

Jonathan Edwards and Music

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Abstract

Jonathan Edwards had much to say on music and singing. He was a vocal advocate for progressive changes towards a more aesthetic approach to congregational singing. However, this was not just reactionary or arbitrary - his position on the church's practice flowed from the core of his theology. Beauty is arguably the central theme of his theology, and he often expressed and articulated it typologically through the vocabulary and concepts of music - particularly harmony. This study will explore this central tenant, reviewing the cultural factors influential in its formation before examining it in detail. It will then move to study its impact on Edwards's thoughts about the affections, the end times, and religious revival. It will conclude by discussing congregational music in Sydney Evangelical churches and how Edwards's insights may commend or critique it and offer a firm theological framework for developing a positive approach to music in church.

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Introduction

There has recently been a great deal of interest in the writings and legacy of Jonathan Edwards. He wrote during a period of dramatic cultural change and spiritual revival and his insights into the philosophical, theological and ecclesiastical issues of his time - shaped by both his passionate Kingdom vision and prodigious intellect - have great relevance to Christians and churches today. He was a vocal advocate for the progressive changes in singing in worship occurring at the time. However, upon reading many of his sermons,¹ letters and papers, it soon becomes evident that Edwards not only had much to say about the practice of music in church, but that he also frequently used the vocabulary and concepts of music to articulate different aspects of his theology - in particular, his central theology of beauty and excellency, and its outworking in his eschatology. Edwards used music to commend his theology and then, consequentially, his theology commends pursuing beauty and excellence in congregational music. This unique approach provides a consistent theological and conceptual framework which may help reconcile some of the divisions over music that are present in the contemporary evangelical church in Sydney.

¹ The author has edited Edwards's unpublished notes. Spelling and punctuation has been modernised, and logical additions and lengthening of abbreviations have been included in parentheses.

Background issues

To aid our understanding of Edwards's writing and theology, it is important to first survey the intellectual, theological and ecclesiastical landscape from which it arose. A few key paradigm transitions deserve mention. In intellectual circles within Europe, the reason, science and philosophy of Enlightenment thinking was beginning to usurp the intellectual authority long held by the religious institutions.² In New England, Edwards was among the first generation to struggle with the tension between his Puritan heritage and this new mindset.³ The depiction of Edwards as the 'revolutionary intellectual prodigy' is somewhat fanciful⁴ - his eager engagement with the writing of Newton and Locke was not unusual for educated New Englanders, but it did sit outside of the predominantly medieval college curricula of the time.⁵ However, what does stand out is Edwards's efforts to positively integrate Enlightenment thinking with his strongly Calvinist theology⁶ to enrich his understanding of God, His universe and His interaction with humanity.⁷

² M. Noll, *The rise of evangelicalism : the age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester, Eng.: Apollos, 2004), 46-47.

³ G. M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards : a life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 60.

⁴ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards : a life*, 60-61.

⁵ Editorial comment in J. Edwards, "Autobiographical and Biographical Documents," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online Vol. 40* (ed. J. E. Center; Jonathan Edwards Center: Yale University, 2008), N.P.

⁶ In contrast to Deist theology, which was rapidly gaining popularity, in which God's sovereignty and providence were undercut by Enlightenment principles.

⁷ J. P. Byrd and R. Hill, *Jonathan Edwards for armchair theologians* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 392-393.

Another significant change occurring in Edwards's time was a transition of ecclesiology - from Puritanism to what Marsden defines as Calvinistic evangelicalism.⁸ While Puritanism remained as the most influential religious system in New England,⁹ its spiritual vigor was rapidly waning, and some of its distinctive corporate worship practices were losing favour. Of particular significance to this study is the area of congregational singing. Puritanism, in reaction to Anglicanism, restricted its corporate worship to practices explicitly commanded in Scripture.¹⁰ Consequentially, corporate singing in Puritan churches consisted of literal translations of the Psalms, 'sung' a capella.¹¹ The use of instruments was banned and extrabiblical hymnody was discouraged.¹² However, this started to change in the early 1700s. Influenced by the hymnody of the English dissenters¹³ and European pietists,¹⁴ and the aesthetic sensibilities of their surrounding culture,¹⁵ some New England clergy began to introduce 'Regular singing' - singing in three or four part harmony - and using extrabiblical hymnody in corporate worship. This change was not without vigorous debate, and Edwards was a vocal advocate for this 'New Way', as will be discussed below.¹⁶

⁸ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards : a life*, 143.

⁹ Noll, *The rise of evangelicalism : the age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, 42.

¹⁰ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards : a life*, 143.

¹¹ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards : a life*, 143-44. "... by the early eighteenth century the near chaos seemed appalling to those attuned to the refined musical standards of the day."

¹² D. A. Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the ministry of the word : a model of faith and thought* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 25-26.

¹³ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards : a life*, 143-44.

¹⁴ Noll, *The rise of evangelicalism : the age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, 59.

¹⁵ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards : a life*, 144.

¹⁶ Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the ministry of the word : a model of faith and thought*, 109.

Another significant cultural factor influencing Edwards and the New England churches was a growing predisposition to religious revival. This religious climate is easily observable, but complex in origins.¹⁷ While the 1733-1735 revival in Edwards's parish of Northampton is viewed as a significant early development of the Great Awakening, it was not without precedent. Edwards himself was greatly affected in his youth by a religious awakening in East Windsor in 1712-1713,¹⁸ and writes of several "unusual harvests of souls" in Northampton during his predecessor's (his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard) ministry.¹⁹ This changing cultural landscape, as outlined above, must have had some level of influence in shaping Edwards's thoughts on music.

One more important consideration in shaping an understanding of Edwards's engagement with music in his theology is his own personal practice and experience. It is likely that music was a feature of the Edwards' family home, as was common at the time.²⁰ But of great significance is the role of singing in his personal devotional life. As he recounts his own conversion experience, he recalls spending extended periods "behold[ing] the sweet glory of God" in all nature. "And while I viewed, [I] used to spend my time, as it always seemed natural to me, to sing or chant forth my meditations; to speak my thoughts in soliloquies, and speak with a singing voice ...

¹⁷ Noll, *The rise of evangelicalism : the age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, 45, 65-66.

¹⁸ Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the ministry of the word : a model of faith and thought*, 35.

¹⁹ Noll, *The rise of evangelicalism : the age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, 64-65. "Historian Michael Crawford has found records of at least fifteen other such New England spiritual harvests, mostly in towns along the Connecticut River, in the two decades between 1712 and 1732."

²⁰ G. M. Marsden, *A short life of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 33-34. Marsden points to the inclusion of a lute string among items on a bill for his wedding to suggest that Sarah Edwards probably played.

year after year ... it was always my manner, at such times, to sing forth my contemplations.”²¹ To some extent, his practice must have informed his principles, and vice versa. And the experience of his congregation’s singing during its time of revival must have also been influential. While they previously had “excelled ... in the external part of the duty before, generally carrying regularly and well three parts of music, and the women a part by themselves ... now they were evidently wont to sing with unusual elevation of heart and voice, which made the duty pleasant indeed.”²² It would be naive to suggest that these positive experiences would not have significantly shaped Edwards’s engagement with music in his theology.

Before engaging with four particular aspects in detail, it is worth briefly mentioning some of Edwards’s general thoughts on music. He regarded music, and corporate singing in particular, as a duty ordained by God. He therefore described neglecting to sing in corporate worship (and even neglecting learning how to sing) with “living in sin.”²³ He considers it an issue of such importance, he goes so far as to explain why he, like other ministers, sometimes refrain from corporate singing, finding themselves “in great need of that respite after public [singing] to recover their breath & strength that they may be fit to speak the word of God.”²⁴ As well as a duty, he regarded music and singing as eminently useful and helpful in many aspects. “[It] is profitable

²¹ J. Edwards, “Letters and Personal Writings,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 16* (ed. G. S. Claghorn; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957-2008), 794.

²² J. Edwards, “The Great Awakening,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol.4* (ed. C. G. Goen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957-2008), 151.

²³ Psalm 139:23-24, J. Edwards, “Sermons, Series II, 1733,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online Vol. 48* (ed. J. E. Center; Jonathan Edwards Center: Yale University, 2008), N.P. cf. Eph 4:22, J. Edwards, “Sermons, Series II, 1734,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online Vol. 49* (ed. J. E. Center; Jonathan Edwards Center: Yale University, 2008), N.P.,

²⁴ Psalm 139:23-24, Edwards, “Sermons, Series II, 1733,” N.P.

and advantageous. It is health to the mind. The soul is greatly bettered and advantaged by it. [It] is an exercise that naturally tends to the spiritual life - to strengthen and confirm and increase it, and [it] is that which has great reward of God.”²⁵ Edwards also extolled the benefits of music education for the Native American children at Stockbridge. He writes that it would be “unusually popular” and “have a powerful influence, in promoting the great end in view, of leading them to renounce the coarseness, and filth and degradation, of savage life, for cleanliness, refinement and good morals ...”²⁶ However, while the emphases of the duty and usefulness of music and singing are well established in Edwards’s writing, they are not particularly unique to Edwards. Of particular interest to this study are the connections Edwards makes with music and beauty, the affections, eschatology and revival.

²⁵ J. Edwards, “Sermons, Series II, 1723-1727,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online Vol. 42* (ed. J. E. Center; Jonathan Edwards Center: Yale University, 2008).

²⁶ Edwards, “Letters and Personal Writings,” 411.

Music and Beauty

Beauty, or excellency, is arguably the unifying theme in Edwards's philosophy and theology.²⁷ "[T]he deepest and encompassing event, according to Edwards, is sheer aesthetic ecstasy."²⁸ Stout remarks that "It is difficult to overemphasize the 'degree and extensiveness' of the influence Edwards's conception of excellency ... had on his theology." Therefore, when Edwards wrote about beauty, he often found rich metaphor in the language of music. The nature and properties of music commended his theology.²⁹ But before discussing this in detail, Edwards's concept of beauty must be briefly outlined here, lest it be distorted by contemporary semantic associations.

For Edwards, beauty is essentially relational. It resides in consent, agreement, or harmony of proportions, observed both within and between objects, phenomena, events or beings. "One alone," he wrote, "cannot be excellent; for in such case there can be no manner of relation no way, and therefore, no such thing as consent."³⁰ "This is an universal definition of excellency: The consent of being to being, or being's consent to entity. The more the consent is, and the more extensive, the

²⁷ R. A. Delattre, *Beauty and sensibility in the thought of Jonathan Edwards : an essay in aesthetics and theological ethics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 15. "Jonathan Edwards' conception of beauty is at once philosophical and theological . The preeminence of beauty among the divine perfections corresponds to the central place of beauty in his vision of reality as one grand system of being and good."

²⁸ R. W. Jenson, *America's theologian : a recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 17.

²⁹ Jenson, *America's theologian : a recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, 19.

³⁰ J. Edwards, "Scientific and Philosophical Writings," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 6* (ed. W. E. Anderson; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957-2008), 334-337.

greater is the excellency.”³¹ The aesthetic beauty that can be perceived in God’s creation, “the beautiful shape of flowers, the beauty of the body of man and of the bodies of other animals ...”, resides in their equalities, their “correspondency, symmetry, regularity.”³² And yet this physical, or ‘secondary’ beauty “is but the shadow of excellency; that is, it is pleasant to the mind because it is a shadow of love.”³³ For Edwards, a far greater beauty resides in the loving actions and agreement of perceiving beings. “[H]ow much more ravishing will the exquisite spiritual proportions be that shall be seen in minds, in their acts: between one spiritual act and another, between one disposition and another, and between one mind and another, and between all their minds and Christ Jesus and the supreme mind ...”³⁴ And thus, he reasons that the perfect example of beauty must be found “between the man Christ Jesus and the Deity, and among the persons of the Trinity, the supreme harmony of all.”³⁵ In this sense, the ‘primary’ beauty of the Triune God, in the infinite love and consent among the members of the Godhead, is unique and ultimate. “’Tis peculiar to God that he has beauty within himself, consisting in being’s consenting with his own being, or the love of himself in his own Holy Spirit ...”³⁶ While such a brief summary fails to communicate the majestic nature of Edwards’s contemplations, it hopefully outlines the flow of his logic.

³¹ Edwards, “Scientific and Philosophical Writings,” 334-337.

³² Edwards, “Scientific and Philosophical Writings,” 334-337.

³³ The Mind, Edwards, “Scientific and Philosophical Writings,” 380-381.

³⁴ 182. Heaven, J. Edwards, “The “Miscellanies”: (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500),” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 13* (ed. H. S. Stout; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957-2008), 328-329.

³⁵ 182. Heaven, Edwards, “The “Miscellanies”: (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500),” 328-329.

³⁶ Edwards, “Scientific and Philosophical Writings,” 365.

How then does Edwards use the concepts and properties of music to commend this theology of beauty? Edwards often speculated on the typological,³⁷ or analogous, function of not only scriptural events and characters, but all of God's creation - including the proportions and harmonies found in music.³⁸ "Edwards realised relatively early in his study of the mind that any beauty, any harmony between objects, can stand for an abstract spiritual beauty."³⁹ However, Edwards's typology goes beyond mere simile or metaphorical relationships. It was "not an arbitrary game or mere hangover from older exegetical method; since all things are thoughts in God's mind, their imaging references are precisely their objective connections."⁴⁰ Consequentially, it is the same aesthetic sense inherent in humanity that enables the apprehension of both natural and divine beauty.⁴¹ But one did not automatically lead to the other. Humanity's true apprehension of divine beauty is reliant on the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. "Then possibly an exposure to secondary beauty, such as that of nature, might by analogy reveal a spiritual quality; the saint might feel, as Edwards himself once felt, looking at the sky and clouds, an inexpressible 'sweet sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God.'⁴²

³⁷ T. Fabiny, "Edwards and Biblical Typology," in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards : an introduction to America's theologian* (ed. G. R. McDermott; Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 2009), 91-92. "Typology, or "figural interpretation," as Eric Auerbach called it, "establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first ..."

³⁸ Fabiny, "Edwards and Biblical Typology," 99. cf. G. R. McDermott, "Alternative Viewpoint: Edwards and Biblical Typology," in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards : an introduction to America's theologian* (ed. G. R. McDermott; Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 2009), 110.

³⁹ T. Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, art and the sense of the heart* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 49.

⁴⁰ Jenson, *America's theologian : a recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, 48-49.

⁴¹ S. H. Lee, *The philosophical theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 150. "Aesthetic sense is not a separate faculty but rather the active tendency of the entire self that determines the direction of all the functions of the human person."

⁴² Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, art and the sense of the heart*, 50-51.

Therefore, in Edwards's writing, different aspects of the properties and functions of music display this typological role, and assist in commending his theology of beauty. An obvious example of this is harmony in music. The pleasing effect of musical harmony on the observer is due to different frequencies complementing or consenting to one another. "When one thing sweetly harmonizes with another, as the notes in music, the notes are so conformed and have such proportion one to another that they seem to have respect one to another, as if they loved one another."⁴³ However, Edwards reasons that this pleasurable harmony does not arise from conscious analysis or understanding of the phenomena. Rather, it is indicative of this universal 'law' of beauty that humanity has an inherent sense of and taste for. "[M]en are delighted with the idea that is the result of this proportion of the vibrations, that know nothing what the proportion [is], or that there is any proportion at all. The reason is, God has been pleased so to frame and constitute our nature."⁴⁴ Hence the typological relationship. Human nature has the capacity and propensity to 'sense' and savor all types of beauty, and secondary beauty, such as musical harmony, functions as a shadow of the primary beauty of the reality of God's Kingdom. This far greater beauty is the proportionate and harmonious loving consent of the wills of beings to one another in the spiritual realm - it is this primary beauty that resounds in the secondary beauty of God's creation, including music. "Its tonal harmonies represented the consenting of wills that composes God's realm of sanctified beings

⁴³ The Mind, Edwards, "Scientific and Philosophical Writings," 380-381.

⁴⁴ J. Edwards, "Writings on the Trinity, Grace and Faith," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 21* (ed. S. H. Lee; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957-2008), 314-315.

...”⁴⁵ This spiritual beauty is of a different nature, and far greater in Edward’s estimation, than its musical analogy, as it is found in the *conscious* loving consent and submission of *willing and perceiving* beings, as discussed above. And yet, the beauty in musical harmony, because of this typological relationship “may serve ... to aid in the conceptualisation of spirit ...”⁴⁶ “[T]he presenting of this inferior beauty, especially in those kinds of it which have the greatest resemblance of the primary beauty, as the harmony of sounds ... have a tendency to assist those whose hearts are under the influence of a truly virtuous temper, to dispose them to the exercises of divine love, and enliven in them a sense of spiritual beauty.”⁴⁷ This profound connection will be discussed in more detail below, particularly in relation to the affections.

While not as clearly specified, Jenson proposes that, in a similar typological fashion, themes of musical melody can be discerned in Edwards’s creational theology. In contrast to the increasingly common deist position - which subjugated Scriptural truth beneath new scientific discovery, and reduced God’s creative activity to ‘divine initiator’ - Edwards held to Scripture’s affirmations of God’s sovereignty and omnipotence. Matter and time are intrinsically linked, and both find their momentary existence and ongoing sequence in the continuous creative activity of God.⁴⁸ “We have shown in philosophy, that all natural operations are done immediately by God,

⁴⁵ Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, art and the sense of the heart*, 57-58; Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, art and the sense of the heart*.

⁴⁶ Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, art and the sense of the heart*, 57-58; Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, art and the sense of the heart*.

⁴⁷ J. Edwards, “Ethical Writings,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 8* (ed. P. Ramsey; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957-2008), 565.

⁴⁸ Jenson, *America’s theologian : a recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, 35.

only in harmony and proportion.”⁴⁹ Jenson suggests that, for Edward, all of history - creation in time - is the melody of God. “[I]t is, to press Edwards’ thought hardly at all, their tune in God’s ear - that is the very being of a creature. There are continuing entities other than God because God associates momentary other consciousnesses with predecessors and successors, and resistance-events with predecessors and successors, in a - one can only say it so - musically coherent way.”⁵⁰ Jenson’s proposal is not unfounded. If melody is essentially the interplay of musical harmonies and proportions in time and sequence, then this melodic typology can be discerned in Edwards’s efforts to integrate the ‘natural’ with the ‘miraculous’ - events which seem discordant to natural laws, but integrate with the greater melody of God’s kingdom purposes. “[T]he highest kind of operations of all are done in the most general proportion, not tied to any particular proportion, to this or that created being; but the proportion is with the whole series of acts and designs from eternity to eternity, as miracles are, as the creation of the world, the birth and resurrection of Christ are ... That it is thus may be argued, because harmony argues it: lower operations are done by a more particular proportion, higher according to higher, and more general for the general ...”⁵¹ This melodic typology will be further explored below, specifically in relationship to Edwards’s eschatology.

⁴⁹ 64. Spirt, Edwards, “The “Miscellanies”: (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500).”

⁵⁰ Jenson, *America's theologian : a recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, 35.

⁵¹ 64. Spirt, Edwards, “The “Miscellanies”: (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500).”

Music and the affections

It is important to define Edwards's understanding of the affections before discussing music's relationship with human affections. Edwards wrote at length on the affections, due to the contentiousness of the issue during the New England Awakening. Some contemporaries were questioning the authenticity of religious revival due to the "enthusiasm, superstition and intemperate zeal"⁵² that accompanied it. Edwards's works, *The Religious Affections*, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* and *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, were a defense of the appropriateness, and indeed the necessity, of motions of the affections in true religion, and an attempt to define standards by which true and false displays of the affections could be assessed - thus discrediting those who would point to false displays to argue against the revival.⁵³

Therefore it was necessary for Edwards to provide a positive definition and defense of the nature and role of the affections. In his own summary, "the affections are no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul."⁵⁴ He observes 'two faculties' or aspects of the soul - one involves cognitive, understanding perception, the other "is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the things it views

⁵² P. Ramsey, in J. Edwards, "Religious Affections," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 2* (ed. P. Ramsey; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957-2008), 7.

⁵³ P. Ramsey, in Edwards, "Religious Affections," 6-7.

⁵⁴ Edwards, "Religious Affections," 96.

or considers ...”⁵⁵ Some of these inclinations are minor. However, others “are stronger; wherein we may rise higher and higher, till the soul comes to act vigorously and sensibly, and the actings of the soul are with that strength that (through the laws of the union which the Creator has fixed between soul and body) the motion of the blood and animal spirits begins to be sensibly altered; whence oftentimes arises some bodily sensation, especially about the heart and vitals ...”⁵⁶ It is these stronger inclinations of the soul, that often manifest themselves bodily and emotively, that Edwards defines as the affections. However, he warns that affections should not be incorrectly equated with emotions or passions. “[A]ffection ... seems to be something more extensive than passion; being used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination; but passion for those that are more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command.”⁵⁷ Likewise, it is important to note that Edwards is also quick to qualify that the affections should not be the sole indicator of the Spirit’s work within a person. “Tis no certain sign that the religious affections which persons have are such as have in them the nature of true religion, or that they have not ...”⁵⁸

Thus defined, Edwards observes that music and singing are a natural expression of the affected soul. As has been discussed above, this was Edwards’s own personal experience and practice. In his times of personal reflection and meditation his affection was expressed in constant singing.⁵⁹ Likewise, he recounted his church’s

⁵⁵ Edwards, “Religious Affections,” 96.

⁵⁶ Edwards, “Religious Affections,” 96-97.

⁵⁷ Edwards, “Religious Affections,” 98.

⁵⁸ Edwards, “Religious Affections,” 163.

⁵⁹ Edwards, “Letters and Personal Writings,” 794.

singing with “unusual elevation of heart and voice” in their heightened religious affections during a time of revival.⁶⁰ He also viewed this as scriptures clear teaching. “Tis plain from the Scripture that it is the tendency of true grace to cause persons very much to delight in such religious exercises.”⁶¹ Argued in the negative, Edwards warns against singing “out of love of reputation and fear of disgrace; or whether only from custom, education, and fashion,” rather than arising “from love to God and godliness.”⁶² He points to God’s condemnation of Israel’s empty religious displays in Isaiah 1:2-15, 58:2 and Ezekiel 33:31-32 in support of his position. And Edwards’s eschatology presents singing as the *ultimate* expression of affected souls - in the songs of the saints in heaven - as will be discussed further below. This connection with music and the affections may seem self evident in today’s context, but the dominant Puritan influence of the time would have deem it necessary to articulate this.

However, more particular to Edwards, and quite remarkable given his historical, theological and ecclesiastical context, was his conclusion that beauty, art, and specifically music, may be useful in raising or exciting religious affections. “[T]he duty of singing praises to God, seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections. No other reason can be assigned, why we should express ourselves to God in verse, rather than in prose, and do it with music, but only, that such is our nature and frame, that these things have a tendency to move our

⁶⁰ Edwards, “The Great Awakening,” 151.

⁶¹ J. Edwards, “Religious Affections,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (ed. P. Ramsey; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957-2008), pg 163.

⁶² “Tis our most important duty to consider our ways” in J. Edwards, “Sermons and Discourses 1720-1723,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 10* (ed. W. H. Kimnach; New Haven: Yale, 1957-2008), 488.

affections.”⁶³ As above, Edwards’s personal experience (and that of his wife Sarah⁶⁴) must have played a significant role in this conclusion. And again, he views this principle as evident in Scriptures, turning to Col 3:16 (for example) “to show what are the ends of this duty. And the ends of it [the duty of corporate singing] are two: to excite religious and holy affection, and secondly to manifest it.”⁶⁵ In this sermon he demonstrates how both the Old and New Testament endorse and encourage corporate singing to encourage spiritual understanding. However, it is clear that Edwards’s overarching theology of beauty and his typological method, discussed above, are the framework for his final exegetical conclusions. It is the beauty and harmony inherent in music and singing that can raise the affections to be predisposed to apprehending the harmonious beauty of God. Singing “is oftentimes a means to give a due sense [of] the Holiness of God and his perfections and [of Christ,] the grace and love of God through him, and of heavenly enjoyments. There is an excellent and glorious harmony in divine things of which the harmony that is in singing seems to give some shadow and by the resemblance helps the mind the better to conceive of that sweet harmony that is in divine things.”⁶⁶ Thus, Edwards affirms the important function of art and music in religious life in what Erdt describes as a “manifesto of a new Puritan aesthetic”⁶⁷ Having initially demonstrated how concepts and vocabulary of music commend Edwards’s theology, the way in which

⁶³ Edwards, “Religious Affections,” 115.

⁶⁴ Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, art and the sense of the heart*, 58-59. “Hymnal lyrics, for instance, played a prominent part in the occurrences of the sense his wife reported in her written account of religious experience.”

⁶⁵ 398. Col 3:16 J. Edwards, “Sermons, Series II, 1736,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online Vol. 51* (ed. J. E. Center; Jonathan Edwards Center: Yale University, 2008), N.P.

⁶⁶ 398. Col 3:16 Edwards, “Sermons, Series II, 1736,” N.P.

⁶⁷ Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, art and the sense of the heart*, 50-51.

his theology consequentially commends the practice of music should now be emerging.

Music and eschatology

It is logical to turn now to Jonathan Edwards's eschatology, as in it these connections between music and theology are not only presented but, in some senses, perfected and consummated. He remarks that, "We know not particularly how the saints in heaven shall be employed; but in general we know they are employed in praising and serving God ... And this they do perfectly, being influenced by such a love as has been described."⁶⁸ In his vision of heaven, the typology and actuality of the beauty of music and singing are united. The affectionate praise of the perfected saints will be expressed in joyful song. And not only will the saints be perfected in their expression of true spiritual beauty and harmony, but also in their perception of it.⁶⁹ They will be able to fully perceive and understand their unworthiness, and God's Holy character and works.⁷⁰ "Then perhaps we shall be able fully and easily to apprehend the beauty, where respect is to be had to thousands of different ratios at once to make up the harmony."⁷¹ Edwards goes so far as to speculate that the saints' resurrected bodies will have their faculties expanded⁷² and their organs adapted for this purpose.⁷³ The perfected perception and expression of this beautiful spiritual harmony will "feed back" on itself in an eternal progressive crescendo. "[H]ow happy is that love, in which there is an eternal progress in all these things; wherein new

⁶⁸ Sermon Fifteen: Heaven is a world of love, in Edwards, "Ethical Writings," 384.

⁶⁹ 182. Heaven, Edwards, "The "Miscellanies": (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)," 329.

⁷⁰ Thanksgiving Sermon, Nov. 7, 1734 Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, 1734," N.P.

⁷¹ 182. Heaven, Edwards, "The "Miscellanies": (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)," 329.

⁷² 182. Heaven, Edwards, "The "Miscellanies": (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)," 328-329.

⁷³ 188. Heaven, Edwards, "The "Miscellanies": (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)," 331.

beauties are continually discovered, and more and more loveliness, and in which we shall forever increase in beauty ourselves; where we shall be made capable of finding out and giving, and shall receive, more and more endearing expressions of love forever: our union will become more close, and communion more intimate.”⁷⁴ And this song will be the expression and reception of the primary beauty and harmony of willing love and consent - joined at last to the eternal love song of the Triune God in a glorious “fugued melody.”⁷⁵ “Every saint there is as a note in a concert of music which sweetly harmonizes with every other note, and all together employed wholly in praising God and the Lamb; and so all helping one another to their utmost to express their love of the whole society to the glorious Father and Head of it, and [to pour back] love into the fountain of love, whence they are supplied and filled with love and with glory. And thus they will live and thus they will reign in love, and in that godlike joy which is the blessed fruit of it, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath ever entered into the heart of any in this world to conceive [cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9]. And thus they will live and reign forever and ever.”⁷⁶ While the above summary is drawn from a collection of Edwards’s writings, one of the most comprehensive portrayals of music in his eschatology can be found in his sermon on Rev 14:2.

Edwards continues to explore this heavenly music in a separate sermon expounding Rev 14:3, in which he features the motif of the ‘new song’ to illustrate a number of aspects of his eschatology. The theme of the new song is the gospel - both ‘heard’ in

⁷⁴ 198. Happiness, in Edwards, “The “Miscellanies”: (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500),” 337.

⁷⁵ Jenson, *America's theologian : a recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, 20.

⁷⁶ Sermon Fifteen: Heaven is a world of love, in Edwards, “Ethical Writings,” 386.

God's sovereign work throughout history, and from the lips of Christ and those redeemed by Him. "[The] ability, that harmony of the soul and melody of the heart, consisting in holy love and joy and delight in God and Christ, is a precious benefit that is the fruit of the same purchase. This heavenly melody is dear; it costs Christ's precious blood."⁷⁷ Once again, the harmony of music is representative of consent and beauty towards God. Before learning this new song, people's hearts "were like an instrument that is unstrung and broken, wholly out of tune ... jarring and discordant ..." whereas after learning the new song, "there is some inward harmony. Now there is divine harmony that is melodious unto God."⁷⁸ Edwards distinguished between the matter and music of the song to illustrate the necessity for God to transform both understanding and affections. The matter of the song is the truths of the gospel, and the music is the "melody of the heart" that has been "tuned" by the Holy Spirit and "put into a capacity and disposition truly and sincerely to praise God and to make that heavenly melody, which is made in singing this new song, by exercising these divine principles of divine love and divine joy."⁷⁹ He emphasizes the newness of the song in a few aspects. It is a new song because it is the expression of people made new by God - "therefore no wonder that his song is new: for we are told that '... old things are passed away ...' and '... all things become new with him ...' and as other things concerning 'em are new, so they sing a new song."⁸⁰ And it is new, in the sense that the New Covenant in Christ has superseded the Old

⁷⁷ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) J. Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online Vol. 56* (ed. J. E. Center; Jonathan Edwards Center: Yale University, 2008), 237.

⁷⁸ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," 233-234.

⁷⁹ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," 237.

⁸⁰ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," 231.

Covenant.⁸¹ However, Edwards pushed this illustration further to illustrate an important feature of his eschatology. The glory of God, and His benefits to His saints, reaches its climax in His redeeming work in Christ. Hence the fall of humanity that necessitates redemption is within the melody of God's sovereign history, and its dissonance serves to magnify His eventual resolution. "[The angels] once sang praises to God for the work of creation ... But now, since they have seen the work of redemption, these morning stars sing a new song, and the work of redemption is principally the subject of their praises; as now that is their tune, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,' is in Revelation 5:11-12, ... The benefits that the saints receive by Christ are far beyond anything that our first parents enjoyed in innocence."⁸² And Edwards uses the song metaphor to demonstrate the realised aspects of his eschatology. While the song itself is perfect, as is the saint's rendition of it in heaven, there is a reality in which the church on earth sings that same song now, but "imperfectly," and with "a great many jarring discordant notes. There are many other sounds mixed that don't belong to the song and that do greatly mar the music."⁸³ Edwards's exhortation, here and elsewhere, is that the redeemed should "seek earnestly that [they] may better learn this excellent song ... "⁸⁴ and start now in their employment of praise that will continue for eternity. "If ever we would go to heaven, we must be fitted for heaven in this world; we must here have our souls moulded and fashioned for that work and that happiness. They must be formed for praise, and they must begin their work here."⁸⁵ It must be noted that this exhortation does not just

⁸¹ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," 231.

⁸² 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," 236.

⁸³ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," 238-239.

⁸⁴ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," 238-239.

⁸⁵ Thanksgiving Sermon, Nov. 7, 1734 Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, 1734," N.P.

apply on a metaphorical level. Once again, we see Edwards blur this distinction between the typology and actuality of music. It is important for the church not only to express the divine beauty of love and harmony to one another because of the gospel, but to also do so by singing. He exhorts them to refrain from “impure songs ... that tend to stir up lusts and to pollute the soul ... ”⁸⁶ and delight in the practice of singing, particularly in public worship. “And this will make our public assemblies some image of heaven, and will make our sabbath days and thanksgiving days some resemblance of that eternal sabbath and thanksgiving that is solemnized by that innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, “Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740,” 238.

⁸⁷ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, “Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740,” 241.

Music and Revival

It may seem somewhat unusual to leave discussing the connections between music and revival in Edwards theology until the tail end of this study - considering how frequently issues surrounding revival feature in Edwards's work. However, this order is intentional, as much of Edwards's response to revival flows from and is shaped by his eschatology. He viewed revival as a prelude of the millennium and the final consummation of God's eschatological Kingdom. "Tis not unlikely that this work of God's Spirit, that is so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or at least a prelude, of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture, which in the progress and issue of it, shall renew the world of mankind."⁸⁸ As such, many of the issues regarding music and singing already discussed have similar relevance here, as earthly anticipations of heavenly realities. It is clear that Edwards viewed the 'enlivened' singing of the church as a significant mark or fruit of its spiritual revival. Examining his accounts of the revivals, Jenson notes that "Of all the manifestations of new religious vigor that occurred in the services themselves, only [singing] receives his unqualified approval, and of the aesthetic manifestations - good or bad - that must have occurred, only [singing] receives his notice."⁸⁹ On numerous occasions, Edwards recalls the 'pleasant duty' of the church's corporate singing during revival. "It has been observable that there has been scarce any part of divine worship, wherein good men amongst us have had grace so drawn forth and their

⁸⁸ Edwards, "The Great Awakening," 353.

⁸⁹ Jenson, *America's theologian : a recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, 19.

hearts so lifted up in the ways of God, as in singing his praises.”⁹⁰ For him, their corporate singing was the fruit of their spiritual revival and an anticipation and a “foretaste of the enjoyments of heaven.”⁹¹ Not only this, but the evident saving work of God among their community was a particular reason and fuel for their praise. “What special and extraordinary cause God has given us in this town to employ ourselves in this holy exercise. God and Christ have been wonderfully amongst us there may well be the shout of a King amongst [Numbers 23:21] us. Many have, by the great and saving and infinite mercies that are bestowed on them, ...great occasion to spend their lives and their eternity in singing praises to God.”⁹²

However, to approach the issue from the opposite perspective, is there a sense that music and singing, particularly the changes and innovations in corporate singing occurring at the time, served to aid or promote revival - both personally and geographically?⁹³ This question warrants further study, especially into the historical factors involved. But this suggestion finds some support from Edwards’s writing and theology.

Firstly, this proposal can be supported as a logical progression of Edwards’s understanding of the awakening, the affections, and the role music can play in exciting them. As he defines and analyzes the “Responses of the Awakened”, it is clear that he regards the Holy Spirit’s work in exciting the affections, hand in hand

⁹⁰ Edwards, “The Great Awakening,” 151.

⁹¹ Thanksgiving Sermon, Nov. 7, 1734 Edwards, “Sermons, Series II, 1734,” N.P.

⁹² 398. Col 3:16 Edwards, “Sermons, Series II, 1736,” N.P.

⁹³ e.g. To what extent did the hymnody of Isaac Watts influence the Great Awakening?

with 'religious instruction', as a critical factor in personal - and by logical extension of his argument, corporate - awakening and conversion. Learning or comprehension on its own was inadequate to bring a person to understand their need for the grace of Christ.⁹⁴ And the propensity of the 'secondary' beauty of music to excite the affections and draw people to regard and apprehend the 'primary' beauty of spiritual matters has been demonstrated at length above. Therefore, it can be argued that the changes towards a greater importance of aesthetics in church musical culture and the revived and 'exceedingly pleasant' singing of the awakened church may have contributed to exciting people's affections to an apprehension of the spiritual beauty of God's grace, and their need of such grace. Therefore revived corporate singing may have been useful in promoting revival to new persons and, due to its public nature, new places and churches. To borrow Sweeney's conclusion on this matter, "Before long, these spiritual practices [fellowship, prayer and hymn singing] had yielded a transformation. Revival blazed through town, spreading up and down the Connecticut River valley."⁹⁵

Secondly, this suggestion is supported more explicitly in a remarkable passage in which Edwards justifies the appropriateness of people singing together in the streets while walking together to church. Not only does this brief passage give the reader

⁹⁴ Edwards, "The Great Awakening," 174-75. "And it has been very observable that persons of the greatest understanding, and that had studied most about things of this nature, have been more confounded than others....It has appeared that none have stood more in need of enlightening and instruction ... It was very wonderful to see after what manner persons' affections were sometimes moved and wrought upon, when God did as it were suddenly open their eyes and let into their minds a sense of the greatness of his grace, and fullness of Christ, and his readiness to save ...Their joyful surprise has caused their hearts as it were to leap, so that they have been ready to break forth into laughter, tears often at the same time issuing like a flood and intermingling a loud weeping; and sometimes they han't been able to forbear crying out with a loud voice, expressing their great admiration."

⁹⁵ Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the ministry of the word : a model of faith and thought*, 109.

great insight into corporate singing as a spontaneous expression of the revived church, but in it Edwards also supposes that this practice may lead to the promotion of revival. “[I]t appears to me that it would be ravishingly beautiful, if such things were practiced all over the land, and would have a great tendency to enliven, animate and rejoice the souls of God's saints, and greatly to propagate vital religion. I believe the time is coming when the world will be full of such things.”⁹⁶ Thus, we can conclude, from logical extension and specific endorsement, that according to Edwards, music and singing can play a role in aiding and promoting personal and corporate revival.

⁹⁶ Edwards, “The Great Awakening,” 489-493.

Contemporary implications and applications for the Sydney Evangelical Church⁹⁷

A brief overview of music in Sydney Evangelical churches

The landscape of the contemporary evangelical christianity in Sydney - and to some extent Australia - has been shaped significantly by the differences (and sometimes divisions) between what may be described as Pentecostal / Charismatic,⁹⁸ Sydney Evangelical,⁹⁹ and Liberal churches.¹⁰⁰ Much of the current Sydney Evangelical position on music and congregational singing has been shaped in reaction to the popular music of Pentecostal / Charismatic churches and the perceived excesses, errors or imbalances associated with it. The excellence, high production values and emotive arrangements of their congregational music, typified by large Pentecostal churches such as Hillsong and Christian City Church, are regarded as excessive, emotionally manipulative and linked with erroneous pneumatology. Their lyrical content is criticized as being theologically shallow and ego-centric.¹⁰¹ In reaction to this, many within the Sydney Evangelical position have emphasized the primacy of

⁹⁷ Unreferenced observations in this section draw from the authors extensive professional involvement with music ministries across a variety of Sydney Evangelical churches and organisations over the past fifteen years.

⁹⁸ An somewhat unhelpful, but strongly held, generalisation which tends to blur the distinctions between Pentecostalism and the various later Charismatic movements.

⁹⁹ A term often used to define churches, from different denominations, who would regard themselves as non-Charismatic, Calvinist, low church and contemporary. Moore College, Katoomba Christian Convention and "The Briefing" journal could be considered as representative of this collective.

¹⁰⁰ S. Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 172-202. Piggin's analysis is particularly useful - he describes the three strands as Spirit, Word, and world.

¹⁰¹ P. Jensen, "Are you ready, Mr. Music?," n.p. [cited 14/10/2010 Online: <http://matthiasmedia.com.au/briefing/library/1498/>]. cf. T. Payne, Cheng, G., "The Surprising Face of Hillsong," n.p. [cited 14/10/2010 Online: <http://matthiasmedia.com.au/briefing/library/3883/>].

content over form, intellect over emotion, order over spontaneity, edification over exaltation and humility over excellence in congregational music.¹⁰² However, as Judd helpfully points out regarding this issue, “reactive theologies often force a wedge between two right answers,” and, “routinely overcorrect the opponents’ flaws.”¹⁰³ This has arguably been the case with the Sydney Evangelical position - too often to its detriment. Its attempts to avoid Pentecostal / Charismatic errors and excesses, and lack of its own clear positive theology of music, have led to a culture of congregational music that has been characterised, from within their own, as “dull”¹⁰⁴ and in its “death throes.”¹⁰⁵ Congregational music in Sydney Evangelical churches is generally regarded as a peripheral issue, and is therefore often ill-prepared, under resourced and not treated with great significance in worship services. To this present situation, Edwards’s theology of music has a great deal to offer in the way of both encouragement and critique.

The importance of beauty and aesthetics in congregational music

Asserting the primacy of content and ‘word’ over form in congregational singing has led, in many cases, to a general disregard for beauty and aesthetics in music. The catch-phrase, ‘There is no such thing as Christian music, only Christian words,’ has been often over-emphasised to the point where music has been divorced from any

¹⁰² P. Jensen, “Ministry Training Paper: Use Of Music In Church,” n.p. [cited 14/10/2010 Online: <http://phillipjensen.com/articles/use-of-music-in-church/>; P. Jensen, “Music,” n.p. [cited 14/10/2010 Online: <http://phillipjensen.com/articles/music1/>].

¹⁰³ A. Judd, “Theologising about music in worship,” *Case*, no. 23 (2010): 14-15.

¹⁰⁴ Bishop R. Forsyth, “Why is Christian music so dull?,” n.p. [cited 8 Nov 2010]. Online: http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/ministry/critique/why_is_christian_music_so_dull/.

¹⁰⁵ M. Raiter, “The Slow Death of Congregational Singing,” *The Briefing*, no. 355 (Apr 2008): n.p. [cited 8 Nov 2010]. Online: <http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au/briefing/library/5175/>

aesthetic or pleasurable function and regarded as simply a vehicle for the words. This underlying attitude can be seen manifested in the minimal time, training and resources given to music ministry,¹⁰⁶ and in the number of songs within the general repertoire that are theologically accurate but lyrically and/or musically clumsy and underdeveloped. In response to this current scenario, some parallels could be drawn with the changes in music culture in Edwards's time. His endorsement and encouragement of singing, and in particular the 'New Way' of singing by note and in harmony, can act as an encouragement for Sydney Evangelical churches to actively and intentionally pursue beauty and excellence, and not just functionality, in their corporate singing. But it has been demonstrated that Edwards's practical exhortations arise from his typological treatment of the beauty inherent in music and its role in ministering to individuals and the church by exciting the affections to apprehend spiritual beauty. This flows from the centre of his theology, rather than being added in retrospect or constructed in reaction, and is thoroughly consistent with, and in some factors, reliant on, his Calvinistic framework. Edwards's theology can offer to the Sydney Evangelical church an understanding, appreciation and incorporation of the aesthetic beauty inherent in music that agrees with their theological framework, and still affirms the primacy of the Word, and yet has real purpose and value in ministering to people.

¹⁰⁶ An example of this is the minimal, if any, teaching or training on music ministry available to future pastors at the major theological colleges affiliated with this collective.

Singing as an expression of unity

One aspect of congregational singing that Sydney Evangelical churches are eager to endorse is its role in edifying the saints.¹⁰⁷ Edwards's writings commends this position, but then take it further. For Sydney Evangelicals, the edification exists primarily in the content of song lyrics, and their role in teaching and encouraging. However, Edwards would also point to the act of corporate singing, and the harmonic beauty (hopefully!) produced, as a powerful expression of unity and consent of wills - not only among those physically present, but also in unity with the universal and eternal church.¹⁰⁸ This again endorses focusing both on the lyrical content and the form and beauty of congregational music.

Singing in preparation for eternity

Related to the above is Edwards's exhortation, as valid to the church today as it was in his time, to pursue singing in worship as a foretaste and preparation for their eternal employment. "So far therefore as we sing this song on earth, so much shall we have the prelibations of heaven ... And this will make our public assemblies some image of heaven, and will make our sabbath days and thanksgiving days some resemblance of that eternal sabbath and thanksgiving that is solemnized by that innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect."¹⁰⁹ And again, lest we think that Edwards is talking purely in metaphor, he strongly encourages teaching and learning "something of the art of singing."¹¹⁰ Neglecting corporate

¹⁰⁷ T. Payne, "Church and worship: Some questions and answers," *The Briefing*, no. 301 (Oct 2003): 15-16.

¹⁰⁸ Thanksgiving Sermon, Nov. 7, 1734 Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, 1734," N.P.

¹⁰⁹ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," 241.

¹¹⁰ 398. Col 3:16 Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, 1736," N.P.

singing or considering it inconsequential - as is commonly the practice in many Sydney Evangelical churches¹¹¹ - would be condemned in Edwards's thinking.

Music and the affections and emotions

The Sydney Evangelical church tends to be wary of the Pentecostal / Charismatic practice of highly emotive music and singing. This is not without due cause. Within some Pentecostal / Charismatic churches, an emotive or ecstatic experience is often viewed as an authenticator of a 'real' worship experience, evidence of the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit and a corporate manifestation of God.¹¹² Much of the theology underpinning this is appropriated directly from Old Covenant Temple worship paradigms and, taken to its logical conclusion, the ecstatic experience in worship becomes the mediator between man and God.¹¹³ Their highly dynamic music is often critiqued as an attempt to manufacture this 'transcendent religious experience'.

In reaction to this, many Sydney Evangelical churches and organizations have created corporate singing cultures that discourage emotional displays or 'excesses'. Song lyrics tend to have an emphasis on objective rather than subjective relational truths. Extreme dynamics and repetition are avoided for fear of 'manipulating

¹¹¹ T. Payne, "Prayer, praise and singing in church," *The Briefing*, no. 178 (May 1996): n.p. [cited 8 Nov 2010]. Online: <http://matthiasmedia.com.au/briefing/library/2095/> "I think it would be strange if we never sang, but...music is a pragmatic element in our church meetings, rather than an essential one. As such, it is an element which we are also free not to use if the needs of the moment so dictate."

¹¹²J. H. S. Steven, *Worship in the Spirit : charismatic worship in the Church of England* (Carlisle, Eng.: The Paternoster Press, 2002), 118-130. cf. D. Williams, "Charismatic Worship," in *Exploring the worship spectrum : 6 views* (ed. P. E. Engle; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004), 145-52. ; Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia*, 176.

¹¹³ B. Sorge, *Exploring Worship: A Practical Guide to Praise and Worship*. (Canandaigua, NY: Oasis House, 1987), 8-9. "[People] will never find complete fulfillment in their innermost beings until they come into proper relationship with God through praise"

emotions'. In some cases, deliberate steps are taken to discourage physical displays of emotional from music leadership, particularly those associated with Pentecostal / Charismatic expression - e.g. raised hands and closed eyes.¹¹⁴

An interesting 'case study' of this tension can be viewed in a recent "Briefing" article. Payne, an influential voice from the Sydney Evangelical position, tries to argue his position by emphasizing the difference between emotions and affections in Edwards's writing. This differentiation is certainly there, as demonstrated in section three above. However, it seems as though a predisposition against emotional response in worship has significantly coloured his reading and interpretation of Edwards. He rightly observes that, for Edwards, an observation and cognitive understanding of spiritual truth is necessary to stir the affections, and many false affections may arise without this understanding.¹¹⁵ However, this does not negate the necessity of an emotional response or manifestation involved with the stirred affections. Edwards continues to emphasize the opposite and complimentary truth that "[t]here is a distinction to be made between a mere *notional understanding*, wherein the mind only beholds things in the exercise of a speculative faculty; and the *sense of the heart*, wherein the mind don't only *speculate* and *behold*, but *relishes* and *feels* (Edwards's italics)."¹¹⁶ It would be unusual to suppose that 'relishing' and 'feeling' are activities devoid of emotion. While Payne is correct in that emotions must not be equated with affections, it is a misrepresentation of both the content, and

¹¹⁴ The author has been personally asked on frequent occasions, before leading singing and without precedence, to not lift my hands or close my eyes, in case it is perceived as 'emotional manipulation'.

¹¹⁵ T. Payne, "Thinking about emotions," *The Briefing*, no. 384 (Sept 2010): 23.

¹¹⁶ Edwards, "Religious Affections," 272.

the passionate rhetoric, of Edwards's writing to imply that the stirring of the affections does not integrally involve, and require, an emotional response. An even more striking example of this predisposition away from emotionalism is Payne's summary of Edward's position, that "True and godly affections are not stirred by music or singing, by soaring rhetoric..."¹¹⁷ which stands in stark contrast to Edwards's own assertion that "the duty of singing praises to God, seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections."¹¹⁸ While Payne attempts to marry the emotional and the rational under the umbrella of the affections, and on the whole presents the different aspects of Edwards's position accurately, his argument fails to attain the balance of Edwards's understanding, and leans decidedly towards the rational at the expense of the emotional, focusing generally on the positive aspects of the former, and failing to adequately address the necessity of the latter.

Similar to the Sydney Evangelical position, Edwards would offer a critique of some of the practices of the Pentecostal / Charismatic church. In *Religious Affections* he goes to great lengths to argue that emotional responses or manifestations cannot be equated with an authentic work of God. He would strongly argue against the anthropocentrism of extreme Charismatic positions that view Christ's work primarily as a means to enable peoples 'praise relationship' with the Father.¹¹⁹ He upholds Christ's person and work as the object, focus and theme of the exalted 'New Song' of the glorified saints in Rev 14.¹²⁰ On the other hand, he would affirm the Pentecostal /

¹¹⁷ Payne, "Thinking about emotions," 23.

¹¹⁸ Edwards, "Religious Affections," 115.

¹¹⁹ Sorge, *Exploring Worship: A Practical Guide to Praise and Worship.*, 8-9.

¹²⁰ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," 236.

Charismatic church's emphasis on pursuing beautiful and stirring congregational music. As argued above, he views such musical beauty as having a useful role in stirring the affections towards spiritual beauty. It is unlikely, given his own personal practices, that he would object to the overflow of emotions in praise to God that characterizes much Pentecostal / Charismatic singing in worship.

To the Sydney Evangelical churches, Edwards would affirm their commitment to Christ centered, truth filled songs.¹²¹ However, he would also offer a stern critique of some of the practices of music and singing in these churches. He would warn that their tendency, either deliberate or unintentional, to discourage emotional expression during singing is also emotionally manipulative, and detrimental to both personal and communal spiritual devotion. "Therefore if, when we come to praise God or confess our sins, we resolved not in any measure to alter our manner of expression for sorrow or joy, we must restrain that which is strongly associated with the joy and sorrow; and thereby shall unavoidably, in some measure, forever restrain the spiritual affections themselves, till we quite dissolve the association ... For we having associated the idea of reverence and other habitudes of mind to such and such gestures of body, it would restrain our notion or apprehension of another's reverence, etc., if we should see those gestures which we have associated to contrary dispositions; so that our own devotion would not be so much assisted by theirs but restrained, and the communion in the duty in some measure destroyed, and so the end of social devotion. 'Tis necessary that there should be something

¹²¹ 583. Rev. 14:3(a) Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740," 236.

bodily and visible in the worship of a congregation; otherwise, there can be no communion at all.”¹²²

A melodic metanarrative

All the above implications apply to the practice of congregational music in contemporary churches. However, from a very different perspective, Edwards’s musical typology could play a helpful role in articulating a metanarrative that harmonises God’s active creation and physical laws, God’s sovereign providence and man’s real will, and God’s gospel purposes and actions throughout history. The influence of modernism continues to shape the church, its theology and its creation and redemption stories - compartmentalising spirituality away from natural truths, laws and phenomena. An example of this can be viewed in contemporary liberal theology which, for the sake of rational consistency, makes spiritual phenomena subservient to the laws of physics and nature - explaining away or discounting the miraculous events of Scripture. However, many seek a more holistic integration of the various aspects of life. Edwards’s unapologetic Calvinism, married with his thorough and positive engagement with the science and philosophy of the Enlightenment, may provide a way of doing so - and musical harmony and melody may provide the typological metaphor to articulate it. Jenson explores this possibility, noting how Edwards reconciles “laws of physics and the miraculous” by drawing upon concepts of harmony and proportion - the former in harmony with other observable and empirical laws, and the latter “not tie[d] to any particular proportion ...

¹²² "Miscellanies" No 101. in Edwards, "The "Miscellanies": (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)," 269.

but ... with the whole series of acts and designs from eternity to eternity.”¹²³ He summarises that, for Edwards, “The sprouting of a seed is right and rationally comprehensible within the tune of one organic life; the resurrection of Jesus or the making of a believer is right and rationally comprehensible within the tune of the universe.”¹²⁴ The metaphorical concept of God’s melody and harmony in creation, history and redemption could provide a helpful metanarrative to draw these seemingly divergent aspects of reality into a consistent whole.¹²⁵

¹²³ Jenson, *America's theologian : a recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, 47-48.

¹²⁴ Jenson, *America's theologian : a recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, 47-48.

¹²⁵ As a side note, it would also be a fruitful progression of this study to explore how Edwards’s thinking stands in relation to modern scientific theories and discoveries, such as quantum mechanics. One could imagine that he would have been very excited at the suggestion that a unifying principle of physics may be found in vibrating and resonating sub-atomic ‘strings’! R. Groleau, “Resonance in strings,” n.p. [cited 9 Nov 2010]. Online: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/elegant/resonance.html>.

Conclusion

In some ways, the conclusion to this study should function like the recapitulation in a sonata form musical work - restating and resolving the themes and motifs that were introduced in the exposition and evolved in the development. The dominant theme, weaving through the entire piece is beauty - the divine beauty that Edwards perceives in the loving relational consent of the Godhead and the saints, and echoing in the agreeable harmonies of music. He explores the intertwining of these 'primary' and 'secondary' beauties in regards to their influence on, and expression of, the affections and emotions of people. Edwards speculates on the ultimate and perfected expression of beauty in the songs and submission of the resurrected saints, and hears their prelude in the singing of the awakened church. However, to strike the final chords of the finale at this point would be premature. Edwards's conclusions invite the contemporary reader to continue the song. His insights draw together in a tune that the contemporary evangelical church in Sydney would be wise to appropriate and make their own. "If we begin now to exercise ourselves in the work of heaven, it will be the way to have foretastes of the enjoyments of heaven. The business and happiness go together."¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Thanksgiving Sermon, Nov. 7, 1734 Edwards, "Sermons, Series II, 1734," N.P.

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