

1. Vineyard Time

The first time I walked into a Vineyard church, I was worried I was late. I needn't have worried. Even on my way to that church, there was a sense of time being out of joint. This particular church was located in the kind of Southern California inland industrial park that you find on the trailing edge of some suburbs. This part of town was built to a vehicular rather than human scale. A thin low line of chaparral-clad mountains was along the immediate horizon, trapping the air and ensuring the sky was an exhausted shade of beige. The few cars on the roadways (who would go to an industrial park on a weekend?) made it feel as if time had stopped.

It was the overall stillness that made the action of the parking lot all the more striking. The vehicles were mostly small economy cars, some of which were the worse for wear, and midsized family SUVs. The latter were almost always adorned with various stickers. One common motif was representations of the family members as stick figures.¹ There were also stickers with the initialism "NOTW" (standing for "Not of This World," a Christian apparel company). The letters were stylized, with the *T* fashioned to look like a cross and the *O* to look like a halo floating over the *T*. (This logo was not just for cars; more than once while working with Southern California evangelicals, I saw people who had it tattooed it on their bodies).

As I walked to the open doors of the warehouse, I could hear the music play: uplifting, midtempo, catchy. It was Christian pop, though it is more commonly referred to as "praise music," at least when it is deployed in worship sessions. There were a couple of people working the door; like most Vineyard churches, this one had a small set of volunteers referred to alternately as the *welcome ministry* or the *welcome team*. These positions were more than just names. Enthusiastic handshakes and sometimes hugs were offered to familiar worshippers as they passed through the door. The mem-

bers of the welcome ministry were handing out that weekend's announcement bulletin, which invariably included the following information: the name of the pastor, a list of home groups one could attend, and the nominal starting times of *meetings* (the term usually used for church services). Often these flyers also had information about the "word" or "message" for the day, what other churches would call the sermon or homily. Other information might include upcoming workshops; church community-building activities, such as picnics or barbecues; and news about various other ministries, or teams orientated around concerns, such as the homeless, food donation, or the short-term mission trips, which are basically vacation-length jaunts to assist churches in other nations.

As I crossed over the threshold, I was greeted by a large, heavy man with a shaved head and a goatee, who was wearing denim and a t-shirt. He looked like a cuddly biker. The biker held out a copy of the circular to me. While he was obviously friendly and happy to be greeting people, I was put on the back foot by having to engage in conversation after arriving late (on this initial visit, I had intended to sit in the back as an observer). I murmured an apology for being late. He immediately said that I wasn't late at all. "We're on Vineyard time," he stated, laughing.

WHAT IS VINEYARD TIME?

And they *were* on Vineyard time. Vineyard time was not a commonly used phrase; in fact, I don't think I heard it uttered again for years, though I would eventually hear it often enough at different Vineyard churches and meetings to know that Vineyard time is a very real phenomenon. Time was loosely kept at almost every church service and Vineyard event I ever intended, whether they were open to all or just a select few. As this chapter will show, Vineyard time is a complex, heterogeneous entity, a direct expression of a series of institutional, embodied, and cognitive practices made up of numerous different pneumatological and practical strands that work as much in conjunction as separately.

In its marked form, Vineyard time serves a specific purpose: When people say Vineyard time, or otherwise refer to the movement's flexibility regarding punctuality, they are invoking a sense of belonging that presumes shared traits. Notably, they are usually speaking tongue in cheek. This is both a way of casting playful aspersion on the Vineyard as a totality and a performative expression of the group's cohesion. It is no accident this is the same formula sometimes heard in ethnic jokes, particularly among those ethnic groups that enjoy telling jokes about themselves—for example, about "Spanish

time," "Italian time," or the like. While suggesting an equivalency between ethnicity and a denomination-like movement may seem odd, I saw similarities between the two in the Vineyard. Vineyard believers often refer to the Vineyard as "their tribe," and the Vineyard pastor at the church where I spent the most amount of time often addressed the congregation with the phrase "let us be a people that." This would be followed by, for example, "aspires to" (some ethical or spiritual trait) or "will accomplish" (some ambitious collective project). Expressing a tribal-like identity is not unique to the Vineyard, but it is a recurring theme among other Christian movements. Recall the "Not of This World" bumper stickers that suggest unity and otherworldliness among the people whose cars or bodies bear this logo, at the same time distinguishing these believers from nonbelievers and notional Christians, who presumably *are* of this world. This framing had a historical pedigree; it was not uncommon for the early church fathers to refer to Christianity as constituting an *ēthnos*.² The work of an ethnic joke (when it is not meant as a form of sublimated aggression) is to articulate some trait that might be ascribed to a particular group, thereby making that group distinct from outsiders. Vineyard time works in a similar way. Vineyard time works as a joke because each time it is told, it makes one of the particular traits that define the Vineyard seem more real.

But Vineyard time is not just a joke; for several reasons it is a substantive phenomenon. First, Vineyard churches are often staffed by volunteers. The ratio of volunteers to paid church staff is a function of the size and age of the church. Smaller and younger churches are more likely to rely on staff, who receive only notional or no pay; sometimes this includes even the pastors, who may be what evangelical Christians refer to as "bivocational," that is, either by desire or necessity they work outside the church to support themselves and their families (almost all Vineyard pastors are men with families). Even when pastors are running a church full time, they are not well heeled: a pastor at a fair-sized church, which might draw two-to-five hundred regular members, might make about as much as a public school teacher in the area. The vision of the megachurch pastor who drives over to his Lear jet in the back of his limousine may hold true in other movements and in other parts of the world, but it does not capture the circumstances of the majority of Vineyard pastors.

The use of volunteers, though, is informed as much by sensibility as fiscal constraints. There is a Vineyard expression going back to John Wimber that says "everybody gets to play." This is usually understood to mean that everybody gets to personally engage in the miraculous signs and wonders associated with the Vineyard. But that is not its only meaning. Playing also means

participating in the running and management of the church. In churches that have elders—a small set of select members who have agreed to advise on pastoral and management decisions—“everybody gets to play” may mean that some get an opportunity to engage in hands-on church governance.

Vineyard churches are organized in this way in part because of their egalitarian tendencies, derived to a certain extent from the fiction of equality found in much of middle-class America. But it is also because of the Vineyard’s Pentecostal- and charismatic-influenced ideas about the Holy Spirit. The egalitarian aspect can be seen in the Vineyard’s unofficial dress code, which is weekend casual. This is part of the group’s rejection of “religion”; in the Vineyard, as in much of evangelical Christianity, *religion* means the presence of a highly coded vocabulary, marked sartorial expectations (such as black suits on Sunday), and formal rituals. The Vineyard’s egalitarianism is not just about not being religious, though, but also about having a democratic sensibility; it is harder to convey status when almost everyone is wearing jeans and a t-shirt. Money counts in the Vineyard, of course, particularly at the pastoral level; a small church can really feel the effects if a relatively well-off or generous family that tithes on a regular basis leaves the church, and this is a particular worry in Vineyards that depend on mobile populations like the military. And most pastors are very aware of who is tithing regularly and in large amounts. But at the interactional level, all members are at least ostensibly equal,³ and this equality is not necessarily fictive. Many Vineyards tend to be somewhat homogenous, drawing their populations from specific segments of the cities where they are located: students, young adults, people who are starting families, baby boomers, and so on.

This general American tendency toward a fictive or actual egalitarianism works in conjunction with Vineyard pneumatology. In the Vineyard, everyone has access in some way to the Holy Spirit, though given the unpredictable nature of the Holy Spirit, it might be more accurate to reverse the agency and say that the Holy Spirit has access to all Vineyard believers. And one way the Vineyard is different from some forms of classic Pentecostalism is that everyone is presumed, at least in theory, to be able to invoke any of the charismata associated with the Holy Spirit at any time (in many forms of Pentecostalism, there is a tendency for charisma to be centralized in particular leading figures). That being said, there is also a sense that some people are granted greater capacity to invoke a specific charism, such as healing; those with an extraordinary capacity or perceived heightened levels of success when invoking a particular mode of charism are considered “gifted.”

This means that in theory everyone can do everything, but people also have gifts particular to them. Despite this, some are unable at a practical level to speak in tongues, have no special capacity for healing, have no prophetic gifts, and cannot have the kinds of sensory experiences during prayer that constitute what is understood as hearing from God. This can be a source of frustration and self-questioning; one way to deal with this lack is to consider positive personality traits or talents, such as being empathetic, encouraging, or well organized, as gifts that are equivalent to those that are more overtly supernatural. And these gifts are often expressed through volunteering. Also, people who understand themselves as being capable of hearing from God sometimes believe they should be more active in the church, which leads them to volunteer.

What this means for the Vineyard is that there is a sense almost any Vineyard member could conceivably have any talent. At the same time, there is also an acknowledgment that people may have more enthusiasm than ability; sometimes it's thought that people might at times imagine they have a talent for narcissistic instead of spiritual reasons. This is particularly the case for those in highly visible or leadership positions, such as heading a bible study group, preaching, or perhaps most compelling participating in the "worship" or "praise" ministry, that is, performing worship songs in front of the whole church. Not every church is large enough to have a choice about who performs in what capacity; new churches, or older Vineyard churches that are fading away, may not have enough active members to discriminate when it comes to who does what. But a sufficiently large church can slowly open up possibilities for members who wish to be more active; they may play guitar for a home group, and if that goes well, they may be asked to play at a night meeting of the whole church (typically affairs with much lower turnout unless the meeting really captures the imagination). Substituting for someone who cannot make it to the worship service on a particular Sunday morning might be the next step, perhaps followed by regular participation in the worship ministry. Similarly someone might progress incrementally from running a Bible study group to being an assistant pastor. Leaders training leaders can be a successful vetting system and a way of encouraging greater participation, but even in the most well-oiled churches, it can also encourage a pattern of unpaid people taking over many of the church's functions.

Therefore, while there are all sorts of forces, from aesthetics to how they understand the Holy Spirit, voluntarism is the functional reason for the Vineyard's noted informality. Though it may seem counterintuitive, informality makes employing so many untrained people easier. But it also contributes to the lack of punctuality known as Vineyard time.

The temporal chopiness that comes from voluntarism is not unchecked by other imperatives. As we shall see later on, the culture of voluntarism is counterpoised by both an organizational imperative and a secondary aesthetic sensibility that demand commodity-centered perfectionism. This aesthetic sensibility stems from the way that the commodity functions as the measure of quality; the replicability and seamlessness of that form and of “branding” as well is held up as a certain standard in much of the Vineyard. This relates chiefly to the Vineyard’s material culture, but it is present in other aspects as well.

Commodity-oriented perfectionism has its own temporal effects. While it would be ridiculous to say that Vineyard churches aim for absolute uniformity, I was told by one pastor that “uneven experiences” between meetings at different churches can be a problem. At some level, novelty is attractive to Vineyard believers, but many believers want to know roughly what to expect at a church service. This is especially the case when evangelizing is a concern; if you are bringing a colleague, friend, or family member who has expressed an interest in Christianity in general or the Vineyard in particular to a service, you don’t want to be surprised at what happens after you have walked through the front door. Quality control means evenness, and evenness means having some sort of schedule.

Voluntarism’s effect on punctuality and consistency is also partially checked by the Vineyard’s historical ties to the church growth movement. During John Wimber’s long association with the Fuller School of World Mission, one of his chief responsibilities was to train evangelical church leaders in social-scientific-derived techniques for growing churches. This movement in applied missiology aimed at identifying and circulating numerically quantifiable and replicable practices that would allow churches to bring in greater numbers. The Vineyard has never quite lost its connection to the movement, though it has to some degrees been diluted by both the imaginative shifts that have occurred with charisma and a lack of connection to the original stringency that founding church growth figures like Donald McGavran brought to the movement. But it still persists in the Vineyard’s weakness for the genre of business-improvement literature, often centered around celebrating efficiencies. The literature itself of course is as much about innovation and change as it is about ratcheting things just ever so slightly tighter; especially during the period from the 1980s to the present, there has been a celebration of the deterritorializing creative distraction, or “disruptive innovation,” in the sort of business efficiency literature that keeps popping up in the Vineyard. Using a business model casts a shadow on the organization, which is perhaps most evident in the

variations in internal Vineyard nomenclature. Many Vineyard churches hesitate to acknowledge that they often switch between the term *ministries* and the more business-oriented term *teams* when speaking about groups working with the homeless, children, or missions; in fact, though, ministry and team are often used synonymously.

WORSHIP TIMES

Commodity and business imperatives can push back against the softening of schedules that comes with voluntarism, but they are no match for the temporal forces that arise from the experiential side of charismatic worship. This has its own temporal self-organization, with overlapping timescales operating at different levels of magnitude and resolution. And this time does not work to one end, but to several, producing a disjunctive synthesis that gives rise to independent and crosscutting axes of Vineyard time, temporalities that run orthogonal to all the other colors of time discussed so far. An example will help clarify how these various modes of time operate.⁴ Charismatic time as an experiential force can be seen operating through worship music.

In the Vineyard, to worship almost always means to listen to or participate in performing worship music. Worship as a collaborative, participatory musical performance is experiential because when it works it performs a series of operations on those present, including the musicians. It reconfigures their sensory attunements and their affective states. It reframes and reorients the believers, allowing them to open up to a different set of sense memories and bodily dispositions; in essence this allows a set of latent capacities to come to the fore. While most listeners/participants are not fully aware of how worship music's specific mechanisms work, they are definitely aware that something is transpiring. People who come to church preoccupied with quotidian concerns, such as the low-level intrafamilial strife associated with getting small children and sleepy spouses to Sunday morning services, find that worship distracts them so that these issues seem less pressing. At its best, worship creates psychic space and a sense of freedom. At the same time, though, worship always has the potential to act not as a mode of training the body or allowing believers to escape their cares but as an event in which something—such as God—reconstitutes the subject through an immanent encounter with *évènementiel* signs. In short, worship is a place where small miracles can occur.

Given that all this is implicit in worship music, it should be no surprise that this process takes time; the first challenge is knowing when that time

begins. When I walked into church that first morning, I was not aware that very few people had arrived before the worship band played its first note. Church services begin softly and slowly, sometimes an hour or even more before the stated start time, yet they don't begin in earnest until well past the scheduled start time. Volunteers come early to prepare the empty space; in churches that rent locations like a school gym or auditorium, this may mean setting up the half-circle rows of folding chairs that are common in midsized congregations. Coffee and donuts are placed on a back table and recommended books for sale on another. All this happens as the band tunes up and perhaps does a rough dry run over a song or two. A few minutes before the church service is scheduled to start, the skeleton crew setting up chairs might come together with the band; the pastor will then lead off with a brief, semispontaneous prayer asking God to help them present "a powerful message," "reach people where they are," or "give a sense of God's goodness," to give a few examples.

The band then begins to play the worship songs, as attendees straggle in, slowly filling the room. The songs are often not hymns but covers of commercially crafted Christian music made for general consumption and written with worship in mind. The choice of music is not incidental, though. In fact, music labels often facilitate use of their music by distributing chord charts and music sheets to encourage churches to adopt their songs.⁵ The economy this give rise to is simple. Believers become exposed to songs as they are used in worship, creating a familiarity and an emotional cathexis with these tunes that primes them to purchase the music or pay to see the song's authors perform the music live.

The songs' dual purposes—as commodities and as part of worship—encourage certain features: songs have to be catchy enough lyrically and musically to be identified and remembered. The capacity of these songs to become "earworms" seems to surpass that of most other forms of pop music by several orders of magnitude. The practice of projecting the song's lyrics on screen during worship also serves to imprint them on the minds of the listeners. Only one or two new songs are introduced each month in order to maintain the fine line between familiarity and novelty. There are fine differences between familiarity and routine, novelty and chaos; inhabiting the productive spaces between these extremes can be difficult.

Inhabiting these spaces is in large part facilitated by the internal organizational features of these songs. They are structured (verse, chorus, and bridge) to allow their performance to go on indefinitely (worship music hardly ever has its length contracted). Likewise, inhabitation of productive spaces is facilitated by the sequence of songs. A typical worship period

covering anywhere from half an hour to an hour and a half will have about four-to-seven separate songs. Songs are put together thematically so that they share the same motif, such as God's love, sacrifice, or forgiveness. Songs are also arranged by key—there is a marked tendency (sometimes communicated as a rule of thumb by people in worship teams) to have one song followed by another that is either in the same key or the relative minor key. Songs are also organized by a perceived sense of their energy, oftentimes expressed in terms of beats per minute or rhythm. The idea is that the songs in a worship set should have a “curve,” a sequence, in which the songs shift speed and are different in length. There are several possible curves, but the classic Vineyard curve starts out with a series of songs that have an accelerated number of beats per minute (on the upside of a hundred), proceeds to a succession of songs that slowly decelerates to a low point of roughly fifty-to-seventy beats per minute, and concludes with a run of songs that once again accelerate to a higher number of beats per minute. Sketched out schematically, it looks a bit like a roller coaster: plunging from a height just to coast after the dip before rising again.

The reason for this organization, as well as the concern that the music be familiar and the lyrics accessible, is that this is a participatory exercise and participation is important mechanically in the experiential edge of worship. As people walk into church, their attention turns from greeting friends (often with a hug) and the free coffee and donuts to the music itself. People listen, tap their feet to the music, and sing along (though some sing more loudly than others; the volume they sing at is often an expression of their confidence in their voices as the degree of enthusiasm they have for the moment). Hands are raised in variations of the classic charismatic gesture: some worshippers raise just one hand and others two, while others raise both hands over their heads in what looks like a receptive gesture directed toward the sky. I have heard the latter pose self-described by some of its practitioners as cupping grace as it descends and channeling it to their heads and hearts. Hands can be raised this way for the length of a song or songs, making it more a position than a gesture. Eyes are often closed and faces emote more as they sing. A few worshippers might turn around and kneel in front of their seats, clasping their hands and looking like children praying at the side of their beds. A smattering of people might go off to some area set aside for dancing, their movements becoming larger and more dramatic as they become increasingly lost in the experience. One or two people might lie down on their stomachs or backs.

Tears are sometimes shed. Tears are not constant nor guaranteed and when there is crying, it is not always the same people who cry every time.

It is difficult to articulate the affective state indexed by these tears. Sometimes it is sorrow or regret—more properly couched in the context as repentance—triggered either by the lyrical content of the songs (about which more will be said later) or recent events in the person’s life. A slight lowering of the person’s emotional guard during worship may allow for a cathartic response. Sometimes the tears are tears of joy or exuberance, often they are just the tears of people overwhelmed by worship. But often they are just *tears*, a reaction to a *too muchness* of worship, an excess, that is neither quite pleasurable nor unpleasurable but rather has elements of both at the same time.

Changes in affect are more likely to occur later in the worship, after the shift from songs with a relatively high number of beats per minute to ones with slower tempos. Sometimes the affective transformation of few people acts like kindling, sparking a response in those around them. It is not quite enough at the level of proximity and automaticity that the word contagion should be used, but it is not too far from it either. When worship reaches these emotional plateaus, it is not uncommon for the worship team leader or pastor to take to the microphone to reference the “presence” of the Holy Spirit, either retroactively or contemporaneously. In the latter case, one of them might say something like “I can really feel the presence of the Holy Spirit here this morning” or “Come Holy Spirit!” In contrast, worship is sometimes discussed as not interacting with the Holy Spirit, who is often imagined as an impersonal force, omnipresent but not always experienced at the same level of intensity. Rather, there are moments in which worship is described as an interaction with God in his mode as an individual—expressed either as feeling “closer to God” or “closer to Jesus.”

These are people who have been primed to tears, having learned (or, rather, having taught themselves) that crying is acceptable and has value; most importantly, they have learned the hardest lesson and become comfortable crying in public. Just because members are primed to cry does not mean they are being “artificial” or “phony,” any more than an athlete, who has through practice become better at lifting weights, is.⁶

More to the point, affected worshippers do not lurch into tears at a moment’s notice. Nor do they instantly become lost in song. In other words, no one walks into church, finishes off a glazed donut, and then falls to his or her knees wearing an ecstatic facial expression like Bernini’s “Ecstasy of Saint Teresa.” And such rapture is not guaranteed in the first place. Sometimes despite the intent of the band and the receptivity of the worshippers nothing happens and there is no excess. Worship then is a pleasant musical exercise, a chance to chat or perhaps withdraw a bit from the world

through song. There is a bit of solemnity but not much more. But even failure is unstable. Occasionally a worship session will seem as though it is not coming together, but then suddenly for unclear reasons the session will lurch into exuberance and repentance; when this happens, the subjective sense of time shifts as well. It may feel as though minutes are passing in an instant or alternately that time itself seems to have slowed down and congealed. Worshipers glancing at their cell phones may be surprised to discover that hours have passed or equally surprised to find that hardly any time has passed.

This emotional state or affective plane does not exist in many places outside religious services, though it shares things in common with the sense of *communitas* found in comparable social forms. Worship does not necessarily have the same triumphal edge as something like a rock concert (though that sometimes can be found), and the introspective aspects seem to be much more foregrounded. It strikes many people as strange, at least at first; converts often joke that they wonder “what in the hell are these people doing” when they first see worship. Nonbelievers with a passing familiarity with the practice sometimes describe it as weird or even wrong, which is not to say that its relative outlandishness does not have pleasures for outsiders as well. There are Vineyard narratives—effectively urban myths—about passersby, who hear the music while on their way someplace else and become so curious that they are lured into entering the church and captivated by the strangeness of it all. In some of these tales, the music alone is enough to make them convert, even though it is important to note that these narratives often wryly suggest that these accidental catechumens are initially openly uncertain or confused about exactly what they are joining. In some tellings, the converts didn’t not even know they had walked into a church.

Several authors have suggested that the play of time and emotions associated with worship results from a global but temporary shift in subjectivity, something along the lines of a trance or positive mode of dissociation called absorption.⁷ That reading seems to fit with this part of life in the Vineyard and will not be contested here. The point made here is more of a primitive observation, with primitive used not as a polite synonym for savage but in the sense of something that is foundational or basic. That observation is that time itself is fundamental to worship as a process at several different levels.

The first level is that worship is parasitic on the worships that came before: that is, past worships are still present in the sense that those experiences have conditioned the bodies, senses, sensibilities, thoughts, and nerves of the members in such a way that they can re-express their earlier experi-

ences in the current moment. The template for worship is carried over from the past, as are the increasingly honed bodily capacities that the enactment of worship presumes. In a way, the past is a force in and therefore a part of the present.

Carrying these practices from the past to the present is only one aspect of time's importance to the Vineyard; worship also points to a future, though not in the sense of an afterlife. As far as I know, I have never met anyone in the Vineyard who does not believe in some form of life after death or in a paradise of some sort where he or she will be in the presence of God. Not all members endorse the idea of "heaven"—some believe in bodily resurrection on a perfected eternal earth instead; I have even heard people invoke both eschatological visions at different times without expressing a great deal of concern about reconciling these two framings. Believers' lack of uniformity when it comes to the existence of an afterlife tells us something important, as does the fact that some members' conceptions of life after death are not fixed or are underdeveloped. This lack of clarity is important because it accords with the Vineyard's understanding of the miraculous: that is, interest in the miraculous is not about escaping this life but is rather about living this life in a more fulfilled manner.

Not all Vineyard members have a heavy investment in the Vineyard as a life project, but those who do desire an ethical and effective life in the here and now—or rather, in their own futures. This futural aspect is important in that worship can be considered not only expressive (or even cathartic) but, as we will see, part of a project of the self—one of many techniques for transforming the believer into a certain ideal type of person. Despite the fact that this is to a large degree about overcoming resistances and is hence reflexive, the focus on transforming the self should not be thought of as narcissistic; rather, the shift away from focusing exclusively on the self's relationship to God implies the development of relationships with those with whom one consociates (and even at the most abstract with one's predecessors and successors as well).⁸ Viewed this way, worship is a moment in a long (and sometimes speculative) trajectory, whose goal is to overcome the self and slowly inaugurate a stronger relationship with God, so that one can become the person one desires to be.

This vision of worship as having a transformative effect on one's future self is not to diminish the short-term temporal aspects of worship; worship over a lifetime has a shape but so does an individual Sunday morning worship session. Rather than seeking to have a transformative effect on a believer's future self, an individual worship session foregrounds an *extasis* in the present moment. This shape of worship, found in both the experiential sense

of time and in the “curve,” the technical diagram that gives rise to it, is more than instrumental. *Extasis* has a value not as a single desideratum, a state to be achieved as quickly as possible, but as a part of a slowly unfolding process that takes place during particularly charged worship sessions. It is a familiar temporal form, and the constitutive transformations are important to that familiarity.

The emphasis on smooth transformations over the middle term of a life or the shorter term of a worship session is not to say that temporal immediacy in the sense of instantaneous transformations is not a part of the Vineyard’s imagination. There are stories of people falling over onto their backs, being slain in the spirit, or falling instantly into divine laughter. These stories are usually about peak moments that took place in a special time. Among older believers, these are usually stories involving the early days of the Vineyard and John Wimber at his best or about the various revivals that periodically spring up in the wider charismatic world. Language expressing the instantaneousness of shifts in states is meant to index the relative rarity of these peak moments and their perceived power and capacity to transform lives (though sometimes only temporarily). In short, these stories of instantaneous transformation are only legible against worship as a process of unfolding.

Part of this emphasis on immediacy is to stress a kinship with New Testament miracles, particularly those done by Jesus, which (perhaps because of the telegraph-like sensibilities of Biblical Koine Greek) are rather punctual, happening in an instant as the result of a single command. When discussing these occurrences in the Vineyard, stressing their instantaneous miraculous temporality is to limit any possibility of naturalistic double coding, that is, attempts to attribute the miracle to something other than an expression of the supernatural agency of God. As we will see, naturalistic double coding of supernatural phenomena is a common framing in the Vineyard. Like a shady legal operation that has two different sets of books, parallel naturalistic and supernaturalistic accounts are often produced concurrently about the same phenomenon.

The real proof that discussions of instantaneousness do not vitiate the importance of process in the Vineyard is that stories of instant transformations are often embedded within larger processual accounts. A description of being slain in the spirit, for example, may be folded into a story about someone who attends a revival, is skeptical, is prayed over, realizes that being slain in the spirit right there is a possibility, tries fighting it as he or she feels a softening of the body, and—BOOM!—falls backward with such speed that his or her body has to be caught by someone before it crashes to

the floor. Depending on how the story is told—for example, whether it is presented as a testimonial or in conversation—it may be elaborated on in detail or abbreviated to focus on the instant the person collapses.

The important point is not that there are narrative exceptions and variations to worship as duration. The point is that a sense of the processual unfolding of worship and other charismata are so readily available that they form the unarticulated presumption against which any specific narrative of worship is thought; the instantaneous nature of these particular and storied miraculous events require the grounding of other processual events (like worship, which is itself a sort of miracle) in order to be made visible. One could not markedly claim instantaneousness if instantaneousness were not shocking. Worship, even miraculous worship, is made from extended plateaus of time, even when some tales of worship presented it as something that can be contracted to a single instance.

In short, just because worship makes other miracles readable does not mean that we should forget the heterogeneous times that constitute worship. All these transformations take place in relation to another temporality, one that exceeds both the ethical telos of the memory of prior moments and the excitations of a specific punctuated moment of ecstatic worship. There are numerous other moments that are also present and are in fact *implicit in* (but not *subsumed by*) worship. Hearts race or decelerate, breathing slows down or quickens and becomes deeper or more shallow, individual muscles contract and relax, the capillaries in the face vasodilate, the rate at which governing hormones and neurotransmitters are released varies, collections of neurons cycle through their chemical and electrical discharges. These changes, which take place in seconds or milliseconds, go unnoticed by the observational ethnographers. And when they are perceived by worshippers or participating ethnographers, they are only perceived in the most visceral ways.

It is easy to conceive of these biological processes as the subsidiary building blocks of larger processes. These biological moments would be the substrate that forms the “base” on which everything else is built, the “real” upon which everything is dependent. What this understanding elides is that these heartbeats, breaths, and tremors are synthetic and in mutual relationships with events occurring at other timescales and on different orders of magnitude; just as these cycles are what allow for bodies and brains that worship or enable people to engage in the ethical process articulated as a “desire for God,” it is the thoughts, perceptions, and sensations at these other levels, at greater physical registers and slower scales of time, that have “downward” causation, shifting the manner in which heart, lungs, muscle tissue, and brains engage in their cycles.

This fact needs to be remembered, though not because worship is a more embodied activity than some other human endeavors or has physiological and anatomical aspects that other activities and events do not have. All human activities involve shifts in bodily and neurological processes; and while the various minima and maxima of them may vary and the sequence and degree of shifts do not all follow the same path, there is *in the abstract* nothing that distinguishes worship from these other endeavors. This is important not because bodily processes are involved but because in worship these various systems are pushed to their limits in ways that other practices are not. This is the reason behind the seemingly contradictory copresence of intensely pleasurable and simultaneously heartbreaking excess that is experienced during worship; cycles and systems are operating at states far removed from those of most of life. (This is only a contradiction for outsiders; for evangelicals with a concern for their “brokenness,” this pairing is natural.)

Given the way that worship pushes some bodily and affective systems to the limit, it is no accident that the shape of these experiences is that of a crescendo, that is, of something that is pushed to its limit and then (sometimes precipitously) falls back, often after lingering at a plateau.⁹ Consider the roller coaster–like “shape” of worship. This is an arrangement of excitations and transformations that would be familiar to the Freud who wrote *Project for a Scientific Psychology*; and while it is easy to make too much of this by viewing worship as merely a displacement of or substitution for some other biological process, a certain kinship in bodily response to other human activities should be kept in the back of the reader’s mind.

This kinship brings us to another issue. These systems, following their own emergent trajectories, do not always go in the direction that conscious minds might desire or anticipate. Variations in initial conditions at the levels of cognition, affect, or physiology or in the state in which one is presently with respect to a wider biographical arc could cause worship not to kindle at all or, alternately, to rush ahead with a surprising velocity. This will affect the speed of the contagion. People respond to the energy of those around them—sometimes at the level of consciousness, where they are spurred to greater efforts by the sight of someone completely enraptured during worship. But they also respond to shifts in pitch and volume or to the degree and speed of bodily movement that affect others and savvy worship bands can work with. These are the moments when the Holy Spirit is really present, when an intimacy with God is truly felt. The converse can happen as well—in a seemingly identical situation, nothing may occur at all and greater efforts by worshippers individually or collectively can do nothing to make something come to pass, presuming the desire to do so is truly present.

Worship leaders know that as well, though they need to continually remind themselves; books, magazines, and websites for worship leaders are full of suggested techniques, including when to vary songs and sets, to catalyze states in the audience. They are also full of stark reminders that the Holy Spirit will come when the Holy Spirit wills and sometimes there is nothing that can be done if the Holy Spirit doesn't will a palpable presence. It is this variability, with things coming quickly, slowly, or not at all, that produces the charismatic side of the temporal elasticity and lags that constitute "Vineyard time," and it is the fact that the Holy Spirit can always surprise one with his appearance that makes it miraculous.

ALREADY/NOT-YET

We have spent so much time on worship because it is an exemplar (though again, not a prototype or an archetype) of charismatic religious practices. As will be argued in later chapters, there is an underlying set of relations that can be found both in worship and in charismata; and indeed for many Vineyard believers worship is a charismata like tongues or healing because it indexes the presence of the Holy Spirit. Like worship, charismatic practices are dynamic, and as is evident particularly in the tendency for things sometimes to take and sometimes not to take, they have striking effects. This dynamism and the tendency for things to falter have been thought through in the Vineyard; further, the Vineyard's account of this indeterminacy has actually been so important that it has been elevated to the level of a pneumatological theorem; at the level of practical theological discourse, it may be the Vineyard's greatest contribution.

In the Vineyard, pastors and other "religiously musical" members have a name for the patterning they discern in the intermixed successes and failures of moments of charismatic practice. The multifarious precariousness of charisma is called *the already/not-yet*. The already/not-yet, however, is more than a way of referring to how charismatic acts sometimes do not go as desired. It also refers to an indeterminacy in eschatological time that Vineyard believers identify in the biblical narrative, especially its Pauline aspects. The various charismatic hesitations and triumphs in the here and now have become laminated with a wider stretch of cosmological time; and these moments have also become part of what they see as the war that God is undertaking to redeem history.

According to the logic of the already/not-yet, because Jesus has been crucified and raised again, Jesus's soteriological work is already accomplished; death has been triumphed over. Hence, the "already." However, this

triumph has not been fully consummated and will not be until Jesus returns to this world: therefore, the trailing “not-yet” part of the equation. This bifurcated concept is part of what people in the Vineyard call *kingdom theology*, an account of the kind of order they believe Christ inaugurated in the world and of how it contrasts with and supervenes Satan’s kingdom.

In many ways, discussions about the Kingdom of God are nothing new in Christianity. References to the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, which the Vineyard treat as synonyms, abound in the New Testament, particularly in the three synoptic gospels. Because of the biblical use of this term, the various elaborations of it as an organizing trope over the last two thousand years of Christianities exceed any possible enumeration here. It is enough to observe that it had a particular salience during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; especially during the nineteenth century it was turned to by Christian thinkers pulling away from Christian nationalism, millennial triumphalism, and personal conversion.¹⁰ One of the chief twentieth-century American deployments of the term has been carried out by mainline Protestants. Mainline Protestants are the liberal denominations that represented “respectable” Christianity for most of the twentieth century and the ones that may be most antithetical to the Vineyard; to some degree there is something almost schismogenetic in the way that mainline Protestants have taken up naturalism and modernism to the same degree that the Pentecostals and charismatics have embraced an antimodernist charismatic supernaturalism. Unsurprisingly, their articulations of the Kingdom of God appear to be quite different, at least at first blush. One of the central planks of mainline Protestantism is the social gospel, an early twentieth-century movement that militated for social, political, and economic reforms for the benefit of the impoverished. This idea was seen as another articulation of the Kingdom of God; in the social gospel’s effective charter, Walter Rauschenbusch’s 1917 text *A Theology of the Social Gospel*, we are told that the Kingdom of Heaven “is itself the social gospel” and if believers wish to practice the social gospel, they “must not only make room for the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, but give it a central place and revise all other doctrines so that they will articulate organically with it.”¹¹ This makes the Kingdom of God central to both the social gospel and the Vineyard. Considering the animus directed toward mainline Protestantism and the social gospel by that first generation of Vineyard believers, it is well worth keeping this small irony in mind.

Given this hostility to mainline Protestantism, it is no surprise that the direct inspirations for the idea of a kingdom theology and an “already/not-yet” comes from a different source. Variants of the concept of already/not-yet

and the Kingdom of God that are more along the lines of the Vineyard's sense of the terms can be found in the writings of theologians, such as Oscar Cullmann and Geerhardus Vos.¹² Given the Vineyard's history, it is probably no great surprise that this source runs yet again through Fuller Theological Seminary, the institution that in its earlier years had employed Wimber and given C. Peter Wagner an academic home. This time, though, the locus was not in the School of World Mission but rather the seminary itself, the institutional nucleus around which the rest of Fuller formed. And the seminary figure responsible for the already/not-yet is George Eldon Ladd.

Ladd was part of the first wave of hires made when the seminary was set up in Pasadena after the Second World War; Ladd was lured out West from Gordon College of Theology and Missions (now known as Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), a respectable East Coast Baptist institution. Harvard educated, Ladd was attracted to the idea of Fuller as a place where first-rate theological conservative scholarship could be fostered and conservative theological thinkers could become respected interlocutors with liberal Christian scholars and academics working in the German tradition of historical-critical biblical scholarship.¹³ His goal, in short, was not for conservative evangelical theologians to become more liberal but rather for conservative evangelical thought to become so rigorous that liberal Christian intellectuals would have to engage with it in order to be credible scholars themselves.

One of the largest barriers to this, at least at the conceptual level, was the adherence of fundamentalists to dispensational millennialism. Dispensational millennialism or dispensationalism as it is sometimes called is a cosmological vision of biblical and church history with a particular emphasis on the end times. Dispensationalism makes use of two rough intellectual apparatuses. The first is an undifferentiated mix of allegorical and literalist readings of the book of Revelation and other Christian apocalyptic biblical texts. This technique creates a series of striking and often conspiratorial readings that relate the Bible to the current technologies, societal tensions, and political climate (dispensationalism always keeps one eye on the extant social-political forces). These readings are then ordered by a second conceptual apparatus, the presumption of a dizzying array of "dispensations." Dispensations are clearly bounded ages, and in each of these ages God chooses one chief modality over all others as his form of interacting with the world. During these ages, he privileges certain parties; for instance, the current era, which is on the cusp of the apocalypse, is often referred to as the "Church Age," in contrast to the early "Prophetic" or "Patriarchal" ages. The lynchpin of this thought is that the current age is

one doomed to fail as wickedness increases and the era of the antichrist grows ever closer. It is for this reason that the anthropologist Susan Harding has called dispensationalism a “willfully mad rhetoric.” Dispensationalism holds that the world is inherently turned toward evil, incapable of being salvaged by any human effort and in need of destruction and judgment by God. This challenges all the progressive teleologies, ranging from liberalism to communism to evolution, associated with Modernist thought.¹⁴

Because of both of these literalist claims and the challenges to the modernist narrative, dispensationalism became popular in fundamentalist circles during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One reason for its popularity was that because it viewed biblical texts as containing veridical allegories and predictions about what was to come dispensationalism was able to claim that it was reading the Bible “literally.” That strength was also part of the problem, though. The difficulty was that as a mode of biblical scholarship (as opposed to a popular theology), its quilt of allegorical and literalist claims from seemingly unconnected parts of the New Testament seemed indefensible to scholars, who were interested primarily in framing the Bible as a historical document that should be understood in terms of the Greek-speaking Roman Mediterranean culture in which it was created. The gap between conservative evangelical eschatology and historically informed practices of biblical hermeneutics was a problem for midcentury evangelists like Ladd, who wished to purge theologically conservative Christianity from what they perceived of as fundamentalist anti-intellectualism. Ladd in particular saw his academic project as creating a new evangelical eschatology. The first desideratum of this new eschatology was that this new reading should not be naturalist or modernist in the way that mainline Protestant thought was; at the same time, this new account had to grow out of a theologically defensible conservative reading of biblical texts that still kept an eye on the meaning of the texts as they were presumably understood in the original milieu in which they were produced. Finally, this reading also had to not come across as fevered in the ways that dispensationalism often does to theologically moderate or secular eyes; the liberal biblical scholars that Ladd wished to engage were individuals who had little time for accounts full of seeming anachronisms, in which ancient metaphors like stinging insects are imagined as heralding contemporary technological innovations, such as military aircraft.

Ladd’s solution was to shift the eschatological emphasis from the book of Revelation to the Gospels and center attention on the paradoxical ways that the Kingdom of God is described: already present but yet to arrive, concerned with the spiritual but also focused on the political and govern-

mental. The following passage from Ladd gives a sense of both the biblical sources he relies on and the way these sources can be seen as contradictory:

The Kingdom is a present reality (Matt. 12:28), and yet it is a future blessing (1 Cor. 15:50). It is an inner spiritual redemptive blessing (Rom. 14:17) which can be experienced only by way of a new birth (John 3:3), and yet it will have to do with the government of nations of the world (Rev. 11:15). The Kingdom is a realm into which men enter now (Matt. 21:31), and yet it is a realm into which they will enter tomorrow (Matt. 8:11). It is at the same time a gift of God which will be bestowed by God in the future (Luke 12:32) and yet which must be received in the present (Mark 10:15). Obviously no simple explanation can do justice to such a rich but disperse variety of teaching.¹⁵

It is exactly such contradictions that are fodder for historical-critical biblical scholars, who would see this seemingly contradictory welter of contradictions as a sign of the multiple sources and numerous waves of redaction that those scholars postulated.

Ladd argues that this seeming confusion is actually an effect of a historically uninformed understanding of the term *kingdom* as a particular political body or form of governance. Working in a philological mode, Ladd corrects this by attending to the original language of these texts: "The *primary* meaning of both the Hebrew work *malkuth* in the Old Testament and of the Greek word *basileia* in the New Testament is the rank, authority and sovereignty exercised by a king . . . When the word [Kingdom] refers to God's kingdom, it always refers to His rule, His sovereignty, and not to the realm in which it is exercised."¹⁶

This leaves Ladd with the position that the "Kingdom of God" should best be understood in contemporary language as the *authority* of God or at least can be understood at times to be speaking metonymically about encounters with and submission to that authority. The eschatological aspect of this argument comes from the understanding of this authority as being alive in the present day, even though it will be exercised to its fullest (in both the intensive and extensive senses) after the *parousia* (the Second Coming of Christ) and the resurrection of the dead. After that, the kingdom will be fully present, but until then, as would be expected in an era when God's authority is held back, it would be a fallen age, ruled by Satan and dominated by "evil, wickedness, and rebellion against the rule of God."¹⁷

But this current era, though it is under the sway of the devil, is not entirely subservient to the power of the devil: "The Kingdom of God is future, but it is not only future. Like the powers of the Age to Come, the Kingdom of God has invaded this evil age that men may know something

of its blessings even while the evil Age goes on." The wicked quality of this age is waning, since Jesus's triumph over death promises a similar triumph for believers to come. As Ladd says, "We are living on the heavenward side of the stage of the resurrection."¹⁸

Satan is in effect bound, but that does not mean that his sting is absent. For Ladd, it is important to stress that the taste of the kingdom in the present day is only a partial taste. While the future has invaded the past, it has not eradicated it, and the character of the fallen age remains as an effective limit on the capacity of the future age to realize itself now: "While we may taste the powers of a coming Age, it is the Biblical teaching that we shall never experience the full blessings of God's Kingdom in this Age."¹⁹

Ladd's hope was that this reading would be acknowledged by mainline and secular scholars, but he never experienced the kind of reception he aspired to; furthermore, his rejection of dispensationalism caused him to be the target of critiques from fundamentalists, who understood their apocalyptic vision of things to be an integral part of any true Christianity. In his later years, he grew caustic, and in ever-increasing levels found solace in alcohol.²⁰

Ironically, despite his sense of failure, Ladd had an influence the scale of which he might not have been able to imagine, albeit on a different population from the one he originally aspired to reach. Ladd was neither a charismatic nor a Pentecostal; at the historic moment when Ladd was most intellectually active, the tensions between evangelicalism and Pentecostalism were too high. Further, the presumed social gap between Pentecostalism and evangelicalism was also too wide for someone like Ladd to dabble in Pentecostalism—even if he hypothetically had an interest in engaging with a more charismatic form of Christianity. Despite that fact, much of the evangelical wing of charismatic Christianity eventually embraced him.

This was because Ladd saw the Holy Spirit as "first fruits" of the time to come—a "promise" of the coming age, but at the same time "more than promise"; it is "not the harvest, but it is the beginning of the harvest. It is more than promise; it is experience. It is reality. It is possession."²¹ Ladd seemed to have in mind a certain quality of life, through which it was possible to intimate the way in which the Holy Spirit would "come to indwell us and to transform our characters and personalities."²² While the exact theological language may not be the same, and though it is given an entirely different emotional charge, it is a vision of transformation closer to that imagined by Jonathan Edwards than by John Wesley. But despite this difference, this was an evangelical account of the Holy Spirit that could be used to frame a Pentecostal-oriented understanding as well.

The ease with which Ladd's point would later be repurposed was also the unintended result of another of Ladd's arguments, this time regarding the purpose behind miracles. For Ladd, the various New Testament miracles were intimately connected to the concept of the kingdom; rather than being goods in and of themselves or acts that directly expressed a messianic function, miracles, especially miracles of healing, were speech acts or as Ladd put it they served as "pledges of the life of the eschatological Kingdom which will finally mean immortality for the body."²³ Miracles were signs of the kingdom, proclamations of the Good News. It was a thoroughly evangelical vision of salvation that viewed the effects of the Holy Spirit neither as an additional unnatural capacity nor as a necessary sign of salvation but as a foreshadowing. What is more, given that this is just an intimation, there is no particular reason following this logic to believe that it would always be presenting the same mode.

This was the lure of kingdom theology for Wimber, who made it a cornerstone of Vineyard understanding. First, for Wimber the usefulness of something like kingdom theology and the already/not-yet is that it gave him a way to dismiss the Pentecostal idea of initial evidence; further, he could do so by way of referencing a known evangelical theologian at an institution to which he not only had a great number of ties but which was also one that had tremendous evangelical social capital. Under Wimber's presentation, though, this meant that miracles also have evangelical value in the sense that they serve as tools to bring nonbelievers into the fold. At least as presented in Wimber's writings and preaching, it was this evangelical aspect of the kingdom that was seen as the chief warrant for the existence of the miraculous.

The kingdom does something else for Wimber. It disarticulates the miraculous from the church, thereby placing in question the value of churches and denominations that would dismiss Wimber's message out of hand. As Wimber puts it, "The Kingdom of God created the Church at Pentecost through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Church is the primary (though not the exclusive) residence of God's dynamic rule. This means the Church witnesses to the King and His Kingdom, but it does not have authority in itself to build the kingdom. Only God has that authority."²⁴

This framing does particular work. It suggests that churches are not *per se* implements of grace; it is possible that in some circumstances other manifestations might have a better claim to the attention of believers. Accordingly if there is ever a moment in which someone is forced to choose between the miraculous and the church governing structure, the choice should always be with the miracle, since miracles are always on the side of

the kingdom. And the Vineyard was the church headed by the man who taught a course on miracles. This argument eased the way for individuals and sometimes entire churches to loosen their previous denominational ties and join the Vineyard. It was also a way of articulating the importance of miracles that would haunt Wimber near the end of his life as other figures, both inside and outside the Vineyard, claimed a capacity for the miraculous that exceeded Wimber's comfort levels.

The "miracle-as-Evangelism," as well as the "miracle-as-disembedding-the-kingdom-from-the church," were important elements of the kingdom theology that even had effects in a generational shift on some aspects of how the Vineyard imagined the potential implicit in the political. However, vital as these turns were, they were not the chief work done by these concepts. The most powerful aspect of the already/not-yet was that it gave Wimber an argument as to why this foretaste of the future found in the miraculous was not always available. It was an explanation of why sometimes prayer fails, the spirit does not come, and people are not healed.

The answer was that believers were in a state of war. And in war, there are casualties. As Wimber put it,

the Kingdom of Satan was and is Christ's real enemy, and there is a war going on. Jesus is about His Father's business, which is releasing those held captive by Satan. The final outcome of the battle has been assured through Christ's death, resurrection and ascension to the place of all authority, the right hand of the Father (1 Cor. 15:20–28). But Satan is not yet cast out, and he will not be until Christ returns to establish His kingdom forever. So we are caught between two ages. The fight continues, and we are in it.²⁵

This fight is a bitter one, and all the more so because the outcome is already determined. One of Wimber's favorite ways to illustrate this was taken from Oscar Cullmann, who was himself an influence on Ladd. Wimber presented the argument in this manner: "Our situation is similar to that of an underground army living in a land still occupied by a defeated enemy. Such was the French underground's role after D-Day during the Second World War. Though their eventual defeat was certain, the Germans were still capable of committing atrocities on French civilians."²⁶

This was a much more elaborated version of the illustration that Cullmann operated with. Cullmann merely presented the argument more pithily: "The decisive battle in a war may already have occurred in a relatively early stage of the war, and yet the war still continues."²⁷ True, Cullmann's observation, made immediately after the close of the Second World War, carries a sting in its unspoken invocation of a still-traumatic

memory; but Wimber's more elaborated version not only recasts his audience as French partisans but even invokes the specter of Klaus Barbie, whose trial for crimes against humanity was occurring during roughly the same period that Wimber was first expounding on the already/not-yet.

Of course, Cullmann, a theologian, had a different charge than the one that Wimber had. Cullmann only had to clarify a particular theory of time through analogy; Wimber by contrast had to *make it real for Vineyard believers*. This is because for Vineyard believers what this analogy was supposed to address and order was already real and in fact doubly real. There was the pain of failure, the puzzle of the moments when prophecy is wrong and intervention through prayer makes no difference. This alone could be frustrating, but it never came alone because it was always accompanied by the underlying misery that these prayers were supposed to cure. However, the already/not-yet takes this problem by the horns and converts an absence of meaning into meaning and suffering that challenges God's goodness into a faith in God's goodness that is all the more stronger.

TIME'S DISJUNCTIVE SYNTHESSES

How does Wimber work this conversion? The already/not-yet works as another sort of time, at once independent of and working in conjunction with the numerous other times; the already/not-yet runs orthogonal to the rolling cycles of the body and unfolding (and often nested) transformations that arise from conscious projects, such as a worship session, a prayer group, or even the totality of a Christian life. These other times also give content to the already/not-yet; it is their variations and vicissitudes that cause things to fall on the "not-yet" that is Satan's kingdom or the "already" that is God's. When things work, it is a sign that God is on the move; when things do not, it is a reminder of the pernicious nature of Satan's rule. As we will see later on, there is more to this as well: a certain attitude toward novelty lies at the center of this formulation, and furthermore there is a lure for those who might struggle against making their religion primarily a moral code or legalism. But the chief work done by the already/not-yet is to provide a lens for and be a regulator of projects and events that exist at other evangelical timescales.

But despite its relation with different timescales, it would be a mistake to see the already/not-yet as another instance of any of these other times. In fact, none of these times are interchangeable with each another. The cycles of the body are always repeating in a now—another heartbeat, another inhalation, another synapse fire. Each instance may have more or less

speed, strength, charge, and so on, but this bodily time is always striking again and again, like a tom-tom. By contrast, the time of biographical growth and conscious projects is different in that it is not simply a repetition but an unfolding; this is the reason why this time can have the same shapes that worship does or contain a telos in as much as this time is working *toward* something. But these processes are *experienced* as already being under way, since they cannot be experienced before their inception; for the same reason, they are always experienced as somewhere in the middle even if not necessarily in the dead center—one has started to worship or is having worship, is in the middle of praying, is still learning to hear from and obey God. And when these processes are finished, they are done—gone except for how they affect the current unfolding of the believer’s training or memory, which means in some ways even though the processes are in the past, they are still constituent elements in the present insofar as they are being reimagined or repurposed by other unfoldings.

The already/not-yet is different. The already/not-yet is a time split in twain through the event, a cleaving of the present moment into past and future. This dual citizenship of the present moment as a sign of the future or as a remnant of the past makes the already/not-yet an operative aporia, a kink or joint in time resulting from its actually being two times as once; as the philosopher Gorgio Agamben characterized this, speaking about the Pauline messianic time that the already-not/yet is a partial derivative of, this time works as “a kind of border zone, or even a transitional time between two periods . . . the first which determines the beginning of the new eon, and the second the end of the antique eon, and as such, makes it belong to both eons.”²⁸ In a way, none of the possible coded states is read as an expression of the present; rather, the current state is either actually past or future. When the opposition is between already and not-yet, “now” is not one of the options. When this time is what is foregrounded, things are either redeemed or are in need of redemption. The present is just the disjunct that these two times shoot out from.

We should not think, though, that the “already/not-yet,” that is, this timeframe that reckons its position with an eye on cosmology and eschatology, is always relevant for Vineyard believers any more than the other times are always relevant. Nor should we forget that the substantive (as opposed to the formal) way that these times operate is filled by the contingencies of the social technologies they invoke. Much like the church growth techniques they inherited stress a certain professionalism, the disruptive and decelerating effects of a participatory ethos of voluntarism affect the flavors of these abstract categories as well. Which brings us to this point:

the gap between the formal order of time and the substantive elements that give this formal order specific shape is not only small but in a way is only a perspectival gap. These projects, these excitations, and these eschatological horizons come out of a plurality of actions—of worship, but also of prayer, witnessing, healing, deliverance, or miraculous providence. And not only are these all different processes but each iteration or instance of one of these processes has its own particularity as well, deriving not only from the effect of whatever milieu it is embedded in but also from the elasticity inherent in these practices. It is the question of how this play occurs, and what relations these practice have to one another, that we turn to for the rest of this book.