61] Framing the role of lighting technology plays in the creation of particular types of experiences, Haulk advises that:

> If you're trying to inspire more interaction within your congregation, it's important to make sure there's enough space to foster open communication. Studies have shown that people like to talk and fellowship when under a general lighting level of 45-55 footcandles or above. As one decreases the lighting in a space, the talking will decrease as well. Even more, when the level gets below 20-25 footcandles, people will start to speak with hushed voices. 10-15 footcandles, they start to whisper (2011:81).

Modulating light, for Haulk, sets the conditions for particular kinds of exchanges. What this conveys about engineered worship practice is the degree of attentiveness to the composure of a space; how it is lit, how it sounds, and how it feels that (ideally) comes together as an immersive, comprehensive experience. The environment Haulk envisions blurs the lines between real and virtual. Haulk notes that "Today, the physical world is not limited to cloth, wood, stone and stained glass to communicate the Word of God. We are using electronics, sound, lights and

[60] Dr. Natasha Myers has reminded me of the vibratory milieus that Deleuze and Guattari suggest, "slide in relation to one another, over one another. Every milieu is vibratory, in other words, a block of space-time constituted by periodic repetition of the component. . . . Transcoding or transduction is the manner in which one milieu serves as the basis for another, or conversely is established atop another milieu, dissipates in it or in constituted in it" (1987:313). The milieu of technologized religion, as I am describing it, may sit atop the technical education provided at the TFW Pavilion, but may also be constituted in it.

[61] I take inspiration from Kathleen Stewart, who artfully suggests that "An atmospheric attunement is an alerted sense that something is happening and an attachment to sensing out whatever it is. It takes place within a world of some sort and it is itself a generative, compositional worlding" (2010:4).

video. These days, we are even capable of receiving God's Word from a holographic pastor" (2011:97).

Even when a holographic pastor speaks, he still addresses congregants whose bodily capacities have been "set out by God". Haulk argues God specially designed humans to be affected by the environments around them. Haulk understands the body and the role of technology for the engineering of "holy moment" experiences through the notion of impact that he shares in his teaching. His understandings of human stimulus—response reactions recall life science considerations of the relationship between embodiment, environment, and physics (Haulk 2011). Haulk, throughout his 2011 book, intersperses information about the speed of light, for example, or the "decay rate" of sound. I take his use of "scientific facts" to suggest that he believes the state of the natural world to be known and measurable according to "God's Laws", much as he believes "the body" to be. As such, he does not consider the subjectivities of congregants. As divinely designed machines, they are merely following the sensorial "programming" they have been endowed with by God. Haulk understands technology an instigator and catalyst for sensorial reaction.

In an engineered worship environment as Haulk describes it, the technological augmentation and configuration structures the relationships between people and creates opportunities for interpersonal engagement. The materiality of the world and all the tactile surfaces, observant things, and sensory incitements make up the relationship, or the configuration, that coheres in the experience of worship practice. In media saturated social worlds, technology becomes an integral catalyst for those reaching towards a relationship with God.

"Excellence doesn't just happen, it's by design"

Excellence is a node in a constellation of modalities that shape how technicians of technology stewards approach the production of worship. For stewards using technology with excellence means understandings how technical specifications and operations relate to worship practice. In turn, when technicians commit to excellence it signals a turn towards spiritual economies that make neoliberalism and spiritual practices consistent. If you will recall, spiritual economies render religious work as a spiritual duty, cultivated through endorsing practices that conform to neoliberal, growth oriented, principles (Rudnyckyj 2009:105-6). Excellence is often used by evangelicals to describe a commitment to modes of worship practice that signal attempts to achieve a level of professionalism and expertise regarding technology use usually reserved for professional broadcasters. For stewards, excellence is something cultivated and requiring commitment. Barry Cobus, TFWM co-founder often remarked that a commitment to excellence was lacking in the house of worship market generally; thus, he ensured it was a focus of educational efforts for TFWM. Yet, Barry was not the only one who recognized that a disposition towards using technology consistently and with an understanding of its functions was lacking among volunteer technicians within the church. At WFX seminars, excellence became a topic of discussion.

At WFX 2010, in a seminar room filled with people, Dave[62]—a young, white, media pastor from a large church in Dallas, TX—related that among his technical staff and volunteers there was "a heavy culture of critique at [his church] to make sure we're hitting the mark and delivering a level of excellence. We are running the script pretty tight. Some may say that there's

[62] This is a pseudonym.

no freedom for God to move in that… but we've done our due diligence. We're being intentional [by asking] is this going to flow, to be effective? We're being intentional with our time". Intentionality, as I explored in earlier chapters, and to which Dave alludes, concerns the effectiveness, the auditing of production and the experience it creates.

Excellence is something many evangelical technicians strive for; it is a marker and signal of attempts to achieve a level of expertise that will separate their church from others. Excellence signals a church's commitment to mobilizing affective labour—activating the gifts of volunteers towards becoming stewards. Stewards attempt to learn how to engineer meaningful and impactful experiences that will grow the church. For volunteer technicians, the pressure to succeed and manage production weighs heavily—especially when things go wrong.

Both technicians and the pastorate often measure excellence by the degree to which technology is transparent, heightening the feeling of pure transmission and the sensorial immediacy of the divinely inspired moment. In the context of evangelical worship practice, the desire for an immediate and personal experience of the divine is in tension with the apparent "hypermediacy" (Bolter & Grusin 1999:33) of contemporary worship at moments of malfunction, where technological presence intervenes in the progression of the event. A commitment to excellence by technicians is thus an attempt to engender dispositions and practices towards technology stewardship that forestall moments of rupture that draw attention to the malfunction of technology rather than the Word. To engineer excellent worship experiences that are immersive and immediate but also transparent presents the problem a TFW Pavilion presenter identifies, "Your visitors expect the same level of quality as what they see on TV or at a concert. If you're not delivering that level of excellence, they'll go to a church that is."

A pivotal seminar for my research occurred on the second last day of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) 2009 show in Las Vegas, NV. Donny Haulk led it. His seminar was held and drew full attendance at the TFW Pavilion. His thinking and speaking on "Creating Relevant Worship Environments" contained many of the prominent ideas, keywords and discourses that would come to frame the direction of my project. His subsequent publication of a book (mentioned above) containing many of his seminar topics has served as a reminder to help fill in the gaps in notes and memory. In what follows I recall NAB 2009 and Donny Haulk's seminar before turning to explore his publication. My focus on Donny signals his importance in the U.S. worship market as an inspiration to growth-oriented churches. His venue design and construction (also called Design/Build) company, which retrofits churches (and other secular spaces) with new audio, video and lighting systems, was one of the most active and well-known companies in the U.S. during my research and has since expanded their operations internationally.

All four immense halls in the Las Vegas Convention Centre were full for NAB 2009; vendor booths sat in rows from end to end. Halfway through a four-day show, attendees abandon the formality of finding a chair and instead lounge on the floor nestled against any open wall space. Massage chairs sit almost constantly occupied near the cafeteria—a testament to sore feet and aching backs. Meanwhile, at the TFW Pavilion, the praise and worship band has played its first set and attendees from houses of worship–technicians, pastors and volunteers–take a seat to take part in workshops: from hands-on training to the more conceptual aspects of worship production.

This morning all the seats are full for the session "Creating Relevant Worship

Environments." Donny began by framing the processes of ensuring production excellence to a group of mostly white men that sat in attendance. They were roughly mid-twenties in age while Donny was in his mid-forties. The attendees all sat on folding chairs in rows in front of the projection screen. With his warm southern drawl, he started by explaining that with a long history of worship engineering, time as a pastor and a degree in physics, he had a unique and well-informed perspective on what it takes to create a compelling worship experience.

In a worship context, he suggested, "It's not what you say, but what people hear you say. Relevance is a moving target." Using audio, video and lighting devices is not enough in itself; Houses of worship must learn to cultivate their vision for a relevant worship environment, he suggested, asking, "What has God led you to do?" Creating a relevant environment also relies on respecting "God's physical laws". Like in his book, Donny shared his views about the nature of human senses. The capacity for humans to hear, he suggested, originates from two sets of God's laws: spiritual laws and physical laws. Worship design, he argued, should pay respect to these laws. So, when feedback comes squealing through the speakers this is an affront to God's laws and thus, "Feedback is the evidence of sin in your physical life". He extolled the virtues (and potential pitfalls) of respect, or lack of it, for the physics of "God's physical laws", like those governing sound.

It is imperative that an audio technician or technology steward more generally have respect for these physical laws when designing a relevant worship environment. Otherwise, the transgression against these laws results in technical malfunction that detracts from the intelligibility and transmission of "the Word" and "the Message". Thus, Donny suggests, to create "high impact worship" one must follow the rules—God's physical laws—and have a plan.

Relevance, in addition to being a moving target for what the congregation will find culturally appropriate, deeply connects to the manner in which devices are used. As noted previously, the understanding that congregants expect professional quality production is common and stands as one of the central motivations for emphasis on excellence in worship production. To grow the church it must deliver on expectations, according to this logic. Moreover, I suggest that cultivating an aesthetic of excellence is an attempt to create a shared religious style (although that style, as I have also suggested, does not cohere into "authorized" modes of worship). On religious style, Meyer and Verrips argue that,

> Inducing as well as expressing shared moods, a shared religious style—materializing in, for example, collective prayer, a shared corpus of songs, images, and modes of looking, symbols and rituals, but also a similar clothing style and material culture—makes people feel at home. Sharing a common aesthetic style via a common religious affiliation generates not only a feeling of togetherness but speaks to and mirrors particular moods and sentiments. Such experiences of sharing also modulate people into a particular common appearance and thus underpin a collective religious identity, which becomes a gestalt (2008:28).

As technicians move notions of excellence and relevance from the technical seminar to informing worship, practice and discourse cohere in the particular dispositions towards how worship is conceived, engineered and the relationship to the embodiment of shared religious practice.

In a section of his book entitled "Survival of the Fittest", Donny Haulk expounds on the predictability of bodily responses. His description signals the density and degree of sensorial engineering that occurs in relevant and excellent worship practice. He speaks to forms of sensorial discipline (cf. Foucault 1977, Crary 1990, Paterson 2006, 2007, 2009, Hirschkind 2006), modes of looking and being, which reveal the cultural underpinnings of, not only mediated worship, but sensorial modalities more generally.

> Over the past decade, we have begun to unlock some of the mysteries behind the physiological responses within worship; what happens to the brain when we hear certain musical chords patterns and structures; or why major chords and major keys make us feel 'happy,' or why songs played in minor keys make us more somber or prayerful, or why we get excited when the music increases to 130 beats per minute; or the fact that certain instruments evoke a specific feeling in us, and predictable emotional response; and why certain songs and sounds inspire some people to see colors, or how lighting angles and certain dramatic features in construction can be used most powerfully in presenting the gospel. Today's church leaders are designing and building worship spaces that reflect a true understanding and appreciation of God's physical laws (2011:101).

Keywords like *excellence*, *relevance*, and *impact* signify evangelical cultural logics that rely on the predictability of *emotional responses* as products of God's physical laws. These keywords signal practitioner's attempts to create immersive atmospheres and "holy moments" through the propagation of ideas about bodily capacities and the predictability of its response. Sensorial predictability is thus a product of the disciplining of the sensorium of the congregation such that particular experiences (of mediated colour, light and sound) are organized. That mediation is not without its own history as Howard Caygill and Johnathan Crary indicate. Crary and Caygill pay particular interest to Walter Benjamin. Benjamin's writings concern the cultivation of the modern sensorium in an era of increasing commoditization and "mechanical reproduction". Benjamin questioned if the affect, the "aura", of artistic works would remain in the mass reproduction of art and the increase in distance between the original work and the viewer (1999). In particular it is Benjamin's early-twentieth century writing on what were for his time, new "urban spaces, technologies, and new economic and symbolic functions of images and products" (Crary 1990:20). I imagine that, like Benjamin, many evangelicals confront the sense that mediated worship is a radical, and sometimes unwelcome, departure from the worship they remember as children. They try to make sense of new forms of worship through contemplating

what it will mean for their relationship with God and religious experience. Moreover, I have tried, like Walter Benjamin, to understand how "technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training" (Crary 1990:112) in the context of evangelical worship practice.

Howard Caygill, Modern European Philosophy scholar, writing on Walter Benjamin's history of technology and "the organisation of experience" (Caygill 1998:102). "In a sense," Caygill argues, "all experience for Benjamin is technological, since the term technology designates the artificial organisation of perception; as such, experience changes with the development of technology" (1998:94). As evangelicals attempt to engineer immersive experiences where the experience of immediacy reveals access to the divine, they confront the sense that the organization of perception is potentially fragile, especially during moments of technical malfunction. In addition, Crary argues that, "Perception for Benjamin was acutely temporal and kinetic; he makes clear how modernity subverts even the possibility of a contemplative beholder. There is never pure access to a single object; vision is always multiple, adjacent to and overlapping with the other objects, desires, and vectors" (1990:20). During mediated worship, evangelicals attempt to cull distractions and create a smooth space of experience. Taking Benjamin and Crary's perspectives into account, I suggest that the organization of evangelical experience confronts this tension between the absence and presence of technological mediation and the relation mediation shares with relevant and excellent worship. The regulation—or more practically—the attempts at making regular the sensorial bodies of the congregation occurs in the densely mediated configuration of technologized worship.

Professor of Modern Art and Theory, Johnathan Crary's, 1990 book, *Techniques of the Observer*, reveals the historical underpinnings that give rise to modern forms of observation and

representation. He asks: "How is the body, including the observing body, becoming a component of new machines, economies, apparatuses, whether social, libidinal, or technological?" (Crary 1990:2). He explains, "The nineteenth-century optical devices I discuss, no less than the panopticon, involved arrangements of bodies in space, regulations of activity, and the deployment of individual bodies, which codified and normalized the observer within rigidly defined systems of visual consumption" (1990:18). Crary's questions evoke for my project an attention to the disciplinary effects of mediated worship practice—I do not assume that communing with God is the only effect, but rather that technicians learn to create worship environments that are ideally immersive by arranging technologies to engage the congregation. In this way, the observing bodies of the congregation ideally become participatory beyond merely spectating. The "activation" of the congregation, as Ed Stetzer suggests, relies on modes of sensorial engineering that technicians learn to create through attending conference events. As Haulk suggests, contemporary worship concerns the creation of sensorial atmospheres where technologies become attuned to *impacting* the congregation. Impact, I suggest, is a bodily incitement towards movement.

Vibration and movement—the often-inconspicuous aspects of engineered and designed worship practice—reveal the subtle logics informing modes of worship engineered by technicians. Teresa Brennan, feminist philosopher and social-political theorist, argues that, things beyond what one can hear or feel possesses a vibratory force. Moreover, images, she suggests, have a potent social and physical materiality and effect on those that encounter them.

> In the last analysis, words and images are matters of vibration, vibrations at different frequencies, but vibrations. The significance of this is easily underestimated in that we have failed to consider how the transmission through physical vibration of the image is simultaneously the transmission of a social

> thing; the social and physical transmission of the image are one and the same process, but (once more), if we have to make a distinction pro forma, the social, not the physical is causative. (2004:71)

The resonation and vibration engineered by technicians and produced by performance technologies can elicit subtle bodily movements, coming in the form of images, music, video and light.[63] Haulk teaches that,

> 'Feeling the music' being immersed in the sound of worship, surrounded by a full congregation singing and worshipping together creates an atmosphere that greatly impacts us. It's also very difficult to explain. It's not all about volume or SPL (sound pressure level). Everything we know has a resonate harmonic frequency. In other words, everything vibrates. Most humans vibrate at frequencies from 30.9 to 82.4 hertz. So if you want to create a worship environment where people can 'feel the music,' it's not about cranking it up, it's about frequency (Haulk 2011:110).

Technicians attempt to get the frequency right through attuning to technology and to sensorial aspects of the bodies of the congregation. Haulk argues that the embodied sensorial aspects of worship have now been widely recognized and as such reveal particular understanding of the worshiping body. He argues:

> It has taken hundreds of years, but here's the simple truth that most church leaders today have finally come to embrace: God made us in a very specific way to be impacted by our environment; he gave us two ears, two eyes, a nose and mouth, a body that resonates and feels both sound and light. Perhaps even more important, there are emotional responses that occur during worship that are connected to endorphins released in the brain during worship. These endorphins that make us 'feel good' are influenced by stimulus by various technological media during worship (Haulk 2011:98). [64]

Attending to the body in this way, even according to Haulk, poses potential problems with

[63] In an editorial on Vibratory Movements, Shelley Trower suggests, "New technologies like radio also provided models for extrasensory, vibratory forms of allegedly spiritual communication . . . Vibration can be perceived as a dangerous, as well as a communicative force" (2008:134)

[64] Goodman following Lange (2010) on audio architecture via Muzak notes the bodily responses that typify listening to music: the "autonomic affects of music in modulating physiological responses such as breathing, metabolism, pulse, blood pressure, energy levels, and galvanic skin response" (144).

detractors who suggest, “We don’t need all that stuff—it just manipulates congregants! . . . It’s deceptive, a tool of the devil” (Haulk 2011:103). Noting the potential for disagreement about his way of understanding the relationship between technology and the body, Haulk continues,

> In the wrong hands, I suppose any tool can be dangerous. But I’ve always viewed technology that improves communication between pastor and his or her flock as positive. After all, what’s manipulative about creating an atmosphere in which hundreds to thousands of people are fully engaged in your message, whether it’s as soft as a sigh or as loud as a shout? In my world, creating an environment that achieves this is not manipulation—it’s simply good design (2011:103).

Although Haulk suggests that technology is merely a tool, he gestures to its capacity to create an immersive and moving atmosphere when used with an attention to “good design”. Relevance and excellence, as keywords, operationalize attempts by technicians to conceptualize how to create engagement through engineering worship. They mark the dispositions that are seemingly required by technicians and stewards as a commitment to design that honors God’s laws of the physical world. As I take Haulk’s understanding of the body and the creation of atmosphere into account, I am reminded again of Teresa Brennan, who insists that,

> The transmission of affect, whether it is grief, anxiety, or anger, is social or psychological in origin. But the transmission is also responsible for bodily changes; some are brief changes, as in a whiff of the room's atmosphere, some longer lasting. In other words, the transmission of affect, if only for an instant, alters the biochemistry and neurology of the subject. The "atmosphere" or the environment literally gets into the individual. Physically and biologically, something is present that was not there before, but it did not originate sui generis: it was not generated solely or sometimes even in part by the individual organism or its genes (Brennan 2004:1).

For U.S. evangelicals devoted to creating immersive environments in line with Haulk’s understanding of contemporary worship, Brennan’s suggestion that atmospheres “literally get into the individual” rings with profound clarity for evangelicals attempting to conjure the Holy Spirit. Creating a worship environment is thus an opportunity for the “transmission of affect”.

Yet, how does this transmission occur in large megachurches?

An important aspect of Haulk's book is his marshalling of leading worship personalities that endorse and extend his thinking on worship design. He features writing by Wes Watson, lead producer at Elevation Church in Matthews, North Carolina, led by Steven Furtick. Elevation is a mega church with over 8,400 members and 6 campuses that began as a few families meeting in a home (Watson in Haulk 2011:37). After the turn of the millennium and within a few years of beginning, Elevation occupied a high school lobby. Now, Elevation has campuses in Charlotte, NC at a theatre, in Raleigh-Durham, NC at a middle school, in Roanoke, VA at a high school and at John Fraser Secondary School in Mississauga, ON. Elevation exemplifies the growth that appeals to smaller churches looking to expand their ministry. As a model for the "American dream" of ministry, Elevation and churches like it promise that technology coupled with a moving pastor can reach "a crazy number of people" (Watson in Haulk 2011:37). Their four core principles exemplify their mission: Growth, Gifts, Giving and Groups. As we have explored in other chapters, the focus on growth and the activation of latent gifts (giftings) is a prominent feature of contemporary evangelical churches that seek to create compelling, transformative experiences.

Elevation uses the language of experience decidedly on their website proclaiming their focus on creating immersive "worship experiences". They use experience to emphasize their commitment to encouraging participation in church life and their focus on the embodied, sensorial aspects of worship. Elevation, through the vision of their technical staff, demonstrates how some contemporary churches are changing the natures of sensorial discipline, creating new aesthetic formations, based on the cultivation of their own techno-identity. Wes Watson

describes it thusly:

> We're not trying to be better than other churches, but to present the gospel in a way that is powerful and compelling. When mainstream media industry [sic] is spending millions and millions every year on movies and entertainment, that is ultimately what we're competing against: people's perception of good quality. It's amazing, but today Elevation is on what you might call the 'bleeding edge' of technology–or the place where our worship needs are driving innovation and, in some cases, creating new products. . . . Our thinking really represents a philosophical shift from most churches. There were times when the tail was wagging the dog for the church, in that we couldn't move in certain directions because of the lack of technology. But we decided that when God has a vision for us, we're not going to let technology dictate whether or not we can fulfill that vision. It is a blessing to even face these challenges: the things that frustrate us most today are things we didn't even know were possible three years ago (Watson in Haulk 2011:40)[65].

The philosophical shift that Watson points to harbours the latent belief, shared by those in the technical ministry, in the requirement for continuous growth that in turn supports media expansion. It also speaks to the contemporary belief that the church can or should act as technological vanguard, not only testing the limits of what is possible but also redefining them—spurring the performance technology on. If you will recall, when the founders of TFWM held the Queen Mary conference, the idea of a church market was quite removed from the experiences Elevation has—literally working to define new, specific products and the sensorial experiences that flow from them to grow the Kingdom.

As we have seen, media, like performance technologies, are always embedded within the social world; their meanings and practices are coupled with discourses that frame those meanings (Oosterbaan 2011:57, McLuhan 1964, Williams 1974). The cultural logics that inform worship experiences rely on the cultivation of sensation and the presencing of the spiritual. Cultural

[65] Current media coverage of Steven Furtick reveals the complex natures of contemporary evangelical organizations regarding the demonstrative lifestyles that some preachers, like Furtick, live.

Anthropologist Martijn Oosterbaan (2011), writing on the relationship between immediacy and hypermediacy, argues that:

> Pentecostal and Charismatic development and use of media is much inspired by their proselytic zeal, but that is merely one aspect of the complex interplay between technology and Christianity. As a number of scholars have recently argued, religious deployment of media has often been guided by a quest for transcendence. . . . As several examples show, religious groups take up and develop media-technologies not merely to distribute a message or doctrine, but also to reproduce the sensation of an unmediated contact with, or experience of, the divine. . . . The proliferation of different media can offer audiences rich sensorial experiences, which resemble the fullness of the 'reality' of daily life. Interestingly, this manifestation of hypermediacy does not diminish our desire or experience of immediacy but rather enforces it (2011:58).

When mediation slips away and the sensorial richness of the experience feels transparent, the immediacy of the event transcends and transforms. I understand Elevation Church, at the *bleeding edge* of technological innovation, as an attempt to sustain a sense of immediacy through the sensational forms uniting aesthetics and experience. Elevation demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between technology and Christianity in the neoliberal landscape of growth, efficiency, relevance and excellence. Beyond the veneer of a forward-moving, growth oriented church like Elevation, premised on excellence and harnessing the transformative capacities of technologies, situated practices and methodical deliberations contribute to the creation of an environment premised on attending to the senses of the congregation. Environmental Projection, a practice to which I now turn, is one such method used to surround the congregation with colour and images for the purpose of intensifying and amplifying the gravity of the message. Environmental Projection—as a sensational form—exemplifies the intersection of aesthetics and experience through creating living environments that encompass the congregation in an effort to intensify the gravity of the Word.

Environmental Projection

> *"He [Walter Benjamin] is demanding of art a task far more difficult—that is, to undo the alienation of the corporeal sensorium, to restore the instinctual power of the human bodily senses for the sake of humanity's self-preservation, and to do this, not by avoiding the new technologies, but by passing through them" (Buck-Morss 1992:5).*

WFX 2010—Atlanta, Georgia

Sitting in a small convention centre seminar room in Atlanta, Georgia, other WFX attendees and I filled the room. It was warm and filled to capacity with interested listeners. Camron Ware, the founder of the design and consulting firm, Visual Worshipper, began by introducing some of the aspects of lighting a room to produce a particular atmosphere using what he called Environmental Projection. He was young, maybe early thirties, dressed casually in jeans and a t-shirt like many of the male attendees present. He adjusted the video equipment ensuring that it was indeed working as he prepared for a live demonstration of his specialty. The room lights were turned down as the two projectors, mounted at each end of the rectangular room projected intense colours on the walls, crossing over each other to over saturate the bland walls of the room. The room filled with red as a large cross took over the space ahead of us, then the room turned blue with outlines of leaf-less black trees flanking the center, where he spoke. The colours continued to change as he spoke over them. Ware extolled the virtues and solemnity of particular colour configurations and how they can accentuate the Pastor's message, or if used improperly, detract from it. Ware explained that red is used to highlight tension, to raise the tenor of the service. Blue is calming. White, combined with doves, speaks to purity and redemption. Purples and vibrant colours elevate the saturation of the service and lend an otherworldly sensorial experience. He asked the group rhetorically: "What does saturating the space in colour and

image do?" In response, Ware described the strategy of bringing the ambient light level down so that the room is cast in shadow, creating a room of spectators engulfed in the colour. The effect of this is to give control of highlighting action to the worship team, coordinating experience through the saturation of colour. It provides a sense of anonymity, Ware suggested, where people are free, in the dimly lit space, to revel in personal ways. Moreover, using Environmental Projection is a way to emphasize the message through light and shadow.

At the end of the talk he handed out two sided cards with a before photo on one side, an after photo on the other, of a church sanctuary. On one side of the card, the after, the projections on the wall fade from yellow at top to blue. Trees accentuate the colours, as light and shadow mark out the forms of branches, twigs and trunks against the walls. It works in negative, filling in unlit space with the relief of colour and form. The surrounding space is dim; a dull back light catches the top edge of rows of pews. An engineered atmosphere becomes active as the projectors throw their light, joining in the production. The projectors enliven the walls with trees, curving over the existing cream walls, crawling into and out of the indentations producing smoothness, continuity. The walls become nondescript with the colour and images filling the space; the floor becomes an extension of the wall, the ceiling—a dark cap. Attention cannot help but be drawn to the vibrancy of the colours, to the blended space. The reverse side is a room lit with standard incandescent light; its yellowish hues make the room look pale and bland. The power of these images lies in their implications: a worship service in a bland, colourless room lacks the vibrancy and affect that an atmosphere-controlled and purposefully lit room would have. On the two-sided card the juxtaposition of the two rooms highlights the role light and colour is understood by some evangelicals to play in engineered worship practice. On the Visual

Worshipper website, Camron Ware's company mandate situates his business:

> Visual Worshiper is a consulting and live event design group that exists to re-ignite a passion in the Church for authentic visual worship using the tools and talent God has given His people. We offer visual experiences that not only transform a building, but also renew a person's spirit. Our passion and joy in life is creating worship environments using light and projection, using Environmental Projection as our main tool. Our desire is to train people to become visual worshipers and visual worship leaders. Most of today's worship gatherings require some level of production, but most of the time there is tension in finding the balance in using media as an art-form that truly enhances the worship. Churches are often only taught WHAT and HOW, but we also teach WHY and HOW to use technology to pursue visual worship. We offer powerful transformational experiences to the people we serve (Visual Worshipper 2013).

Ware locates the impetus for Environmental Projection in prior models incorporating the visual into worship practice. Ware notes, in an interview for the website: Church Marketing Sucks[66], that:

> Visual worship is ancient. Like I mentioned earlier, the church used to be the leader in use of visuals (stained glass, architecture, paint, mosaics, etc.) The old cathedrals that used the building itself to tell story is a far cry from our "modern" church buildings with muted colors and flat walls. The re-introduction of visuals in the church really came about once projection and lighting technology became practical for us to use. We can now change the look and feel of an entire space with a simple push of a button. Environmental projection gets its root from those old cathedrals, so the concept is old, but the technology is relatively new. I often call environmental projection 'post-modern stained glass' (Hendricks 2013).

Keywords like re-igniting, renewing, and transformation frame the role of Visual Worshipper in the creation of what they call cultural atmospherics. Cultural atmospherics is based on the ways evangelicals decode cultural understandings of the *meanings* of colour and their potential effect on congregants when used in conjunction with provocative or otherwise moving visual imagery.

[66] The marketing firm "Church Marketing Sucks" highlights, foremost in their name, the perception that churches do not understand marketing principles or best practices and the result is poorly designed and executed attempts to grow their churches.

As I previously noted, Ware suggests that colours are mapped onto emotions and moods in such a way that they can evoke particular feelings and sensations. Using colour and imagery deepens the possibility of a *transformational experience*. Ware's emphases on the visual aspects of worship through Environmental Projection are not limited to viewership but suggest a bodily experience incited by viewing. Ware positions viewership as an active bodily engagement with cultural logics of colour. In an interview with www.WorshipTechDesicions.com, Ware argues that "Environmental projection envelops the congregations; it owns the space. … Philosophically it's not even supposed to be watched, it's not even supposed to be seen" (Stern 2012).

Something seen and simultaneously unseen: again I return to the concept of technically transparent worship. The attempt to saturate a space technologically while also rendering that saturation technically transparent is a complex endeavor for volunteer technicians. He's not simply saying that people have neglected to be aware of their surroundings; Ware is arguing that Environmental Projection should subsume the sanctuary providing a break in the continuity of the mediation. Interestingly, Jonathan Crary, writing on changes to perception, notes on the work of J. M. W. Turner that, "[s]eemingly out of nowhere, his painting of the late 1830s and 1840s signals the irrevocable loss of a fixed source of light, the dissolution of a cone of light rays, and the collapse of the distance separating an observer from the site of optical experience. Instead of the immediate and unitary apprehension of an image, our experience of a Turner painting is lodged amidst inescapable temporality" (1990:138). Although removed in time from the work of Turner, Crary's attention to the *inescapable temporality* removing the distance between observer and image observed captures the movement behind Environmental Projection. Environmental Projection, collapses the distance between the congregant and the projected images. Using it,

words or symbols are no longer solely located on a large projection screen at the front of the sanctuary, but they cover the walls so there is no longer a single source of light. The experience of projected colours and symbols becomes inescapable for the congregant during the worship service.

Environmental Projection, when implemented by technicians, replaces flat, dull walls with the vibrancy of colour and luminosity of poignant imagery, yet it also becomes inescapable. As such, congregants become part of the textures of worship; their presence contributes to the presencing of a sensorial ecology in which their bodies, their sensorial engagements, compose and configure worship practice by feeding back into the worship event. Together, the experience of colour and image is coupled with the warmth of the bodies around, the feel of the floor beneath ones feet, the smell of the air, the posture and gestures of one's own and others' bodies, the sound of the pastor, the sonic and infrasonic hum of the audio system, and the rhythmic push and pull of the worship band. The senses are distributed amongst, between, and through the people and objects that compose the event. They are both an aspect of personal experience and something more, something shared, something distributed between. Jumping off from Spinoza's well known dictum: we do not yet know what bodies can do, (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, Deleuze 1988:17) I ask instead: What can technologies, strategies, and sensing bodies do together?

Environmental Projection is a lure; a configuration of technicians and technologies that offers possibilities. Camron Ware notes its capacity to draw, to gather, people into worship:

> This is a great way we can use technology to draw people into worship. At first glance, Environmental Projection [EP] appears to be incredibly simple – shine a projector on a wall and show an image. However, it's so much more important and so much deeper than that. *When you use Environmental Projection with intentionally, it can actually draws (sic) people's minds and spirits into worship and in contrast when it's used poorly, it can be an entertaining distraction*.

> For example, when I was designing EP at my church and saw on the order of worship that we were going to be singing a favorite hymn of mine, All Creatures of Our God and King, I would think of creation, warmth, and being outside, so I would use a triple-wide nature scene across our sanctuary. With a simple click of a button, the congregation has been taken from the inside of a man-made building to outdoors in God's creation. I would change the lights so they were same color as the imagery, and make sure to transition the lighting and EP at the same time in between worship elements.
>
> Imagine projecting subtle stars across your entire worship space while singing Silent Night during a Christmas eve service – it's a powerful and breathtaking way to foster a mood of what it might have felt like that Christmas night, and frankly, I don't know of a better way (other than taking your service outdoors) to create that environment.
>
> I've found that using imagery with texture and high color-depth show up best and create the most engaging feel across a room, without being a distraction (Ware 2011)[67].

Ware's perspective on the use of technology for worship emphasizes many of the themes drawn out through previous chapters: experience becomes the practical locus of attempts at worship engineering through the complex interplay of technicians and technologies use to create, with *intention,* a *relevant* and *impactful* environment. Ware however, perhaps uniquely, identifies the potential effects of media saturation and the utility of occasionally turning the lights down and then triumphantly back on again.

In an article on "visual silence", Ware describes the process of turning off the lights and creating a *visually silent* space. The notion of visual silence implies collusion between the visual

[67] Stephen Ellison (TFWM writer and editorial advisor) asks: "How can you create beautiful pictures using light as your artistic medium? A painter first starts by preparing a canvas, laying out the brushes, and getting the colors on the palette. So let's break down our canvas, brushes and colors. Our canvas is the building we are lighting, the platform, the congregation, and any architectural elements. Our brushes are the lighting fixtures and the lighting positions. The colors we have available are no less plentiful than a painter; the one thing to remember about color and light is that without haze in the air the color only shows up on a surface. … The better you prepare your tools the more creative you can be when painting with light. However, unlike a static painting, lighting is a four-dimensional art form. You don't just create one painting for a service, but many; and well-executed lighting design can not only enhance worship, but elevate it" (Ellison 2013: 46).

and the auditory—as though the absence of light plays on the senses in the same way that the absence of sound does. Visual silence also acknowledges the *speaking* that images do. In this way, to render a space silent is not to cease sound but to turn off the lights. In the following excerpt, Ware describes the process and utility of turning off the lights.

> There has to be some heart-logic to your use of visual silence—a natural, unnoticed feeling of purpose and flow. Switching back and forth from full-on lighting and motion graphics to nothing and back again can be jarring and unnatural. I've seen a lot of churches start off their service with louder, faster songs of celebration and then transition to quieter, slower songs right before the message, typically followed by even deeper worship songs after the message. I see a lot of churches do visual media well in this example—the motion backgrounds stop, the colors get subtler, and the lights get turned down. But maybe there could be one more step.
>
> Slowly fade the background to black on your screens during a song that your congregation knows well. Take the lyrics away for an entire song as a means of saying, 'Stop reading; just sing and listen.' Gradually dim the lights during the worship as a way for people to encounter God for themselves. Imagine yourself in a totally black room with no light. All around you are fellow Christ-followers singing praises to Him. God meets with us in the quiet places, and I think it's important for us to remember that (Ware n.d.).

"God meets with us in quiet places" informs the quote that begins Ware's article: "Be still, and know that I am God…"—Psalm 46:10. Amidst the contemporary evangelical landscape of highly engineered worship experience, creating a quiet and dimly lit moment for reflection is seemingly a unique proposition—that provides yet another vector for the contemporary evangelical experience to follow. In a rare reflection, not on the evils of technology, but on the effects of intense mediation, Ware concludes by suggesting:

> When you take away all the visual noise in a room, the focus of the audience can become something internal rather than external. The bottom line is that there is a need for balance in how we use visual media. I find myself looking more and more to visual silence as a means of retuning myself to what God wants me to see. After all, for a lot of us, the only time our eyes are closed for an extended period of time is when we are sleeping! In this visually noisy society, periods of

> visual silence are both refreshing and necessary. Sometimes, we forget that we don't need any of this "stuff" anyway (Ware n.d.).

When collapsing the visual into sound, in a synesthetic sense (Buck-Morss 1992), the erasure and elimination of *noise* becomes an opening: *visual silence* is a disruption in the continuity of the signal, in the progression of the familiar experience. Silence becomes the unusual and unexpected strategy. Often framed as tools for the glorification of God, technologies, from this perspective, can also intercede in those still moments of internal reflection where congregants *listen* for the voice of God (Luhrmann 2012).

What does it mean for embodied sensorial experience when listening for God is coupled with the densities of immersive, mediated worship? Donna Haraway, writing about the materialities of sensorial and technological "compounds" explores the worlds of Crittercams, the cameras affixed to animals to offer viewers a so-called "unmediated experience of otherness" (2006:120). Haraway insists, "Never is Crittercam's audience allowed to imagine visually or haptically the absence of physicality and crowded presences" (2006:121). Similarly, within Environmental Projection, there is never an absence of the physicality of presence, even as they try to create an environment for communing with God. The technological presence, the projected light, colour and imagery, crowds the room. Following Don Ihde, Haraway suggests "human bodies and technologies cohabit with each other in relation to particular projects or lifeworlds" (2006:123). Environmental Projection represents the evangelical cohabitation of bodies and technologies.

Anthropologist David Abram writes to remind his readers of the sensorial and sensuous bodily engagements to be found in the world. Following Merleau–Ponty, David Abram suggests

"The sensing body is not a programmed machine but an active and open form, continually improvising its relation to things and to the world" (Abram 1996:49). He argues that "Only by affirming the animateness of perceived things do we allow our words to emerge directly from the depths of our ongoing reciprocity with the world" (1996:56). In a beautiful example of the sensorial call of animate things, Abram shares his reflection on watching a raven. A "raven soaring in the distance is not, for me, a mere visual image; as I follow it with my eyes, I inevitably feel the stretch and flex of its wings with my own muscles, and its sudden swoop toward the nearby trees is a visceral as well as visual experience for me" (Abram 1996:61). In the visceral experience Abram breathes life into describing his observation of the raven I find the potential for understanding the sensorial power of Environmental Projection. The projection of powerful symbols, like the Latin cross, doves in flight, a forest of silhouetted tress or an image of Jesus crucified on the cross, are not "mere visual" images for devout evangelicals. Their visual experience has the potential to become a sensorial, visceral engagement with the world around them.[68]

In quiet, still environments or those suffused with media splendor, the visual remains a poignant mode of bodily experience for evangelicals. Yet, if our sensory systems find meaning and integration in the world, what is the effect of halting that engagement (Buck-Morss 1992)? Stillness, like sensory overload, becomes a shock: a sense of unexpected difference. Susan Buck–Morss argues:

[68] As I noted in a previous chapter footnote, Anthropologist Josh Brahinsky recalls his visceral experience of a Pentecostal worship service by describing his bodily reaction: "I feel a burning in my thighs down by my knees. As if a flamethrower aims at my legs, a fiery heat rises through to my hips, belly, chest, and I am drenched in an all-out sweat. This is not familiar. Years of epileptic pareasthesia have prepped me for strange sensations, and in fact makes them suspect, but this heat is new, not erotic or esoteric in any usual sense. It feels both separate and within" (2012:216).

> The nervous system is not contained within the body's limits. The circuit from sense-perception to motor response begins and ends in the world. The brain is thus not an isolable anatomical body, but part of a system that *passes through the person and her or his (culturally specific, historically transient) environment.* As the source of stimuli and the arena for motor response, the external world must be included to complete the sensory circuit. (Sensory de-privation causes the system's internal components to degenerate.) The field of the sensory circuit thus corresponds to that of 'experience,' in the classical philosophical sense of a mediation of subject and object…" (Buck-Morss 1992:12, emphasis mine).

When I contemplate stretching the nervous system beyond the limits of the body my focus is reoriented towards a sensorial engagement *with* the world. For a congregation sitting next to each other in rows, or within groups of technicians sharing a seminar room, the "sensory circuit" becomes another layer of experience in an accretion of bodily encounters. David Abram insists that "the boundaries of a living body are open and indeterminate; more like membranes than barriers, they define a surface of metamorphosis and exchange" (Abram 1996:46). Learning or experiencing worship thus offers the potential for a myriad of exchanges that exist in multiplicity, not solely the result of one-way transmission. I am thinking, with reference to exchanges, of the congregation's capacity to sense and transmit their affective engagement with their hands in the air, singing and rejoicing and the effect this has on the experience of the event for all present. Participation in worship can be the chrysalis for sacred metamorphosis.

Considering the potential for sensorial exchange what can be made of attempts to intentionally shock a congregation, rendering them momentarily unable to see in moments of theatrical transition? "Audience blasting", detailed in a TFWM e-newsletter, is an attempt to shock the senses of the congregation, creating a momentary inability to see what is transpiring on stage. Using "visual masks", it is an attempt by technicians to provide the illusion of magic—a space for the emergence of the uncanny. Jeff Johnson, a worship market technology consultant

and church technician, describes the practice and effect of audience blasting:

> Now, there is nothing magical, special or unique about this scenario. As technical staff we all use these techniques weekly. What we should consider is the anticipated effect on the audience. An automatic physical response of the human eye is to contract the pupil when hit with a sudden bright light. The 'audience blaster' allowed the actor to step through the trap door 'literally' unseen by the audience since they were temporarily blinded by a momentary bright light. Using the fog as a secondary visual mask or shield, created the illusion that something magical had happened prolonging the actors escape window since the audience's eyes had to adjust to something unexpected. In addition, the stage lighting was adjusted down slightly, causing further adjustment to the audience's eyes and again lengthening the actors escape window. A competent technical director is as vital to a theatric production as any actor or any other event staff. He or she must be able to gauge the effectiveness of theatrical tools from the audience's perspective, and be able to look beyond the director's concept and determine the desired effect upon the audience. The goal, in this instance, was not to merely get the actor off the stage, but rather to find the method that would give the audience the perception of theatrical magic. The technical director needs to ask, 'What do I want the audience response to be, and how do I create it in their minds?' It is important to remember, the magic doesn't occur on the stage but in the minds of the audience (n.d.).

Relying on understandings of the biological activity and abilities of the eyes, Johnson's "magic" transcends mere use to query the potential effect on the mind of the audience. Assuming the mind and body are separate entities yet linked by the senses, Johnson considers the response of using techniques such as this, as though their use carries no import itself. The use of techniques like audience blasting rely on shock, diversion and sensorial manipulation to accomplish their goal—in this case, provide a diversion for actors to exit the stage. Here I recall Walter Benjamin's project to make sense of increasingly commodified and industrialized forms of sensory experience (cf. Seremetakis 2009). Benjamin's project, read alongside the technologization of evangelical worship practice, draws attention to the potential for "sensory alienation" (Buck-Morss 1992:4) but instead explodes "the constellation of art, politics, and aesthetics" (Buck-Morss 1992:5). Aesthetics, for Benjamin, writes Buck-Morss, is bodily—"a

sensory experience of perception" (1992:6). What audience blasting does is confirm and confound the "sensory experience of perception" through shock. Benjamin's interest in shock, follows from a Freudian suggestion that consciousness protects an individual from trauma, especially battle. The issue at hand for Benjamin was how to understand everyday experience, not only the effect of war's battlefield. According to Buck-Morss, "The problem is that under conditions of modern shock—the daily shocks of the modern world—response to stimuli *without* thinking has become necessary for survival" (1992:16, cf. Stewart 2007). Buck-Morss continues,

> Benjamin claimed this battlefield experience of shock 'has become the norm' in modern life. Perceptions that once occasioned conscious reflection are now the source of shock-impulses that consciousness must parry. In industrial production no less than modern warfare, in street crowds and erotic encounters, in amusement parks and gambling casinos, shock is the very essence of modern experience. The technologically altered environment exposes the human sensorium to physical shocks that have their correspondence in psychic shock, as Baudelaire's poetry bears witness (1992:16-7).

Benjamin too makes assumptions about the nature of the relationship between technology and the sensorium—a relationship that posits the sensorium as open, completed in the world, not solely a property of the body. Shock as the "essence of modern experience" feeds into evangelical experience through technical training. Technicians learn that it is normal and necessary to "blast" the congregation, shocking their senses amidst the quest for a divine encounter.

Technicians learn that the senses are open yet culturally situated through creating and maintaining a crafted, engineered environment that aims to foster sacred experiences that endure outside of the sanctuary. Juxtaposing images and colour in Environmental Projection can be as unsettling as it is poignant and moving. The "visual noise" that audience blasting utilizes relies on the ability to shock the senses in order to create the illusion of "magic". It presupposes the

uniformity of the senses across an entire congregation; a generalization that risks appearing more like trickery and manipulation than magic and a sense of the uncanny. Yet, these practices cohere in contemporary evangelical worship practice.

Environmental Projection and audience blasting are not available to every church because of the cost of equipment, the training to implement them, and the physical layout of the sanctuary.[69] What these techniques reveal are the yearning for the creative development of new ways to reach an increasingly over-mediated congregation that arrive, to some extent, expecting to be moved—and wowed—not only be the Word but by its creative technological elaboration. A church like Neighbours, in contrast, did not employ these techniques, instead relying on situated understandings of excellent and relevant experience using the messy bricolage of technologies-at-hand. Having neither the resources nor the know-how, Neighbours focussed on creating durable experiences through the familiarity of ritual practice.

Neighbours Church: situated forms of relevance and excellence

Aesthetics and experience—when considered together give shape to sensational forms that organize shared forms of religious experience. Sensational and sensorial forms of experience collide in situated practices that attempt to establish authority and authenticity amidst the demands of worship practice-in-the-making that, at Neighbours Church, resulted in two very different experiences of the same event. In what follows, I explore the ways that the live and online experiences of worship present an opportunity to situate relevant and excellent practice at

[69] Although according to churches cited by Kumorek (2012) the cost of implementing an environmental projection system is relatively inexpensive. For context, the churches cited are large organizations staging elaborate productions.

Neighbours through attempts to establish authority and cultivate in-person and digital fellowship.

The fall weather is crisp and cold. I arrived early to Neighbours as the coffee was brewing and Tim Horton's Tim Bits sat in boxes at the entryway. A few men, looking dishevelled, waited by the door to get free coffee and a snack. I went in and took my coat off. I stood near one of the cocktail tables that flanked the front entrance. Michael saw me and came over to chat. We talked about the weather getting colder. He had forgotten my name again even though we had spoken many times and I had been coming to the church for months. Michael suggested that after my research completed I could still come to the church. At this comment, I wondered if he was trying to determine my level of belief. I responded in a non-committal way about attending. He asked if I planned on sitting in the control booth and I confirmed. We walked up the main stairway and into the booth, chatting as we climbed the stairs. I took a seat on a chair to the right of the main video control console and feed switcher, mounted on a table custom built for the space. Monitors hung above the table, angled down. Michael took a seat at the switcher and put his headphones on. He was able to hear the guys operating the cameras on the sanctuary floor through them. He positioned himself in his chair, adjusting the settings and centering himself at the board. As he readied his setup, checking in with the camera operators he reached over to his right and grabbed a sheet of paper. I saw that was the schedule for the service. It listed the songs, their order, and the breaks for the pastor's message. It followed a sequence: upbeat songs welcome the congregation, and then songs with a slower tempo prepare the attendees for the gravity of the message. The slower, contemplative songs ready the congregants, coaxing them into a humble disposition towards God and the message. The lyrics conveyed the importance of deference and reverence, self-sacrifice and our debt to God.

During the service, Michael always had his hands on the switches; poised to adjust a level or switch the camera feed. He envisioned the look of the service on the web broadcast and directed the camera operators to highlight particular aspects of the service: a close up on the drummer, a tight shot of the pianist's hands, or the centre altar before the pastor takes the stage. Through this framing, he attempted to craft a worship experience for those watching remotely through privileging some aspects of the service and downplaying others. When the pastor put up a PowerPoint slide for example, Michael switched the feed to display on the slide. For those attending live, the slide contents displayed on a screen behind and above the pastor. With the intensity of the stage lights, sometimes it was difficult to see the writing on the slides, depending on the font colour. For those at home, the slides appear clearly, as the pastor's voice accompanied them.

Video and audio feeds traveled from the sanctuary microphones to the control room where they were re-broadcast over the Internet. The web encoder transformed the analog signal into a digital signal, so viewers at home could watch. During online services, James initiated a live, online chat with viewers at home, alerting them to problems with the video and audio feed. Viewers also responded when the video and audio were sounding good. Creating a feedback loop, Neighbours online chat demonstrated James's attentiveness to the broadcast and how viewers perceived it.

Being responsive to the observations and opinions of online viewers gestures to Neighbours attempt to acknowledge their technological limitations, the incidences of malfunction, and their commitment to bridging the online and live experience of worship. As such, not all chat was devoted to monitoring the quality of the broadcast. The moderator (in the

chat forum) responded to prayer requests and comments made by participants. Neighbours maintained a sense of relevance through not achieving a state of technological excellence, but by being responsive to congregants, both in person and online. The sensorial immersiveness sought after by larger, better-funded churches was not possible at Neighbours. In exchange for highly technologized relevance, commitment to broadcast, and performance excellence, they offered digital fellowship and the feedback loop of processed, mediated connection. This sense of experience—composed of connection, community, and fellowship—occurs through the modest chat window. Neighbours had the potential to incite action at a distance and create sacred surplus-value.

Their messy bricolage of technologies-at-hand gained traction through action at a distance (Latour 1987), between those engineering the service and online viewers. The chat window became a way for James, or other Neighbours volunteers, to be responsive to committed viewers and their online worship experience—offering surplus-value beyond the event itself in the form of access. Acting at a distance through chat and online broadcast is a way to grow the church base remotely, while also authorizing the expertise of Neighbours as the arbiters of certain religious truths. Discussing forms of liberal governance and the contemporary state, Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose (1990), building on Latour's use of action at a distance, suggest that, "action at a distance mechanisms have come to rely in crucial respects upon 'expertise': the social authority ascribed to particular agents and forms of judgement on the basis of their claims to possess specialized truths and rare powers (2). Through Neighbours action at a distance, Pastor William's "specialized truths and rare powers" had the potential to shape viewers participation in a fellowship community through chat. Chat became a way to connect, to express

emotions, ask questions and explore faith with those who claim access to specialized expertise and the truths that outflow from it.

Specialized expertise operated at Neighbours through another mechanism: through the control and analysis of biblical scripture (cf. Engelke 2006). Like other North American evangelical churches, Bibles are no longer readily available at Neighbours. Some congregants, however, bring dog-eared copies, full of page markers, to services. Quotes from the Bible display on a large projection screen at the front of the room. Using PowerPoint, Pastor William interpreted, analysed, and often paraphrased biblical quotes as he wove them together with the theme of his central message. The themes were often contemporary questions of living a spiritual life amidst the pressures of the "modern" world. William translated biblical passages to show their contemporary relevance, selectively removing each quote from its context in the Bible, and re-examining it based on the topic of the week. Looking for insight in the authority of biblical writing, William attempted to establish his authority, often punctuating his points by raising his voice and leaning forward on the pulpit. To establish his expertise and role as a translator, William was also learning Hebrew so he could read earlier incarnations of biblical texts. In lieu of technological relevance (in contrast to some of the larger evangelical churches) Neighbours attempted to supplement the experience of technological immediacy with other forms of relevance through attempting to do the work of translating the importance of scripture for everyday contemporary practice—while also situating it within conservative evangelical discourses.

Neighbours multimodal worship practice evidenced their commitment to meeting their congregants where they were—at home, in the sanctuary, on the other side of the planet. For

Michael the online broadcast was a way to offer a both pure and cultivated transmission. It was pure in its direct transmission of the scene of the sanctuary but Michael cultivated the view to represent a particular experience of worship—mediated by the forms of technologies used. Cameras captured the worship band playing, drawing in on the drummer's hands, or pulling out to see the scene of the stage: yet congregants worshipping, hands held high in the air, were omitted and cut from the shot. Being able to see the sanctuary, does not fulfill "the promise of transparency" normally accorded by the act of vision (Modern 2013:191). In his sweeping account of secularism in antebellum America, John Lardas Modern suggests, with regards to early 20th century Fundamentalists that, "Just as there was a transparent relationship to be had between the self and God, reader and words on the page, the promise of transparency was also fulfilled in the human act of vision more generally. God was the architect and engineer of the world. He constructed the eyes as well as the space that made visions of the world even possible" (Modern 2013:191). The tensions of technologically mediated worship challenge these earlier held notions of transparency. When technicians attempt the erasure of technology (technology transparent worship), it signals the anxiety technology incites even as it is further and further integrated into the contemporary nature of ritual practice. Neighbours lives out the tension of transparent immediacy and hypermedicacy through attempts to be relevant for their congregation—addressing them with familiar technologies-at-hand—and producing the best experience with their available resources.

Cultivating expertise for the translation and analyses of biblical texts creates an atmosphere where the experience of The Word occurs through the control of truth, control of interpretation and analysis. In many evangelical churches, the control of the atmosphere extends

from the experience of Biblical interpretation to the experience of attention-holding images, scenes that cover the walls, fixating the congregation's view during the delivery of the message. Controlling access to The Word and the engineering of immersive, immediate experiences of the divine through intensive technological mediation are ways that the contemporary evangelical church establishes its authority to engineer certain types of religious experiences. Yet when intensive technological mediation is not an option, is authority established? Neighbours Church demonstrates how excellence and relevance take on local valences as situated practice is negotiated. Considered together, the examples explored in this chapter demonstrate that, in many cases, worship practice is the result of an engineered space, composed deliberately with the attempt to create a feeling of immersion and personal connection with God—if possible. Technicians attempt to create an environment where congregants can feel close with a "personal God" that can be experienced directly. A feeling of closeness and connection with God is a hallmark of contemporary evangelicalism. It has inflected both the direction of worship practice and the use of technology to achieve it. In the conclusion that follows, I trace some of the paths the present work has taken to explore the relationship between U.S. evangelicals and their performance technologies before considering the role speculation plays in the technologization of evangelical religious practice.

8. Conclusion

I began this project asking: How do church technicians learn to use technology? That question has matured to encompass the ways that technicians attempt to enhance worship experience. Exploring this question has meant travelling along the tenuous strands of markets-in-the-making where education is a precursor to the purchase of performance technologies. I have questioned the ways that different vocabularies and keywords signal material-discursive practices and help shape the roles and responsibilities of technology stewardship. My analysis has been situated within the broader spiritual economies that focus on cultivating particular kinds of immersive experiences that ideally lead to church growth. Technical systems and technicians together experience the pressures of excellence and relevance in their ambition to create sensorial worship experience.

In the opening pages of the present work, I began by describing the keywords excellence and relevance and their importance for contemporary evangelical worship. The bulk of this project has been devoted to unpacking their significance in hopes of situating the use of technology for worship. I have also spent time querying the relationship between religion and political economy and the long-standing assumptions of the secularization hypothesis that prophesied the disenchantment of the world. Contrary to this present-future, I have experienced the flow of religious practice as new forms of religious piety are created with the aim of growing the church through the use of technology, and I have attempted to situate this ongoing process within broader anthropological efforts to understand the technologization of ritual practice. Technicians experience forms of religious piety as affective labours where they are asked or

required by church leadership to bear the responsibilities of operating all of the media equipment. Volunteer technicians and technology stewards negotiate the tensions of the presence of technology and its capacity to intercede in the flow of worship experience at moments of malfunction, often without considerable training. I have endeavoured to follow the efforts of TFWM and WFX as their speakers have offered training and guidance to technicians and the relationship these training events have with house of worship markets.

In Chapter 3, I explored the events aboard the Queen Mary—a ship of dreams, so to speak, that only narrowly avoided proverbially sinking. The vision that made the events aboard the Queen Mary possible—the vision of TFWM founders—motivated those involved to believe in the possibility of a worship market. I understand the market as a peculiar combination of education and the potential for technology purchase that contingently forms around the understanding that relevant and excellent worship will increase the size of the congregation and grow the church. In this sense, worship markets are performative: they come into being through the embodied everyday practices of technical education.

In Chapter 4, I situated how generating shared technologically immersive experience results from creating shared meaning about the nature of worship practice and the role of technology. Sometimes creating shared meaning is often, however, a difficult process where understanding between technology manufacturers and technicians, for example, is contingent on creating common understandings about the nature of technology and its use for worship. Between TFW Pavilion participants, and even between technologies like lighting fixtures, different languages and ways of speaking are at play. At Neighbours Church, Michael's production of live and online worship attempted to create durable experiences to incite their

congregants to stay in the Word, or live a lifestyle of worship.

Living a lifestyle of worship within broader spiritual economies relies on the recognition and activation of God-given gifts. Gifts, transformed into affective labour through the normalization of lifestyles of worship and living on mission, are the surplus-value of contemporary spiritual economies. In Chapter 5, having a heart for worship production and branding the church through recognizing its unique spiritual DNA and identity is the crucible for growth. Yet, attempts to incite lifestyles of worship are sometimes complicated by the quasi-failing bricolage of technical systems and attempts to steward them towards righteous ends, like at Neighbours.

Technology stewardship is the focus of the subsequent chapter. In Chapter 6, stewardship embodies speculations on the nature of technology and its relevance and relationship to production and worship practice excellence. Stewards feel the inherent tensions of creating immersive worship experiences through the negotiation of the presence and absence of technology. Stewardship grounds discourses on the role of technology and the risks it poses to the sacralization of worship practice. At Neighbours Church, technology stewardship means negotiating the demands of systems that invite prayer and deliberation even as they are perceived to have no other spectral or uncanny qualities. Technical director Michael's ambivalence towards technology's duality embodies the contemporary techno-ontological moment that is ripe with speculation on the nature of things.

Chapter 7 engages with the concept of sensational forms to explore the nature of technology and its potential to presence a living God through the creation of immersive worship experiences. Attending to the sensorial aspects of worship, this chapter explored the practices

that give shape to immersive worship and their relationship to notions of relevance and excellence. At Neighbours we encountered situated forms of relevance that relied on the experience of fellowship and connection, not only technological immersion. Together these chapters have queried technology's roles and relationship to contemporary forms of evangelical worship practice. In the section that follows, I conclude by exploring the "collective apparatuses", or how the components explored throughout the preceding chapters come together to form broader spiritual economies of experiences through technologized worship production.

A reflection on collective apparatuses

> *As machines change—becoming better, stronger, faster—so too does the form and content of the first principles emanating, with moral force, from these machines. What demands attention . . . is not so much the force itself, but the effects registered in uneven ways, in the practices and documents of humans. . . . Machines inflect aspects of that assemblage, but the assemblage of forces cannot be reduced to those machines. As Deleuze reminds us, social experience cannot be reduced to the technologies that inform that experience. 'The machines don't explain anything,' he writes. 'You have to analyze the collective apparatuses to which the machines are just one component.' (Modern 2011:298).*

The collective apparatuses, composed of people and technologies, discourses and vocabularies, nervous systems and affective labours, and spiritual economies and experience, that make contemporary technologized worship education possible, come together with some measure of stability in the efforts of trade publications and their technical education tracts. These efforts become legible in the performative aspects of worship markets and the attempts to cohere the vision, the idea, into a community of manufacturers and users.

These collective apparatuses have given rise to the possibility that understandings about religion, technology and political economy do not neatly fit into rigid categories. The present

work has attempted to challenge some of the contemporary scholarship on religion and capitalism that understands religion as victim of both technological change and market logics. Instead, I have demonstrated how U.S. evangelicals negotiate a dialogical relationship in the form of spiritual economies that, although complex in their elaboration, sees neither religion nor political economy as victim (cf. Haddorff 2000, Wuthnow 1996). Rather, religion and political economy are mutually imbricating. Take, for example, the enactment of house of worship markets. The idea of what a market is becomes, in performative practice, an example of efforts to create shared, meaningful experiences around technology use, even though nothing is bought or sold. The creation of shared experiences, such as those on the Queen Mary, even if (or perhaps because) it was a quasi-failing event, was the result of considerable effort required to make a trade event happen, motivated by a guiding vision.

The events aboard the Queen Mary incited TFWM speakers and attendees to return to TFW Pavilion events for years after. Like Neighbours ability to connect with their congregants despite the lack of the latest, smoothly integrated technologies, TFWM was able to speak to the hearts of manufacturers and attendees—helping them believe in Barry Cobus' vision of "bringing excellence back to the church". The durability of the relationships Barry and Shelagh created is not a small feat in an intensely competitive advertising landscape. Many exhibitors returned year after year during the Inspiration shows, later becoming part of the TFW Pavilion. What holds all these relationships, even when tenuous, together? I have tried to demonstrate that creating shared understandings based, for example, on keywords like excellence and relevance, have helped to shape worship practice. The possibility of extreme and rapid church growth, which represents the American dream writ large and infused with a spiritual mandate,

strengthens these material-discourses. Yet, the growth churches advocate is not, for many, solely the result of a profit motive—churches are interested in the spiritual currency of saving souls. Technical perfection is thus a divinely inspired motivation.

Another of my aims was to speculate on how the anthropology of religion could be the ghost in the machine for science and technology studies. The present work is a modest attempt to begin that exploration. My research has revealed that as evangelicals speculate on the nature of technology, they hint at technology's capacities that they do not fully conceptualize through the understanding of technology as mere machine. Technology stewardship, as I have come to understand it, frames a way to rein in the vitality of things *unseen.* As stewards learn to become accustomed to using a device, they attempt to understand, through training and everyday practice, the dynamics and sensorial capacities of sound, light and energy. Close contact, I suggest, brings these variable forces into proximity and creates conditions for worship practice.

The tensions of mediated worship exemplified by the notion that technology will attract more attention or divert attention away from the transmission of the Word, open a space to think about the narratives through which evangelicals come to understand technology use and speculate on the nature of objects. Alexandra Boutrous, who specializes in religion, media and technology studies, suggests that "[t]hinking through the intersection of religion and technology requires not only an exploration of technology use by religious groups, but also an examination of the multiple ways in which religious and technological narratives intersect" (2013:241). I have attempted to follow the intersections as well as the diffractions of narratives contemporary U.S. evangelicals share through technical education, published in articles and through conversation. I have listened to the stories evangelical technicians tell each other about the nature of technology

and the appropriate role they should play in the church. These are evolving stories. Moreover, I would suggest that there are multiple stories that converge in the technologization of worship practice within a landscape of spiritual economies.

Courtney Bender describes the nature of American spirituality as "*entangled* in social life, in history" (2010:5). Evangelical churches go to great lengths to intensify this entanglement through preaching and orienting worship practice specifically towards intensifying faith-based commitments—such as living on mission. Inciting congregants to enact this personal change towards living on mission becomes one of the loci of worship experience. In the context of contemporary social life within capitalism, Brian Massumi suggests that the potential for the "experience of a change, an affecting-being affected, is redoubled by an experience of the experience. This gives the body's movements a kind of depth that stays with it across all its transitions—accumulating in memory, in habit, in reflex, in desire, in tendency. Emotion is the way the depth of that ongoing experience registers personally at a given moment" (Massumi 2003:213). Evangelical churches attempt to engineer events with lasting effects where the sensorial "impact" of the worship service lingers in the hearts of the congregation. When congregants reflect on their experience they experience it again as an accumulation of affects.

Evangelicals intend the embodied affects of worship performance to be part of a "re-membered" experience (Stewart 1996). Experiences may be re-membered through a sense of proximity to those around you or the feeling of sound resonating in your body while singing. The words of the pastor or the hardness or softness of the seats may evoke a memory. The smells in the air, the aesthetics of the room, the juxtaposition of light and image on the projection screens, or the reverberations of sound through feet on the floor may register long after the event. Or,

congregants may experience the echo of God's voice.

Take for example, the ways that conservative British evangelical students learn to embody belief. Religious Studies scholar Anna Strhan (2013) describes the process as: "[t]he speaking and listening bodies of students become the means by which they experience God's voice echoing—within themselves and others (237). Although they cultivate a highly entextualized[70] relationship with their faith, the "means by which evangelicals come to embody propositional beliefs are inseparable from their faith in others—institutional authorities, friends, and God experienced as an intimate other" (Strhan 2013:237)[71]. That intimate other is what Thomas Csordas (2004) locates as the "phenomenological kernel" of religion that emerges from an intimate alterity. Ironically, for many evangelical stewards, technology embodies that alterity that requires a type of intimacy in order to produce relevant and excellent worship practice.

Technology as *other* is simultaneously a divine threshold through which the Word is transmitted and a gateway for wonton incitements to "insidious evil". It can contribute to its own idolization yet stewards speculate that it contains almost "human" qualities. It may seem merely a turn of phrase or a bit of anthropomorphizing to write about technology in this way. I want to draw attention to the sense that technologies incite speculation on their excess of capacity, an inside both receding from view and exploding onto the scene that cannot be captured in mechanical metaphor, reductively in machinic function, or through "scientific naturalism" that posits things as collections of increasingly smaller bits (Bogost 2012:6).

Evangelicals seek to understand the point at which immersion within a technologized

[70] Entextualisation: where "chunks of text come to be extractable from particular contexts and thereby made portable" (Keane 2007:14).
[71] "The dominant hermeneutic method employed by the group was to establish the relevance of the text for personal, local, and global circumstances—a characteristic interpretive practice for Evangelicals (Beilo 2011:82).

worship environment becomes more about the feeling of the immersive experience itself, and less about contact with the Holy Spirit. The conceptualization stewards adopt towards technology entertains the questions: is it a tool or participant open to the movements of the spirit? What I found to be certain is that constant vigilance and alertness to the traces of technology's capriciousness is a requirement for contemporary evangelical church stewards.

When evangelicals speculate on technology's use and usefulness it becomes part of the policing of technology's boundaries, a reaffirming of the "proper" place and function of the device in relation to the divine. "The lord of the nations is surely also the Lord of Google. This perspective protects stewards from a false distinction between the sacred and secular that minimizes the spiritual import and moral value of technology" (Roberts 2010b:90). Keeping the divinity divine by discounting the sacred/secular divide, technology becomes loaded with "spiritual import and moral value". The technology steward, from this perspective, must manage both the technological aspect of device use but also consistently reaffirm the boundaries of the object, separating it as an *other* from the human and divine. Insofar as technology is a disenchanted product of production, a claim that requires all due suspicion (cf. Modern 2011), the sacred evaluation of technology is deeply imbricated with an uncertainty as to the vitality of objects. Praying over technology at Neighbours Church embodies this uncertainty and ambivalence towards technology.

It is both technology's vitality and its political ontology that troubles its carefree use by stewards. Social Anthropologist Stanley Tambiah, writing on the role of technology, elaborates on Weber's processes of rationalization and the elaborations of his work by Marcuse and others. Tambiah suggests, following Marcuse that "technology is invoked as providing the rationale for

the organization of men's lives; technical criteria are said to determine the organization of life, and thus technological rationality is a political process" (1990:146). He further quotes Marcuse to suggest that "Technology is always a historical social project: in it is projected what a society and its ruling interests intend to do with man and things" (Tambiah 1990:147). Broadly, it is worth asking: what kind of social project the technologization of religious practice incites and writes in the dialogical elaboration of spiritual economies of experience for evangelicals.

The tensions invoked by technology use for stewards embody the contemporary evangelical moment. I have attempted from an anthropological perspective, to account for a multiplicity of points of view and embodied practices without locking down the analysis with a just-so conclusion that fails to account for the diversity of situated practices—such as those at Neighbours Church.

I will leave you with one last ethnographic glimpse that conveys the gravity with which many evangelicals understand their calling for technical excellence and the magnitude of the technological endeavour for many churches. I was sitting at one of the TFW Pavilion lounge tables at InfoComm 2010, held at the Las Vegas Convention Centre, in Las Vegas, NV and a man, forty-something, with dark salt and pepper hair, dressed in jeans and a blazer, asked to join me. It had been a successful show—the seminars were well attended and that always made the presenters happy. As he introduced himself, he explained that he was representing a Montreal church that did not have enough staff to operate their worship production devices. I asked him why that was. He replied that the church's experience with the equipment installers had not gone well. They had spent five-hundred thousand dollars on a sound system that sounded good for about a year then started to sound "really bad". As a technology consultant, he was asked to "fix"

the sound. The volunteers that had been operating the system had made it sound progressively worse. At this, he looked straight into my eyes and declared, “The harvest is coming and there are too few workers”. The Second Coming—when only the chosen will endure—is upon us, he suggested, and the harvest will require workers to reap the fields, to tend to the crop of would-be believers. The harvest is wonderfully salient metaphor for the growth-oriented efforts of contemporary evangelical churches—their sense of impending rapture demands the immediacy and sensorial presence of the spiritual to ensure that the crop is plentiful.

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