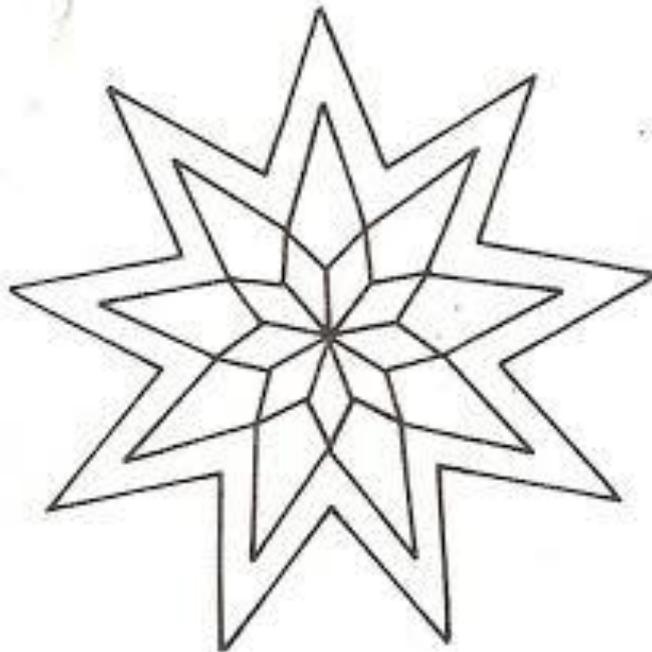


Journey Towards an Oratorio

Nine-Pointed Star

By Malcolm Dedman



Written in 2020, after the completion of his oratorio 'Nine-Pointed Star', the composer Malcolm Dedman describes the background to his philosophy and religious/spiritual thinking that helped to shape this, for him, important work.

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Journey Towards an Oratorio

By Malcolm Dedman

Foreword

The author is a musician, in particular, a composer of new 'concert' music. Born in November 1948, he considers his most worthy and significant achievement is his oratorio *Nine-Pointed Star*, written during 2019 and completed in 2020.

This is because, quite apart from the forces used in the oratorio and its length, it is an expression of his religious and spiritual understanding that has developed during his lifetime. The forces used are five vocal soloists (soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone and bass); four-part choir, consisting of the usual soprano, alto, tenor and bass; and orchestra. The orchestral forces, although not huge by early 20th century standards, consist of double woodwind plus alto/tenor saxophone and bass clarinet; four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, tuba; timpani, three percussion players on various instruments, celesta, harp plus the usual body of strings. Its duration is just under 1 hour 45 minutes.

This booklet describes the background to this work and why the composer considers it to be his most important work in his lifetime (considering he wrote it during his 70th and 71st year). It shows the development of his religious and spiritual thoughts and how this has shaped the outcome of this oratorio. Whereas these ideas will not appeal to those who have fixed ideas about faith or their religion, it will appeal to anyone with an open mind, who is prepared to think for themselves from the vast amount of information available today. The author does not believe that readers should accept these ideas on the surface but to open up channels of thought for their own spiritual journey. He believes that every individual is on his or her own spiritual journey and should draw his or her own conclusions, even if they disagree with those of the author.

The booklet also shows the author's musical journey, a journey of exploration into the wide range of musical idioms and *genres* available today, especially musical developments since Debussy, Stravinsky and Bartók, leading us through music of the 20th century and into our own century. Also described is his interest in finding out how things work, for having gained an honours degree in physics, he became an electronic design engineer in the 1970s. This reflects a three-fold interest that is to inform his life's work: music, spirituality and science.

After an introductory section where the author gives a personal account of his musical and spiritual development and scientific learning, a description of his musical interests and more detailed musical development is given. This is followed by two chapters forming the bulk of this booklet. The first chapter describes key aspects of his religious faith and shows us how problems of interpretation affect people's belief. The chapter then defines the concept of Manifestations of God and how this is used in the oratorio. The second chapter describes the texts and music of the oratorio in greater detail. The booklet finishes with the author's conclusions followed by six supporting appendices.

Introduction

About the Author, a Personal Account

Early years and first musical development

I was born as a post World-War 2 child on 3 November 1948 in London, England, to my British parents, John Francis Dedman and Millicent Muriel Dedman, née Warring. My mother had a diploma in music, performing both piano and organ; and my father had a love of music, especially the classics from the Baroque to Romantic periods, even though he could not play a single note on any musical instrument. It was my mother who introduced me to music by teaching me to play the piano when I was about five years of age. I therefore learnt to read music from this early age but, instead of devoting time to proper practice, I was more interested, at the time, in improvising. In addition, after hearing various pieces of music, I played these as best I could by ear.

By the time I was around twelve years old, I had the urge to start writing music down. I also learnt about the different instruments that make up an orchestra. I was particularly fascinated when the school at which I attended held trips to hear orchestral concerts with programmes that introduced the 'classics' in a way that was approachable to children. My first experience of hearing an orchestra play live was one of awe and wonder at this incredible sound. By this time, I had stopped my piano lessons and had already started learning to play the violin.

Gradually, I became aware that music did not have to stick rigidly to the normal scales and harmony that were officially being taught, as I heard on the radio music with quite different sounds. So during my teenage years, I explored much of the music of the twentieth century (to that time), accepting that any sound can become music in the hands of an experienced practitioner, whether this is the composer or the performer. I achieved this by listening to the radio, going to the London 'Promenade' Concerts, playing and singing new music (at this time, my main instruments were violin and singing tenor in choirs) and, later, attending one or two weeks a year at the various Summer Schools of Music.

In my spare time, between school studies, orchestral playing and choir singing, my urge to write music down continued to develop and I started to refer to myself as being a composer. This was not something I decided to do; rather I felt that I *had* to write music, having no choice in the matter. I learnt from the music I heard, reading about new music as well as from the various conductors I encountered in the course of my playing and singing. I borrowed records and scores from local libraries and learnt so much from this experience. Thus, it can be said, I was self-taught.

Science, my Second influence

In addition to my fascination for music, particularly new music, I developed an interest in science, especially physics. This fascination led me to study physics and maths at school to A-level and, eventually, to degree level. I attended Brunel University in London from 1967 to 1971 and passed an Applied Physics course with Upper 2nd Class Honours. After my

studies, I pursued a career in Electronic Design in various Research & Development (R & D) departments.

My musical development never stopped there! In my early 20s, I attended composition classes for the first time, studying with Patric Stanford who, at the time, was teaching at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. This helped me to develop a more professional approach to musical composition but, as it transpired later, I was still searching for an individual musical voice in which to express my developing ideas.

Later, in 1991, my Electronic Design work came to a close due to redundancy and, encouraged by friends, I took up teaching music privately in schools and at home, mainly to High School students, although a few adults also wanted lessons from me. I taught mainly piano, electronic keyboard, violin and singing.

Third influence – spirituality

During my teenage years, I saw my own personal development as three-fold. Two of these have been described (music and physics), but the third was religious. As a child, I was baptised by the Church of England and encouraged to attend communion services every Sunday morning. Later, in my early teens, I was confirmed by them. Naturally, I joined the choir in the church I was attending, starting from my early teens as my voice developed into a tenor range. I was told by priests and even my own father at one point, that the Church of England, or Anglican Church was the only true religion and all others were subsidiary! Thanks to my enquiring mind, I soon realised that this opinion is not even remotely logical, as many other believers from other churches or religions were saying the same thing! I even had an argument at school with a Muslim believer who claimed *his* faith was the only true faith, after which I came to my senses and realised the reality: that no single faith is more special than another. If you read on, you will find out why.

It was during the mid-1980s that I encountered the Bahá'í Faith that changed everything. I embraced this Faith in 1986 and soon realised that, in fact, I had embraced all religious faiths, known and unknown, since mankind evolved on this planet. Many of my friends and family thought I had changed my religion – ‘converted’, they said – but I considered that I had not left the church but, rather, expanded my beliefs. I came to accept that there is only one religion: the Religion of our Divine Creator. It is this realisation that originally triggered the idea for the oratorio ‘Nine-Pointed Star’ and you will see, from this booklet, why this is so important to me and why it is equally important for me to share this reality with readers and listeners. Naturally, I will leave it to the reader/listener to make up his or her own mind about why this has come to me as a reality.

About the Music

It is important for me to share the kind of music that has interested me since my teenage years, although this has changed over time as more music is being written. Musical styles, like so many things, are changing all the time.

Initial revelation

In my early days of learning to play violin, I was invited to take part in a small string ensemble. I remember being in Junior School at the time but all the other players were from the nearby Grammar School (High School). We were introduced to the *Capriol Suite* by Peter Warlock, written in 1926. Although based on old Renaissance dances, it contains what were, for me, some extraordinary harmonies, even with different parts clashing. This was a true revelation to me as, up to that time, I had not come across any music that did this (I was around ten years old). The revelation was the trigger to me finding out more, so began my journey of exploration into new music. As I explored, I was introduced to the music of [Benjamin Britten](#) while being a member of the Middlesex Youth Choir, lead by Michael Rose. This was a major attraction for me, together with other composers who Michael introduced to the choir, with many pieces recently written by, for example, Tippett, Birtwistle, Leighton and even folk song arrangements by [Béla Bartók](#). I soon discovered the latter on the radio and bought records of music by both Britten and Bartók (my father had just bought a record player). Not long after, I heard Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* on the radio and was so bowled over by this, for me, new sound, so much so that I went out to buy a record of this as well! I could not get enough of these new, very different, sounds; all the while my friends at school were listening to *The Beatles*, *The Rolling Stones* and other latest pop-hits.

Another composer who soon came to my attention from radio broadcasts was [Olivier Messiaen](#), whose music was so different that I grabbed every opportunity to listen to new recordings. Messiaen's music was only just beginning to be heard outside his native France, so finding records was not easy. I did manage to find a source of French recordings, at a price, and I treasured every sound I heard. Indeed, it does not take long to discover that Messiaen was, in fact, a deeply religious man, and it did not worry me that he was a declared believer in the Roman Catholic Church. After all, his and my churches are both Christian and come from the same Biblical teachings. He was appointed the organist of *Sainte-Trinité* Church in Paris for much of his life, but often annoyed the priests and bishops, not only for his strange new sounds, but also for his extended beliefs which do not form part of the Roman Catholic Doctrine. He was a free thinker! It is these beliefs that helped him to write so much colourful music, whether for organ, orchestra or even piano solo.

Both Bartók and Messiaen remain as my all-time favourite composers for very different reasons, and Britten's music can often inspire my own vocal writing. It is true that Bartók declared himself to be agnostic, so was clearly not religious, but his 'new sounds' were inspired by the rhythms and melodies of folk, or gipsy music from remote parts of his native Hungary and surrounding countries. This concept inspired me to explore the indigenous music from other countries, such as India, China, Japan and the Indonesian Islands of Bali and Java (Gamelan).

Although, at this time, I absorbed all styles from Serialism (music organised into series of notes and sometimes rhythm and other musical elements) to Aleatoric techniques (music with a greater or lesser chance element), it was the use of different scales or modes, inspired by my exploration of non-western music, that helped me eventually to find my own musical voice.

Later developments

As I listened to more and more new music, observing how many composers were changing the course of musical progress, I discovered other composers such as Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Terry Riley and John Adams who were all writing what is now termed 'minimalism' – but how different each composer sounded! I also discovered that other composers were offering a similar simplification of musical style, such as Arvo Pärt and Henryk Górecki as well as a composer who offered music in several different styles, even in one piece – Alfred Schnittke. The music of Henri Dutilleux also came to my attention as his relatively small output is a very idiosyncratic, full of original sounds. And so the list goes on. There are too many developments to give a full account here.

The composers described above have all become internationally known, but there are others who are less well-known that have written music for meditation, for tuning into our 'higher selves' and so on, some good and some not so effective. I mention this, not because this music forms a major part of musical development, but because it is important for me to discover as much new music as possible, especially if there is a spiritual connection from which we can learn or experience. There are so many styles around today that it is understandably very difficult for a young composer to find his or her own voice, even if influenced by some individual sound. This was my difficulty, even in the 1960s, but I feel that since 1980 and especially since 2000, I have developed a style that is truly mine.

Finally, a musical qualification

I had the opportunity in 2004 to study for a Masters Degree in Composing Concert Music at Thames Valley University, London, led by Francis Pott. The university is now known as the University of West London. I gained a distinction in 2005 and I feel that, since then, I have truly consolidated my style. In September 2007, my wife, Dr Anja Morris-Paxton and I moved to South Africa and, as we live in a quiet rural town in the Karoo, I have been able to put my more personal style into practice. This includes writing many new scores, revising and re-writing old scores and getting professional performances of my music in South Africa and around the globe.

My thinking and philosophy of spirituality has also developed and I will write in more detail about this in the next section, but it has helped me to realise that much of the new music around us has actually alienated listeners and concert goers. This is a pity as, despite the often 'strange' sounds which have never fazed me, such music is often very well written by good, well-established international composers. It is worth noting that there is much very beautiful music written since the year 1900 and it is this that I focus on when writing music intended to be heard, as with the oratorio – the main focus of this booklet.

What is an 'oratorio'?

Before continuing, it is worth defining what an oratorio is in practice. According to the [relevant page on Wikipedia](#), an oratorio is:

'a large musical composition for orchestra, choir, and soloists. Like most operas, an oratorio includes the use of a choir, soloists, an instrumental ensemble, various distinguishable characters, and arias.'

It goes on to say that, whereas an opera is a staged work or musical theatre, an oratorio is intended specifically for the concert hall. Oratorios are typically religious in nature. Handel wrote many, the most famous being *Messiah*; J S Bach too wrote in the *genre*, notably the two *Passions* and the *Christmas Oratorio*; Haydn wrote *The Creation*; Mendelssohn *Elijah*; Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius*; Tippett *A Child of our Time*; and Messiaen *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* to name but a very few. All these oratorios share most of the above definition and all last between 1 and 2 hours and sometimes longer. So I had a great tradition to follow when setting out to write mine. Although I have had the idea for this for over twenty years, I could only make a start on it when I felt truly ready. It may not have, according to the definition, 'distinguishable characters' even though there are five solo singers, but otherwise it complies with the quoted definition precisely.

It may seem to some that the musical form of *Cantata*, is very similar to that of oratorio. The distinction between the two is more to do with duration and, in some cases, instrumental and vocal forces used. J S Bach wrote a large number of cantatas; some were conceived on quite a small scale as they were intended for performance during the church services of his time. For a full account, you are welcome to explore ['Our Pastimes'](#) website. Although this account suggests that both forms are from the past, specifically the Baroque period, many composers since and up to the present day have continued these forms in their own way.

Chapter 1 – Background

A Journey of Faith

Having described my musical development, I would like to show how my spiritual thinking has evolved over my lifetime as this is important for a more complete understanding of my oratorio.

Christian beginnings

As I have already stated, I grew up belonging to the Church of England and was taught that this was the only ‘true’ faith, or religious practice. My later fascination for science, especially physics, triggered my enquiring mind about faith and religion as a whole. I was taught to believe in God, but no-one could explain precisely what God is, other than that God is the Creator of the vast universe with humanity forming just a small part of it on planet Earth.

I soon learnt that many scientists are agnostic and I realise that this is because the various church’s ideas of God cannot be verified by any logical explanation. Later, through studying Bahá’í teachings, I learnt that [God is, in fact, unknowable](#), but we can only know about the Attributes that are revealed to us.

My first revelation

I remember a dream that I had many years ago, I think in my teens. I was in a space-ship when I saw a mass of coloured lights in space, flashing and twinkling. My companion in the space-ship told me “That is God”! Later I found this links with Bahá’í teachings:

All will I gather beneath the one-coloured covering of the dust and efface all these diverse colours save them that choose My own, and that is purging from every colour. (Bahá’u’lláh, The Persian Hidden Words, no. 74)

“..that is purging from every colour” tells us that God is in the whole spectrum of light, but not only – the Creator is in the complete electro-magnetic spectrum, from gamma rays to radio waves, including X-rays and the full light spectrum from ultra-violet to infra-red. In my early thinking, I took this a step further.

My second revelation

Physics teaches us that nothing is created or destroyed. We also know that energy and mass (physical matter) are related, for one can be converted to the other as in, for example, the creation of nuclear energy from materials such as Uranium. Therefore, what cannot be created or destroyed refers to the duality of mass-energy, treated as one. So what can this mean in terms of our faith and the Creation? The following is an extreme simplification, but I hope will help the reader to understand the essence my thinking.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” is the very first verse of Genesis. Now let’s leave aside what is meant by ‘beginning’, and suppose that this God was, in fact, a highly dense form of energy, capable of creative thought. Let’s face it, our minds exist

outside our brain in the form of energy and, on a relatively smaller scale, this mind-energy is capable of creative thought. Much of the energy around any one of us can be observed and measured, such as the delta, theta, alpha, beta and gamma rays which our brain emits. In addition, our 'aura' is an energy field that surrounds our bodies which can also be observed. There is much more, however, to be understood about our mind-energy.

I suggest that the original giant mass of energy was everything, containing all the basic ingredients of our universe, whether physical form or as energy waves and radiation. It contained even more than science knows about to date. It was capable of great thought and, at some stage – let's call this the original Creative Impulse, or 'Big Bang' – decided to initiate the Creation process. Atoms were formed from pure energy, combining waves of protons, neutrons and electrons; at first to form the simple hydrogen atom and soon building up what we know from the ['periodic table'](#) to helium, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and many more chemical elements. Atoms combined to produce many other substances, such as water and many gasses, such as carbon dioxide and, as the creation process continued, all the known elements were formed (plus some more unstable elements seen at the end of the periodic table); all from combinations of protons, neutrons and electrons. Stars were formed from some of these atoms and, in addition, they are highly radio-active, with the atoms in the stars converting to heat, light and other energy forms. And so the process continued until planets were formed, some eventually being the home to life forms. The process goes on much further and is still continuing. The universe as we know it is a work in progress with new stars and galaxies being formed and others collapsing.

Nothing, however, on the microscopic level, is actually created or destroyed. The energy that formed the matter we call stars, planets and every physical thing around us, eventually returns to energy, the original energy where all this came from – God. So everything around us, physical, mental, spiritual, etc. is a part of God. That is the realisation that hit me sitting in the choir stalls during one Sunday Holy Communion service!

So my revelation shows that God is everything – absolutely everything. Not some man in the sky – 'Him Upstairs'! Our thoughts, whether we are a believer or not, are part of God. We are a part of God. This is why we must respect ourselves, our environment, all other life forms and especially the whole of this magnificent creation throughout space. Focussing, or meditating on the greatness and wonder of ourselves and our environment is, for me, a form of worship. We can find God within ourselves, our subconscious; we can find God in the stars, galaxies and beyond; for, as is often said, God is everywhere.

Science and Religion

All this does not imply we can know precisely what God is, but we can learn a lot from science, especially as scientific learning progresses. Every scientist will tell us that every new discovery answers one question but opens up so many more. The same can be said about knowledge of God our Creator. Is it possible that the original mass of energy was what we now define as a 'black hole'? Some things suggest that it could be, but it is possible (as more is learnt about black holes) that it was something different, but even more strange and magnificent.

For sure, physics reveals to us many mysteries. Einstein's theory of relativity reveals many such mysteries that we cannot explain from ordinary logic. For example, light particles (photons) can only travel at one velocity such that even if two travel towards each other, they will both 'see' the other travelling at this same velocity towards the other. In the macroscopic world, two objects in head-on collision impact at the sum of the velocities of them both, which is not the case with anything travelling at the speed of light, such as photons. Also, anything travelling at this speed experiences zero mass, but at the same time, its length (in the direction of travel) reduces. This effect is known as '[Lorentz Contraction](#)' by physicists.

What can be made of [Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle](#), where the position and momentum of an object (microscopic particle) cannot both be measured, exactly, at the same time? Simply by observing such a particle will affect what you are trying to measure. It must be emphasised that all these phenomena exist only at the microscopic level – that of atoms and sub-atomic particles – not at the macroscopic level of our own experience, which is why they appear to us as a mystery. If we cannot know everything about these microscopic particles at any one time, I can imagine that the concept of what God actually is becomes equally obscure.

One of the reasons I was attracted to the Bahá'í Faith was not just that it taught about unity of religion, of human races and of gender among many other things, but that the Faith declares that science and religion are two aspects of the same reality:

Religion and Science are inter-twined with each other and cannot be separated. These are the two wings with which humanity must fly. One wing is not enough. Every religion which does not concern itself with Science is mere tradition, and that is not the essential. Therefore science, education and civilization are most important necessities for the full religious life.
(‘Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 28).

We can learn about ourselves, our environment and about the universe as a whole, as well as the Creator itself, from both scientific learning and religious knowledge. Although we *can* learn more about God through this knowledge, we can never get a full understanding of what our Creator is because every new 'discovery' opens up more questions. We refer to God in the masculine, but I shall only do this only for convenience – it does not infer that the Source of Creativity has a gender. I also believe that this Source of Creativity is far mightier and more magnificent than anything we can possibly know or understand at our present time.

The Problem of Interpretation

I said earlier that many scientists are agnostic or, at least, appear to be so. Many of the earlier scientists, however, such as Galileo and Newton, were deeply religious people. The fact that [Galileo had arguments](#) with the church leaders of his time suggests that, with our current knowledge, the religion got it wrong. The argument was that Galileo could prove that the Roman Catholic belief of the earth being at the centre of the universe was incorrect. He observed that our planet actually revolves around the sun and not the other way round. The Roman Catholic Church leaders of the time interpreted that the earth was at the centre of the

universe from their limited understanding of the Holy Bible. So it was the *interpretation* that was incorrect, not the original teachings and Scriptures of the Christian and Jewish Faiths.

Unfortunately, history has shown that the early church leaders wanted to teach their own version of the Bible and many believers could not prove them wrong as many could not read for themselves. Much religious teaching, even today, is based on assumptions, incorrect interpretations and, indeed, translations from original texts, so it is small wonder that many find religion confusing. I believe that it is important for us not to ram our ideas down people's throats; rather it is more desirable for us to search for the truth ourselves, whether through the original scriptures of the various religions, or through science, or preferably through both. As individuals, we are on our own spiritual development. The ideas I present here are intended to help the readers' individual development by encouraging them to think for themselves. They are evolved from my own thinking based on my investigations into both science and religious Writings and, as such, are not intended to be accepted on face value.

Incorrect interpretations lead to misunderstandings

Many misunderstandings, in my opinion, have arisen from incorrect interpretations of any religious text. The biggest problem for me is that of literal interpretation of Holy texts, such as the Bible. Taking both Old and New Testaments as examples, much of the writing is metaphorical, symbolic or even metaphysical.

For example, right at the start of Genesis is the well-known story of the Creation of 'heaven and earth'. Chapter 1, verse 2 starts with earth being a formless void. We know, as seen earlier in this booklet, that much creation had to evolve even before this happened, but according to the Scripture, this was supposed to be the first 'day'. A day, however, is defined by one complete revolution of the earth about its own axis. Is it not more probable that these 'days' refer to stages of development? Continuing with Chapter 1 of Genesis, we find that Man was created, this being described to happen on the 'fifth day', but we know from archaeology that mankind did not occupy the planet until millions of years after its creation, after many other life forms appeared, evolved and became extinct. Then, in Chapter 2, verse 1, it states that heaven and earth were complete. We know, however, from our studies of the galaxies that suns and solar systems are being created and others collapse. We know that the Creation is a work in progress, that is to say, it is evolving. All creative processes evolve and we know how even our own species has evolved over the time it has been on the planet. Unfortunately this particular verse is often interpreted to mean that the Creation process had suddenly stopped and we are to believe either in the Biblical creation account (that is, the interpretation of it) or evolution, as though they are not compatible!

In my opinion, it is extremely naive to interpret any of this literally. I know many believers will say, "But the Bible is the Word of God so must therefore be correct"; and so it is correct. It is nearer the truth to say that it is correct only in a symbolic, metaphorical and even metaphysical sense, certainly not literally!

I could sight many examples of where people interpret the Holy Word literally and I would say the same thing. My comment does not just apply to the Bible, as the same applies to the Holy Qur'an, even though these Words were conceived by Muhammad Himself by means of Divine inspiration. This is why we have so much division in the Christian Church and in the

other religions and, unfortunately, these divisions cause disunity, disagreements and even war! How sad. A greater understanding of the principle of the symbolic interpretation would not only reduce the onset of war, terrorism and other forms of conflict, but bring more people to accepting religion as a whole, whatever the faith they choose.

As we have seen, it is vitally important to learn from both scientific and religious texts. I came to the following revelation during one physics lecture: that physics teaches us how our world and even our universe were actually put together on a macroscopic and microscopic scale, but in precise terms and not in symbols.

Problems of translation

Further problems of interpretation are a result of translation. Let us take the Bible as an example. The languages of the original script are said to be Ancient (Classical) Hebrew, not the Hebrew that is in common use today, also Aramaic and Koine Greek. All three languages are rarely spoken or understood today. Read [here](#) for a more detailed account. The first language of translation was Greek; after this, as both the Jewish and Christian Faiths spread to more countries, it was only natural that this important Book was translated into the language of those countries. The first English translation is probably around the turn of the 16th century and, later, the King James Bible was begun in around 1604. This version was translated from the original texts, as far as they were known or understood at that time. The English language is certainly a lot different now than it was then! Many words have transformed, some obsolete and others have changed their meaning. How can anyone whose English is not their first language understand it?

The Bible has therefore been re-translated many times during and since the 20th century into the words we now use in everyday speech, without 'cheapening' the result. Even so, how can we assume that what we read is what was originally meant in the original languages? The answer surely has to be probably 'not much', unfortunately. Translators are only human beings, perhaps with limited *spiritual* understanding, even if the job is given to professional translators, theologians and historians. We must be careful when we say 'The Bible says' such and such. Which version and which translation? A comparison of different new English versions will demonstrate different interpretations and understandings.

It would be wrong to think that this important Book should not have been translated at all. It was vital that the Holy Word was made available to people of all tongues, but we must now caution that there are many reasons for not taking what we read literally – not only because of symbolic and metaphysical language of the original, but also because of problems of translation. Again we should read with an open mind, checking on our interpretations through the various sources available to us today.

It is worth taking a look at a website on [metaphysical interpretations](#). This website from 'The Global Centre for Spiritual Awakening' questions literal interpretations and suggests a more metaphysical approach. There are links on this page for those readers with enquiring minds who want to find out more.

One further misunderstanding

Before I describe the process of the composition of my oratorio, I would like to stress one further point that is frequently misunderstood. The quotations used in the oratorio include a section which tells us that all the Messengers of God from the various religious faiths are one; they are 'the same Luminaries and the self-same Mysteries'. This will be covered in more detail in the chapter about the oratorio itself.

Revelations Chapter 1, verse 8 states: 'I am the Alpha and the Omega...'. Here the phrase is said to be revealed by 'the Lord God'. The phrase 'Alpha and Omega' means beginning and end, as in the letters of the Greek alphabet. A discussion on the [relevant Wikipedia page](#) reveals:

This phrase is interpreted by many Christians to mean that Jesus has existed for all eternity or that God is eternal. Though many commentators and dictionaries ascribe the title "the alpha and the omega" to both God and to Christ, some secular sources argue otherwise.

The reader can search for this whole passage and consider for himself or herself. My thinking is as follows. First, we need to distinguish between the word 'Christ' and the name 'Jesus'. Christ is a Spirit from God that existed within Jesus, the Man. The theory of Christ being spiritually an aspect of God can be inferred from the concept of the Holy Trinity (God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) where Christ is referred to as the 'Son'. In this respect, the Christ Spirit is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. In passing, even the words 'beginning' and 'end' take on a different meaning in the metaphysical sense.

Taking this a step further, if we assume that all Messengers of God – and I will define exactly what I mean by this in the next section – did, indeed, deliver God's message to the people of their place and time, then it is quite probable that the Christ Spirit was as much part of these Messengers as it was in Jesus. I feel that this would explain the unity between different religions in a coherent way and that the Messengers of God are 'the same Luminaries and self same Mysteries', although I would argue with myself that, as my theory is just that (a theory) I cannot verify how accurate the argument is. This is what I mean by thinking for oneself and not to accept what we are told or read at face value. My theory could even be a simplification of reality, as with so much of our understanding.

The Bahá'í Teachings, although providing us with much more information than previous Holy Writings, do leave room for original thought. The ideas I expressed are inspired by these Teachings, but not necessarily seen my way by everyone. The Teachings include the principle of the [Independent Investigation of Truth](#), which supports my view of the importance of thinking for ourselves.

We will now examine more precisely who are these Messengers of God.

Manifestations of God

The word 'manifestation' can be defined as 'an event, action, or object that clearly shows or embodies something abstract or theoretical'. There is no reason why the 'object' cannot be a person. Bahá'ís use the term 'Manifestation of God' to mean a special person who has revealed a Spiritual Message from God to the people of their place and time. It is these people I have referred to previously as 'Messengers of God' but some people refer to them as 'prophets'. My response to this is that, although all Divine Messengers (or Manifestations) of God are prophets, there are many prophets who are not Manifestations of God. So the term 'Manifestations of God' will be used here to refer to those special prophet-messengers Who revealed a spiritual message from the Creator of the Universe, the Universal Mind. These Manifestations are often associated with a specific religion and are thought of as being intermediaries between God and humanity. A more complete account on the subject of these Divine Manifestations can be found on the [Bahá'í website](#). Note that this account also relates this subject to the concept behind this oratorio: that of progressive revelation.

Although there is no definitive list of Manifestations of God, defined by the Bahá'í Faith, I have highlighted nine that are most often quoted, with the knowledge that more have existed before records were known and more will follow in time. The earliest recorded religion is Hindu, even though many existed before and, even today, many follow these ancient paths. The reader might wish to see a list of [founders of religious traditions](#), a rather lengthy list. Here we concern ourselves with original Monotheistic religions (not derivatives), those that recognise One God, One Creative Spirit. Hinduism is a little borderline here as many Hindus speak of several gods and there have been many manifestations that have supposedly 'reincarnated' until we get to Krishna, said to be the eighth 'avatar' of Vishnu and considered here to be the first recognised 'Manifestation of God'. With Krishna, there is some recorded evidence regarding His teachings and the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads have been quoted in the oratorio. The teachings of Krishna do re-enforce the concept of just One Creator God.

The nine Manifestations of God

As stated, the first Manifestation whom I have presented in the oratorio is Krishna. The next two belong to the Jewish religion: Abraham and Moses. Their life and teachings are recorded in the Biblical Old Testament within the first five books, known as the Torah by the Jews. The Talmud forms the complete Jewish Scripture. I have mainly used quotations from the Torah, plus one from the Talmud and one each from the Books of Daniel and Ecclesiastes.

The Zoroastrian religion is probably the least known of the earlier religions, but their Manifestation, Zoroaster, comes next in my oratorio. I have used the Zend-Avesta as the Sacred Book providing the teachings of Zoroaster.

These four Manifestations form the first of three major Parts of my oratorio, referred to as 'The Early Years'. Then there follows the second Part which I have called 'The Age of Enlightenment, Son of Man and the Seal of the Prophets'. The religions represented are therefore Buddhism with The Buddha as the recognised Manifestation; Christianity with Jesus as Manifestation and Islam with Muhammad as Manifestation. The teachings of The

Buddha are recorded in the Dhammapada, those of Jesus are in the Biblical New Testament and those of Muhammad can be found in the Qur'an. It should be noted here that the very first Scripture where the Manifestation of God Himself revealed God's Message directly is, in fact, the Dhammapada, the second being the Qur'an. All previous Scriptures, including the life and teachings of Jesus, were documented at a later time from words spoken by their Manifestation.

At this point it is worth reflecting on what is meant by the 'Seal of the Prophets', meaning to many Muslims that Muhammad was the last Messenger of God. The reader is referred to an interesting review from a [Bahá'í perspective](#). This suggests that, although the Qur'an mentions this belief, it also suggests that the same Qur'an states that *if* other Messengers should come, we must heed them. This means that the interpretation might be better expressed as the idea that the phrase 'Seal of the Prophets' does not mean that no Messengers will ever follow after Muhammad. On the contrary, it could be thought that the 'Seal of the Prophets' refers to the last Manifestation of the 'Adamic Cycle' and the Bahá'í Faith represents this 'New Universal Cycle'. The [article that follows](#) this offers further relevant thoughts on the subject, showing that *all* Manifestations of God are the seal of what has been revealed, as they are all One. The concept of independent investigation of Truth is important here.

With that in mind, I turn to the final Part of the oratorio which I have called 'A New Universal Cycle – the Cycle of Fulfilment'. There are two Manifestations of God represented in this phase: The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Followers of The Báb were known as Bábís and those of Bahá'u'lláh are known as Bahá'ís. These two Manifestations are often referred as the 'Twin Manifestations' as their lives were concurrent. The Báb announced His mission in 1844 in which He prophesied that the One who would follow Him will be at a far higher station. This turned out to be Bahá'u'lláh. Those Bábís who understood this became Bahá'ís after Bahá'u'lláh announced His mission in 1863. The name 'The Báb' means 'the gateway', in this case the gateway from the old (Adamic) cycle to the new Universal Cycle; and the name Bahá'u'lláh means 'The Glory of God' and is the fulfilment of the prophesies that are to form this new cycle. The phrase 'Glory of God' appears in many places in those prophesies contained in the Holy Bible and elsewhere. Among many interesting insights, this is shown in the book ['Thief in the Night'](#) by William Sears, published by George Ronald.

Bahá'u'lláh's son

A third key figure of the Faith, although not considered a Manifestation of God, was Bahá'u'lláh's son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás Effendi, whose first name means 'Servant of the Glory'. One movement of the oratorio is devoted to some of His writings as He deeply understood His Father's teachings and was able to talk and write in His own manner about His vision for the future. It is also worth reflecting that many of the Writings revealed by both The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, plus those of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, were translated from the original Persian and Arabic into English by Shoghi Effendi, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's grandson. Shoghi Effendi was appointed as the guardian of the Faith until his death in 1957. This ensured that the original Writings of the three major figures were more authentic to their original meanings, especially as he had an English degree from Cambridge University in England. The only consideration in my mind – although this does not faze everyone – is that Shoghi Effendi

chose to use the older version of English as, at the time, this version of English was used for most religious Writings. This should not obscure the meaning for most readers.

The major outcome of this new Cycle, for me, is that there is only one Religion, that of the One True Creator God, as I have explained in a previous section in this chapter. This one Religion is progressive as, although many of the teachings are common to all the earlier Manifestations, each has been brought in line with the knowledge and understanding of the age in which They lived. This is the focus of the oratorio which I called 'Nine-Pointed Star' and subtitled 'An Oratorio about Progressive Revelation'. One of the major symbols of the Bahá'í Faith is a nine-pointed star and I have taken each of the nine points to represent, in turn, one of the Manifestations of God, as defined in this section.

These nine Manifestations of God, as described, and their representation to the Nine-Pointed Star, are shown in [Appendix 1](#).

As this booklet is not specifically about the Bahá'í Revelation, I direct the reader to investigate for himself or herself by finding books about the Faith and exploring online. A good starting place would be the [Bahá'í website](#).

Finally, before describing the oratorio in full detail, I wish to clarify a further possible misunderstanding. Many Christians infer that Muslims believe in Alláh, not God! A search on the name 'Alláh' shows many sources that describe the word being the Arabic for the *word* 'God', not a different entity. Applying a logical mind, Muslims say that Alláh is their Creative Spirit, the same as Christians believe about God. So they are the same! It is impossible for there to be two different Creators of the same universe! The word 'God' has been translated into many languages: *Dieu* in French; *Gott* in German and, of course, *Alláh* in Arabic. There can only be One Creative Spirit, and that Spirit is common to all Faiths.

Chapter 2 – The Oratorio, ‘Nine-Pointed Star’

Initial Thoughts

Although I wrote the oratorio itself mainly in 2019, the idea of an oratorio linking the various religious Faiths, as previously described, came much earlier, probably before the year 2000. I did not know precisely at this stage how it would develop although I do remember getting the idea of showing that some teachings of the major religions are identical. I did know, however, that the title would be ‘Nine-Pointed Star’ as a reference to the Bahá’í symbol. I needed time to focus on the best approach so that I could shape the whole work so, at the beginning of 2019, I decided to make a start and search for relevant texts. The creation of this oratorio has been, as can be seen, an evolving journey over a number of years.

During the search for texts, it soon became apparent that I needed to focus on the concept of Progressive Revelation, to show that the commonality of religious teachings progress with each Revelation. I chose to concentrate on three major teachings: the concept of One Creator God; human and Divine Love; and what happens after the death of our bodies – life after death – and present the teachings on these subjects from each of the chosen religions.

The format of the three distinct Parts was quickly realised, and each Part would contain four movements with the first in each Part forming an introduction to that Part, starting with identical music. I wanted to suggest that the origin of humankind was African, so I chose to start these initial movements with identical music on African instruments; two djembes and a marimba. The remaining movements would use quotations from each Scripture in turn, with words I wrote to link the quotes. The titles of the three parts and twelve movements are shown in [Appendix 2](#).

The texts

I first selected most of the words I would use and add some of my own text to link some of the quotes. The details would change during the course of the composition, but not much. I also allocated solo singers and choir but these *did* change during the composition process. Many of the words can be found from an ebook called *Ocean* that can be [downloaded from here](#). This ebook contains Scriptures and other writings from all the major religions described in this booklet. It has a search capability that enables the user to search on any topic or specific phrase. The user can also select a specific religion or religions so as to refine his or her search.

I found this to be a valuable starting point, after which I would frequently search on the internet or in original books for more specific information or examples wherever I needed. The final version of the complete text is shown in [Appendix 3](#) together with the source of all the quotations.

Overview of the music

During the following description, much musical terminology is used. I do not expect non-musical readers to understand all the musical terminology I use because this is not essential for an appreciation of the main focus of my work.

As the musical full score is 160 pages in total, I shall not include it here. Instead, the reader is referred to a [page on my website](#) where it is possible to view it in full. Recordings from computer of each of the twelve movements can also be heard here, although they use computer simulated voices and instruments. The complete list of forces used is shown in [Appendix 4](#). When deciding on which instruments and which solo singers to employ, my main thoughts were to provide strong musical contrasts in what was to be a work lasting nearly 1¾ hours. As can be seen from Appendix 4, a standard medium-size orchestra is augmented by a single player switching between alto and tenor saxophones; a separate player for bass clarinet; three percussion players using a variety of different instruments, some 'pitched' and others 'unpitched' instruments; plus a player on celesta and one on harp and the usually body of strings. Solo singers are asked to sing mainly individually, sometimes as duets and, in places, in larger combinations with all combining together in the final Postlude.

Nowhere in the score are all instruments and singers asked to play/sing at once; even for the closing *tutti* bars of the Postlude, celesta and harp are omitted as they would unlikely be heard. Only small groups of instruments accompany the solo singers so that they do not need to force their singing to be heard, let alone understood, above a large combination. Rather, often a solo instrument is chosen to compliment the singer with light accompaniments, much as J S Bach did in his many arias and recitatives.

Every movement forming the bulk of the work contain choruses, arias and even recitatives, rather than breaking them up into smaller, shorter 'numbers', the later being a more traditional approach.

Many of the movements about a specific Manifestation of God use the mode or scale of the country from which that Manifestation was born or in which He was associated. These modes are presented in [Appendix 5](#) and are described in the following paragraphs.

Having described the overall form and substance of this work, I shall now describe each Part and each movement in more detail.

Part 1: 'The Early Years'

As can be seen from [Appendix 2](#), the four movements in Part 1 are: *Prelude, Krishna, Abraham and Moses* and *Zoroaster*. The Prelude forms the first movement and opens with words from the Bahá'í Faith: firstly an exaltation to God the 'Most High' followed by a statement from Bahá'u'lláh that no past Revelation has received teachings greater than the capability of the followers' ability to understand (spiritual capacity). This is what 'Progressive Revelation' is about.

The words of the Prelude are at first spoken, then sung by the choir after the initial djembe and marimba ensemble. The orchestra develops rhythms stated by the percussion with fast and lively music.

It is not possible to know the exact dates during which these early Manifestations of God lived. [Krishna, from Northern India](#), is said to have been born around 3228 BCE. It is likely that [Abraham](#) was born in Ur, known now as Upper Mesopotamia, around or after the year 2000 BCE. [Moses](#) was born in Egypt during the late 14 century BCE, and [Zoroaster](#) was born in Ancient Persia (now Iran) probably around 1000 BCE or earlier.

Krishna

The second movement presents two writings from the Bhagavad Gita to show the Hindu teachings about One Creator-God and about love. The third text is from the Upanishads, indicating the 'sleepless' are free from death. It opens with the choir declaring that Krishna is the first point of the star, as expressed in this oratorio. The music is very simple and expressed mainly on crotales (tuned finger-cymbals) and glockenspiel.

The tenor solo follows with the statement that Krishna is 'Essence and symbol of Divine Love, with human life and love as a reflection of the Divine'. A flute solo is in counterpoint with the singer indicating that Krishna is often depicted with a flute in his hand. A harp supplies a very simple accompaniment, initially using only the notes G, A, D, and E.

This is followed by an aria sung by the mezzo-soprano solo and is firstly introduced by a solo violin, then in counterpoint with alto saxophone. The accompaniment is little more than a drone, a long sustained note, although a simple rhythmic pulse is provided by a pair of bongos. The text, taken from the Bhagavad Gita 11:13, (known as 'The Song of God'), is written in a very poetic translation. Reference to the [commentary on this verse](#) shows that Pandu's son, referred to here as Arjun, encompassed the entire universe in all its diversity of galaxies, planets, stars and so on, but *in the body of the Supreme Lord*.

In the next section, the choir asks "What of love?" The response is supplied by a tenor and baritone duet, introduced by one of the main themes, played on solo clarinet, that is used in future movements. The strings provide a bouncy rhythmic accompaniment. The two soloists sing, again from the Bhagavad Gita, but this time chapter 9 verse 29. This verse, spoken through Krishna, appears to come from the Spirit of God saying He is just, knows no hate and those who worship Him He will love and they are in Him. Reference can be made to this [verse on the website](#).

The final question, asked by the choir, is "What happens after death?" The response is supplied by a bass solo singing a translation of Maitrayana-Brahmaya-Upanishad, v25. Roughly, this says that, while still in our body but not ruled by it, it 'sees' with the purest intellect the 'Pranava' which means the controller of life-force and life-giver. Pranava is also the mantra 'Om', or 'Aum'. We will then become Pranava – sleepless, free from old age, death and sorrow. This, I believe, is what we will be like when we finally leave our bodies. When the soloist sings the word 'Pranava', the choir chant 'Aum' by slowly changing the vowel from 'A' to 'U' to 'M', this is said to be the vibration by which the Supreme Spirit brings

all things into manifestation. See [this website](#) for more information. Refer also to the [Hindu website](#), but scroll down to the Sixth Prapatraka, verse 25.

The music is very calm, with chords rising from strings and harp, but when the choir chants the mantra, the orchestra is silent. I feel that the music is intensely beautiful and tranquil as it is intended to reflect attributes of the Divine Creator God.

Abraham and Moses

I was careful not to shatter the calm of the last movement, so I begin this third movement with high tremolos on the strings, a quiet oboe melody answered by clarinets, and a pulsating marimba note. The choir introduces Abraham and Moses as the second and third points of the star and as being 'Divine Manifestations of the Jews'. The musical mode used for most of this movement is called Ahavah Rabbah mode in various transpositions and one section uses a mode called Ukranian Dorian – see Appendix 5c.

This introduction is followed by a recitative sung by the baritone solo with words from Exodus, confirming One Lord God and that we are not to worship any others gods. This leads into a chorus which introduces Abraham as the father of the Covenant and a link to the chain of prophets from Adam to Jesus and Muhammad. This section is introduced by a solo clarinet melody, accompanied by harp, and the voices enter in fugal fashion, one after the other. This is followed by a recitative sung by the bass solo stating that we are all to keep God's Covenant, with words from Genesis.

There is then a return to the initial music of this movement but this time as an accompaniment to a tenor aria singing words from Deuteronomy. The tenor proclaims how we should love the Lord our God. At this point, I would like to mention that I have used the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible in both this movement and the movement about Jesus. This is not because I think the version is closer to the original than any other version, but that it is written, for me, in clear modern-day English. As previously described, it would still be a mistake to take the words literally, but the message of the Oneness of our Creator God and the emphasis on loving this Creator is clear from these texts.

The music leads without a pause into the section on Moses, firstly using the fugal music from the section introducing Abraham. The words proclaim Moses as both the leader of the Israelites into the Promised Land, as well as being the Law-maker.

There follows a section using baritone and bass soloists, at first a recitative sung by the baritone, then the bass, which leads to an aria where both soloists join in together proclaiming 'words' from God. Remember that, as I have defined God, words 'spoken' by Him cannot be literal. So often, such messages appear in our dreams or like an idea that has suddenly sprung to mind. These words must have been felt in this way by Moses. The aria part (for the duet) is sung in the singers' low register with contrasting high string tremolos and arpeggios in the harp. God promises to the Israelites that Moses would lead them out of Egypt to the Promised Land, a land 'flowing with milk and honey'. The words are from Exodus.

The choir, accompanied by brass, then introduce the next section which is the summary of the Law revealed by Moses. This summary is sung by the soprano solo with words from the Talmud for the Shabbath:

“What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary”.

The accompaniment is for two oboes, alto saxophone, crotales and two congas.

The final section of this movement concerns itself with everlasting life, the question “What happens after death?” being sung by the choir. I had to use quotes from later in the Old Testament as very little seems to be mentioned about the subject in earlier parts of that Testament. The first of two quotes, from the Book of Daniel, is sung by the tenor solo as a kind of recitative:

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”.

This does not mean to me, although there are two possible outcomes, that there is heaven separate from hell as two separate places. Metaphysics suggests that there is no ‘place’ where we go, just a higher state of awareness, a higher vibration. ‘Everlasting’ means that time has a different meaning than we know in the material world, and maybe will eventually be no longer relevant at all. In this higher state of awareness, however, some will be awake from sleep – that is to say become aware – and some will experience shame and contempt. Probably most of us will experience a bit of each!

The music accompanying the tenor is initially for cellos and basses, then woodwinds. The choir then sings the second quote, which is from Ecclesiastes:

“... the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it”.

Again, here ‘dust’ refers to the material body returning to the earth and the energy form – spirit – moves onto the next level of awareness where it becomes closer to the Creator. The music of this section consists of flowing quavers, at first on strings, alternating with woodwind. The choir is mainly contrapuntal until the closing bars. This movement closes peacefully, played by two each of flutes and clarinets. This section, in contrast to the rest of the movement, is in the Ukranian Dorian mode, shown in Appendix 5c.

Zoroaster

The final movement of the first Part introduces the Zoroastrian religion. As previously stated, Zoroaster was from Persia, so I decided to use a small variant of the main Persian scale (see Appendix 5d). I have added the perfect 5th to the usual notes associated with the scale. This movement begins simply on repeated Ds in the strings during which the female choir, followed by male choir, introduce Zoroaster as the fourth point of the star. Altos state that Zoroastrians worship one God whom they call [Ahura Mazda](#), tenors and basses sing that this means ‘Wise Lord’.

The tempo increases slightly for the bass solo aria which proclaims He is the Keeper, the Creator, Maintainer, Discerner and the Most Great Spirit – that is to say, the same Creator God of the previous religions. This solo is accompanied by low strings, oboe solo playing a very Persian style melody and five tom-toms. The words are from *Teachings of Zoroaster* by S.A. Kapadia. The remaining quotes in this movement are from the Sacred Book, [The Zend-Avesta](#).

There follows a graceful aria for soprano solo with responses sung by the female choir. The words, from The Zend-Avesta – Visperad 13:1, proclaim that Zoroastrians worship One God (Ahura Mazda) and Bountiful Immortals. The reference to Mathra appears to be sacred word of reason, as possessed by Zoroaster. The music accompanying the soloist is a simple melody played by first violins over a drone, with responses played on celesta. The female choir is accompanied by harp and flutes. The string parts are later transferred to woodwinds with alto saxophone playing the melody.

The choir then affirms, at a slower tempo, that ‘All that is created must be treated with love and respect’. The mezzo-soprano solo responds with an aria in faster, lively tempo, addressing a youth proclaiming we should have good thoughts, words and deeds, and we should be loving and free from sorrow. The words are from The Zend-Avesta, Fragments (Sacred Books of the East, 2:11). A light accompaniment is supplied by various instruments and, after the singer has finished, the music builds to a dramatic climax. A tam-tam stroke leads into the next section where the choir asks what Zoroastrians say about death. The music here is a variant on the music that starts this movement. Then the choir state that they think Zoroastrians believe that the body dies and the spirit moves onto the plain of spiritual existence. The choir sings this, starting with altos, then sopranos, followed by basses then tenors. The accompaniment is gentle semiquavers at first in the strings, with celesta responses. The choir becomes more contrapuntal and more instruments are added to support them. Tubular bells are heard at the end, and other orchestral forces stop, leaving a few bars from just tremolo strings and bells.

This is followed by a tenor and baritone duet, singing words from Avesta – Yasna 45:5, supporting the previous statement. The solo instrument in counterpoint with the singers is the tenor saxophone, playing its calm melody with exceptional beauty. The accompaniment on harp and strings consist of rising chords, similar to those used at the end of the second movement. During the last part of this duet, a chord builds from the top, like the descent of the Holy Spirit. The movement closes with rising phrases from the woodwind, plus tubular bells, indicating the rise in the level of awareness – spiritual energy moving to a higher state.

Modes used in this Part

This first Part, with quotations from religions which originated in the earlier times, introduces words associated with Krishna, Abraham, Moses and Zoroaster. The music, in general, uses modes taken from the country of origin of these Manifestations of God; in particular, the modes for Abraham and Moses are Jewish and that for Zoroaster is Persian. For the modes used in the Prelude I have employed the Mixolydian and Dorian modes, as shown in Appendix 5a. As we shall see later, both the Interludes (Parts 2 and 3) use just the Mixolydian mode.

For the second movement, 'Krishna', I start with the Dorian mode but develop it into other related modes, either by adding notes, or sharpening the fourth degree of the Dorian scale, see Appendix 5b. Although Krishna was born in North India, I have avoided the use of Indian Rāgas here so I can explore these in the movement about The Buddha. Although The Buddha was born in Nepal, the Buddhist Movement spread to various parts of India, thereby justifying the use of Rāgas in that movement.

Part 2: 'The Age of Enlightenment, Son of Man and the Seal of the Prophets'

The 'Age of Enlightenment' is associated with Buddhism, the 'Son of Man' with Christianity and the 'Seal of the Prophets' with Islam. The first movement of this Part 2 (fifth movement of the entire oratorio) is a short Interlude with words similar to those used at the start of the Prelude (first movement). The words are again an exaltation by Bahá'u'lláh: "In the Name of One True God". He used similar exaltations at the start of many of His Writings.

The mode used is the same as that which opens the Prelude, that is, the Mixolydian mode (see Appendix 5e) and this movement opens with the same djembe and marimba music as the opening of the Prelude. Similarly, the choir speaks the words and the orchestra continues to develop the rhythmic ideas stated by the percussion.

The Buddha was born as Siddhārtha Gautama and there are several accounts of when He actually lived. [One source](#) states He lived from 563 BCE to 483 BCE. Other scholars believe He was born earlier, around 624 BCE.

It is thought that [Jesus](#) was born around 6 to 4 BCE and was crucified in 36 CE. The date of [Muhammad's life](#) is more precise and is recorded to be 570 to 632 CE.

The Buddha

The sixth movement devotes itself to the teachings of The Buddha. It is said by many that He developed more of a philosophy of life rather than a religion in its own right and His teachings are very vague on the interpretation of the Creator God. From a metaphysical point of view, it is easy to see why, as He taught us to look *inside* ourselves – spiritually of course, for inside, we can see higher states of awareness or consciousness. This can be achieved through meditation which is, I believe, the Buddhist's form of prayer. This does not conflict with our understanding of God, albeit limited, as these levels of consciousness are there to be explored and, remember, God can be found everywhere.

I therefore start with the concept of Nirvana, the highest aim, the state of ultimate peace and release of suffering. This, The Buddha said, can be achieved by following what He described as the 'eightfold path'. The Buddhist teachings are taken from the Dhammapada which, it is believed, is a record of the actual words of [The Buddha himself](#). All previous texts were written by authors other than the Manifestation Himself.

The opening of this movement presents music similar to the second movement, but using vibraphone, glockenspiel and finger cymbals over figurations from harp and celesta. The choir sings that The Buddha, the fifth point of the star, taught His followers that our highest

aim is 'Nirvana', a state of ultimate peace and the release of all suffering. This is followed by the baritone solo singing from Dhammapada 20:13, reinforcing the words from the choir. The solo instrument here is a bassoon with strings and vibraphone accompaniment.

The choir then asks what is the 'Noble Eightfold Path'? The music returns to that of the opening of this movement. The bass solo then explains that following the Path will put an end to suffering, with words from Dhammapada 20:3. The main accompanying instruments are bass clarinet and two flutes, imitated by harp.

The choir follows with the question about love, singing mainly *a cappella* with woodwind and horns joining in towards the end. The response is sung by the soprano and mezzo-soprano in duet with music taken from the response to the same question in the second movement. The words, from Dhammapada 25:17, state that we should live in love, be adept in our duties so that we can put an end to our sorrow.

The final question is about death, asked by the choir: can there be immortal life if Nirvana is our goal? The accompaniment here is delicate upper strings with pizzicato bass notes which gather momentum leading to the final section of this movement. The words, sung by the tenor solo and quote from Dhammapada 2:1, state that *awareness* is the path of immortality; the aware do not die, whereas death comes to the thoughtless as "The thoughtless are as if dead already." The music is taken from the Tibetan Ritual music which, for me, is an incredibly powerful sound. The original music uses a deep horn sound, large drum and rattling gong-like sounds. Listening to the [Tibetan music here](#) will show the reader what I mean. I simulate this with bass trombone, contrabassoon both playing low C; clanging sounds from three gongs played with a metal beater struck in the centre and bass drum struck with a hard beater near the edge. The tenor solo sings once the choir basses start singing in 'overtones', a product of Tibetan chanting. The basses sing octave Cs to vowels with a nasal-like sound, which accentuates the harmonic associated with each vowel. With the words "aware do not die", the male choir chants AUM, just as the choir did at the end of the second movement about Krishna. At this stage, the music has died down, the noisy instruments having stopped. Tremolo strings and celesta build up a chord from bottom to top, representing the rise to a high state of awareness, the peace of Nirvana and the beauty of immortality.

The modes used, as previously indicated, are Indian Rāgas, see Appendix 5f. Most of The Buddha's teaching was done from northern India even though He was born in Nepal, but I have used Rāgas from southern India mainly for musical convenience. In general, Rāgas are more than a scale or mode, as many have a melodic contour associated with them. Rāgas from the Southern Indian Melakarta collection, however, are more mode-like as their ascent is the same as their descent, so I found them more appropriate from a musical viewpoint to implement in a work of this nature.

Jesus

As with the previous movements that focus on individual Manifestations of God, this seventh movement is devoted to the teachings of Jesus. In the opening passage, sung by semi-chorus, I use my own words to describe my thoughts (as previously described) about the connection between the Christ Spirit and Jesus, the Man of God: "The Christ Spirit came to

earth in the form of Jesus...”. Note that this passage states that Jesus was a Jew. His mission was to reform the Jewish Laws, not to form a new religion. The word ‘Christianity’ was adopted later to mean the followers of Christ, which I believe to mean followers of all the religions presented in this work – and more!

I had thought about using plainchant which was sung at the time of the first Roman Catholic Pope – Pope Gregory 1 when he was Pope from 590 to 604 CE. Instead, I came across a Kyrie composed by the French composer [Guillaume Dufay](#) who lived in the 15th century CE. I decided to quote this Kyrie in full and write the preceding music in the style of that period. This movement therefore starts with two trumpets and trombone simulating the instruments of that time, (probably shawms and sackbuts), followed by the semi-chorus, playing and singing music in this idiom, with syncopations similar to those used by Dufay. I also use crotales on the single note A to give this section a ceremonial feel.

The semi-chorus sings mainly *a cappella* and this is followed by the Dufay Kyrie sung by mezzo-soprano, tenor and baritone soloists, again mainly *a cappella*. I have added injections played on oboe and two bassoons, both introducing and echoing the trio. Towards the end of the Kyrie, however, low strings are introduced to indicate that the style and mood are about to change.

The style does indeed change and the orchestra builds to a climax; the soprano solo then continues with a recitative-aria, quoting a passage written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. These words emphasises the importance of Jesus seen through the eyes of someone from the Islamic culture. The aria section is a calm, lilting passage in triple time. Woodwind alternating with strings play the harmonies and alto saxophone provides a supporting melodic line. The orchestra builds up to the phrase ‘beauty of unity’, as this concept is so important to our understanding. The music then calms, with the soprano rising quietly to high B, to the words ‘Jesus was the Word of God’.

A short passage for choir follows, accompanied by strings, stating that Jesus announces His commandments. The baritone quickly takes over, announcing that the Lord our God is One. We should love the Lord our God and our neighbour as ourselves. These words, familiar to Christians, are from the Gospel of Mark, 12:29-31. The lilting harmonies soon reappear and developed. Vibraphone and finger cymbals also feature during this aria, and an expressive tenor saxophone soon emerges. A solo violin and vibraphone accompany the second of the two commandments, after which the lilting harmonies return on strings with the expressive tenor saxophone ending this aria.

The two clarinets and bass clarinet sound the opening period music and choir sings a modified version of it at a different pitch to the words ‘Jesus said of Love:’. This is answered by a duet sung by mezzo-soprano and tenor, in 6/8 time, singing words from the Gospel of Matthew, 5:43-45. The words state that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. The first part is a short recitative with melodic fragments played by piccolo and clarinet and punctuating chords from the harp. The aria section is a flowing duet supported by harp figures and woodwind duets.

The woodwind and harp bring this aria to a close and strings take over with flowing semiquavers. The choir sings the words: “Christ, the Son of God, says of eternal life:” in

close cluster harmony, thus introducing the final section of this movement sung by the bass solo. The words are from the Gospel of John, 5:24-25 and states that believers in the Word of God will have eternal life. Those who don't believe – the 'dead' – will live as soon as they hear the Word. At first, harp arpeggios accompany the singer and delicate strings and harp enter from the words "Whoever hears My Word...". The harp recalls earlier sections on the subject of eternity with its rising phrases. The most unlikely solo instrument is then introduced – the solo tuba! It is not often that the orchestral tuba player gets to play a solo, especially an expressive one, but this is just what happens here. The tuba is instructed to play *cantabile*, so it can 'sing' in the upper register where the tone is mellow. The lilting harmonies return after both bass solo and tuba have finished and celesta plays delicate rising figures which brings this movement to a calm close.

The mode used after the initial period-sounding music and the Dufay quote is essentially based on the Phrygian mode plus an extra note (diminished 5th from the tonic) in various transpositions, see Appendix 5g. The 'extra' note is used more as decoration. The perceived tonic is not always in the same part of the mode, for example, during the soprano solo early in the movement, when the lilting triple time first appears, this passage appears to be in D major! Other tonic 'shifts' occur later.

Muhammad

We now come to what Muslims call the 'Seal of the Prophets', the interpretation of this term having been already discussed. Muhammad's teachings are said to be revealed by God to form the Qur'an from which many of the quotations for this, the eighth movement, are taken.

As Muhammad came from where is now known as Saudi Arabia (Mecca), I have used Arabic modes for this movement, often in a simplified form. The modes I use are shown in Appendix 5h. The Arabic modes are called '*maqam*' but, like many Indian Rāgas, they are used as the basis for improvised melody. Notes of these *maqam* do not always stick to the notes of our Western scale tuning – the notes to which pianos are tuned. I have represented these 'out-of-tune' by means of quarter-tones, that is, notes half-way between the standard semitones of our Western system. This is not exact tuning, but is the closest practical for the purpose of this movement. Sometimes, for convenience and playability, these notes are 'normalised' to the standard semitones. Modes that are not labelled in Appendix 5h are either slightly modified or derived from smaller sets known as *jins*.

This movement begins simply with a drone on D in violas with harp punctuation (octave Ds). The violins suggest the first part of the mode taken from the *Maqam Hijaz*, as shown in Appendix 5h. The choir declares that Muhammad is the seventh point of the star, as defined in this oratorio. The harp is heard building up notes of the mode in its high register, with the notes played near to the soundboard – *Près de la Table*.

The next section is introduced by a flute solo which plays an elaborate melody, continuing in the same mode as the opening. The tenor solo sings a passage, written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, showing the link with previous Manifestations:

Muhammad recognised the sublime grandeur of Christ and the greatness of Moses and the prophets.

The tenor is directed to sing this passage 'freely, like a call to prayer' (a sound very familiar to Muslims), to a mode with two quarter-notes (Maqam Husayni 'Ushayan as shown in Appendix 5h) during which the orchestra is completely silent. After this solo, the flute melody continues in the original mode above a drone on the note A, with the last phrase being echoed by violins and oboe.

This drone note A is taken up by pizzicato low strings in a repeating rhythmic pattern. Violin solo alternating with oboe continue with a melody in the modified form of the *Maqam Hijaz*, shown in Appendix 5h. The choir sings:

Muhammad reaffirmed the Laws revealed by Moses and summarised by Jesus:

The baritone solo continues with words from The Qur'an, Sura 3:29 which state that those who love God must love Muhammad and that God loves us and will forgive our sins. The supporting instrument here is the high clarinet in E \flat which continues the Arabic style melody. The rhythmic drones are forever present but shift their tonality.

This leads to an aria sung by mezzo-soprano with words from The Qur'an, Sura 4:40. She is accompanied by rocking rhythms in the strings and a supporting melody on alto-saxophone. The tonality is now C which is reinforced by pizzicato notes on double basses. The message is that we should worship God and be kind to all humankind, whoever they are. Other instruments take over the rocking rhythms and the supporting melody and, after the singer has finished, the music builds to a climax with the tonality shifting to D, but using the last mode shown in Appendix 5h.

The choir affirms the words just sung by singing, in block harmony:

So we are taught to love our Lord God and fellow humans.

The strings alternate with the choir in the same harmony with phrases from the harp. The soprano solo continues with an aria, quoting words from 'Six Lessons on Islam' by Marzieh Gail:

Desire not the world, and God will love you; and desire not what men have, and they will love you.

This solo is supported first by one violin solo, then two, plus two muted trumpets echoed by harp, using the phrases that the harp played in the previous choral section. The strings complete this aria which leads to the final section of this movement.

As with previous movements, the choir asks what does Muhammad say about death (or life thereafter)? The mode returns to the *Maqam Hijaz* on D, as at the start of the movement. The choir is accompanied by a solo horn and strings, but horns and bassoons lead the music forward to the final aria, sung by the bass solo who sings from The Qur'an, Sura 3:139. These words state that, whether we desire this world or the next, this will be granted and the thankful will be rewarded. Flowing quavers in the strings accompany the singer, echoed by celesta, and the main supporting solo instrument is the bass clarinet. Half way through, the mode is transposed to start on E when more instruments are added. At the end of the movement, like all previous movements ending with a statement about life after death,

rising phrases are heard: strings build up a sustained chord from the bass and other instruments calmly ascend. Over this, muted horns and trumpets supply fragments of the melodies previously heard.

Part 3: 'A New Universal Cycle – the Cycle of Fulfilment'

The third and final Part is devoted to the Bahá'í Revelation, the 'New Universal Cycle'. Like the other two Parts, this Part has four movements but presented a little differently. As with the previous two Parts, however, it starts (ninth movement) with an Interlude, with similar words of exultation from Bahá'u'lláh; the tenth movement is subdivided into two and quotes the Writings from both The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, being the last two points of the star as defined by this oratorio. These two Manifestations of God are combined as one movement as they are considered to be '[Twin Manifestations](#)' of this new Revelation by Bahá'ís. The eleventh movement is devoted to writings from Bahá'u'lláh's son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the twelfth and final movement is called 'Postlude' and continues with the Words of Bahá'u'lláh from the passage quoted in the Interlude to this Part.

Looking at each movement in turn, the ninth uses Words from the 'Epistle to the Son of the Wolf' by Bahá'u'lláh. The strange title of this excerpt comes from the fact that Bahá'u'lláh was addressing a prominent Muslim cleric. The cleric and his father were known for persecuting the Bahá'ís so He gave the father the [nickname 'the Wolf'](#). The music starts, like the initial Prelude and Interlude to the second Part, with the same music for djembes and marimba, but doubling the marimba rhythms with timpani. The choir sings the Words instead of speaking, after which there is a more extended development of the djembe rhythms and marimba chords from the full orchestra, which build up to an exuberant close. The mode used here is shown in Appendix 5i and is the same Mixolydian mode as that used in the Prelude (movement 1) and Interlude to the second Part (movement 5).

Although both Manifestations were from Persia (now Iran), I decided to use a mixture of modes, including the Persian mode, for the remainder of this Part, see Appendices 5j to 5l.

The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh

The tenth movement starts with Writings from The Báb who was born in 1819, declared His mission in 1844 and was executed by a firing squad in 1850, as [described here](#). The Báb is known as the Herald, or forerunner of the Bahá'í Faith.

The music is based on the opening music from the second and sixth movements but played this time by an ensemble consisting of tubular bells, glockenspiel, triangle, celesta and harp. Tremolo strings lead the choir into singing that The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are the eighth and ninth points of the star.

There follows a passage setting words by 'Abdu'l-Bahá indicating that the Báb was the One promised by Muhammad, this being sung by mezzo-soprano. The accompanying chords are a reminder of the lilting chords in triple time, used in the seventh movement, but using the second and third modes in Appendix 5j. A supporting melody is played by trumpet, doubled

by glockenspiel. At the end, the orchestral forces build and the music returns to the second mode in the Appendix 5j but transposed to E.

This gives way to the next aria, sung by the soprano solo, proclaiming that there is only one God, to words by The Báb taken from a book of selections from His Writings. At first, tubular bells, glockenspiel and flute support the soprano, continuing with pairs of woodwind instruments and two solo violins.

The choir then sings the next selection from the Writings of The Báb, stating that God's method has always been that of love and not of force or coercion, and this method will continue in the future. The musical mode returns to the *Maqam Hijaz* Arabic mode on E, as used for Muhammad (eighth movement). The choir enters in fugal fashion with a melody that could now sound familiar, but actually developed from previous material. There are many cross references similar to this in order to maintain a sense of unity to the whole.

These Writings of The Báb show no conflict with previous teachings on the Oneness of God and of love, rather they expand our understanding. Although I have not quoted it in the oratorio, He also showed us that there is life everlasting once the body has died, as described in the ['Selections of the Writings of The Báb', p 95-96](#). The relevant sentence makes this clear:

It is better for a man to guide a soul than to possess all that lies between East and West. Likewise better is guidance for him who is guided than all the things that exist on earth, for by reason of this guidance he will, after his death, gain admittance into Paradise, whereas by reason of the things of the world below, he will, after his death, receive his deserts.

In the oratorio, however, I have included another teaching to close this section on The Báb, from the same book of selections, stating that only God can ordain both life and death and all shall return to Him. Initially given to the bass soloist to sing, the tenor soloist joins in later, at first solo and then in duet for the last sentence. The atmosphere for this aria is set by means of delicate string tremolos and scale-like passages on harp and two flutes, then two clarinets, providing an introduction to the bass solo who sings the chosen words. The mode here is the fifth in Appendix 5j. At first, the bass sings without accompaniment, soon joined by vibraphone together with more string tremolos. The tenor saxophone makes an entrance a little later. The tempo quickens when the tenor solo sings "He is the One Who ordaineth life and death..." with just the harp accompanying. The tempo returns to the calm of the start of this aria and both singers complete the quote as a duet, where The Báb declares that there is only One God. Again the singers are supported by muted tremolo strings, vibraphone and tenor saxophone, bringing this aria to a quiet peaceful close.

Following this is the second section of this movement with Words from Bahá'u'lláh. He was born in 1817 and declared His mission in 1863 and finally died in 1892 after much suffering and torture. See the [full account of His life](#).

This section follows on after only a slight pause. The rhythm is now more complex as I use an irregular pattern of note-groupings within 9/8 time, expressed as 2+2+3+2, each number being the number of quavers (eighth notes) to each beat. At first, strings play new material

pizzicato then, one by one, they change to bowed (*arco*). Fanfares first from horns, then trumpets and trombones, are sounded interspersed with timpani. The mode is the first of those shown for Bahá'u'lláh in Appendix 5j.

The words for this section are mine and explain that The Báb foretold the coming of Bahá'u'lláh, who He referred to as ['He whom God shall make manifest'](#). Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh confirmed past religious teachings and showed us how we can build peace in the world through unity. This is mostly sung by a quartet of the soloists: soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor and bass, with the choir singing the Name 'Bahá'u'lláh'. Once the choir starts, the mode is the second of those shown for Bahá'u'lláh in Appendix 5j, firstly on B, then A \flat and finally the first mode on F. The tempo is quick and the mood is joyful, expressing appropriately the Coming of this, the most recent and most important Manifestation of God.

The remainder of the movement is devoted to one quote from 'Gems of Divine Mysteries' by Bahá'u'lláh but divided between the solo singers. These words summarise exactly what this oratorio is about – the oneness of all Divine Revelation. Previous Messengers of God are all "the Manifestations of His Self, the Repositories of His might, the Treasuries of His Revelation, the Dawning-Places of His splendour and the Daysprings of His light". The excerpt is first sung by baritone solo, then tenor solo and then both in duet. Instrumental accompaniment is, again, kept simple and features a trombone duet and harp solo. Strings become more prominent in the duet section.

Then comes, what is for me, the most magical section of this movement and, possibly, the whole work. The mood calms considerably and all the strings build up a static chord, out of which the solo soprano emerges, singing the last section of this quote initially over this chord, softly sustained. Female wordless chorus in four parts now provides the only accompaniment to the solo singer, re-enforcing the calm. Later, the same chords are played by tremolo harp and solo strings, at which point, the mezzo-soprano continues with the words: "And since in their inmost Beings they are the same Luminaries and the self-same Mysteries...". The quote is completed by the two soloists in duet continuing the quote from: "thou shouldst view their outward conditions in the same light...", to the end. At the point where the singers stop, a chord similar to that opening this section is heard very softly, building up note by note, with a *crescendo*, on muted brass doubled by harp. The final chord is taken over softly by the strings, fading to silence, which have themselves been muted throughout this section.

The mode used from after the initial section is the first of the two modes shown in Appendix 5j for Bahá'u'lláh, but in G and, finally, A. This last section for female singers is an example, for me, of where music speaks beyond the words, transporting the soul to a new reality, a new level of consciousness.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

After the calm of the end of the last section, it was difficult to know how to continue. Perhaps a moment of silence should be observed before this movement, the eleventh, begins. In the end, I decided to start this movement with a solo instrument, the alto saxophone, with quiet sustained notes in the strings.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was the eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh and lived from 1844 to 1921. He was the One chosen by His Father to lead the Faith from 1892 until His death. A more [detailed account of His life](#) is described online.

The male section of the choir sings the words introducing 'Abdu'l-Bahá, stating that He re-enforced His Father's many teachings. The full choir sings that He also had a vision for the future of mankind. The strings then introduce a simple 4-bar passage which is to be used and developed throughout this movement. The mode is the first shown in Appendix 5k, firstly on D, now transposed to A.

There follows a lengthy quote from the 'Bahá'í World Faith' with a passage from the section conceived by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This forms the bulk of this movement and is split between bass solo, followed by tenor solo, then soprano and mezzo-sopranos solos. The bass sings that the darkness has passed and we are in a century (at that time, the twentieth) where the reality of things is becoming evident and science is penetrating the mysteries of the universe. He also predicts: "the oneness of the world of humanity is being established and service to mankind is the paramount motive of all existence". Many will argue that this did not exactly happen in that century, and the situation seems to have worsened in this twenty-first century, but there *have* been many revelations about spirituality, consciousness and awareness of things not being as they seem from many sources, including science, psychology and other disciplines. It is true that some of these delve into practices that should not be pursued – those which many people call 'wacky' – but a person with an enquiring mind, searching for truth, will be able to learn what is right and what is wrong. There is still no doubt in my mind that, by avoiding those practices that are quite often 'iffy' or even dangerous, it is possible to see much progress in awareness of spiritual matters, especially among the artistic community. Guidance can always be sort from the Bahá'í Writings which can be found on [their website](#), and on the Ocean ebook previously sited ([download for free here](#)).

Returning to the oratorio, the bass in this section is at first supported by bass clarinet, then standard clarinet and solo viola, after which the alto saxophone melody returns. The marimba soon takes over the supporting role with pizzicato strings, using the second mode in Appendix 5k. At the end of the bass solo, the tempo increases, the dynamic gets louder and the brass and percussion set the atmosphere for the next part of the quote, sung by tenor solo. This is where I imagine that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was frustrated with people clinging to old, outdated beliefs: "Shall we remain steeped in our fanaticisms and cling to our prejudices?" We should not be bound by ancient fables and superstitions of the past which he calls ignorances of dark ages which wage religious wars. The music here is agitated and even violent, showing how frustrating it must have been to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and, indeed, many others that there are people who are not prepared to consider the progress of religious teachings. At the end, there is a flurry of descending trills from woodwind and fast phrases on strings which, eventually, calm the mood. The mode for this section is the first in Appendix 5k based on F#.

The music quietens and slows to a sustained A in strings, leading to the soprano solo singing the next part of the quote. This is shared between soprano and mezzo-soprano solos, eventually singing in duet. The soprano starts by singing "Is it not better for us to be

loving and considerate toward each other?” This is surely the message of any true religion, to enjoy fellowship and unity? The mezzo-soprano continues with the words: “Then indeed this world will become a paradise” and both sing in duet the final words: “and the promised Day of God will dawn.” The singers are accompanied mainly by harp and celesta with vibraphone stroking isolated notes with a bow. The same mode is used, first transposed to A, then back to F#.

The same mode now transposes to B but with E sounding the tonic. The chorus introduce the last quote of this movement, that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had a vision of the future as promised by God. As the music builds to a climax, the mode is again transposed to C#, leading into the baritone solo who begins the next quote taken from one of the talks ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave when He was in London. This message is the summary of His Father’s teachings on building peace in the world – that of the oneness of mankind and of religion. Once we learn to accept our differences, war will cease between nations and the people of the world can build what His Father called the ‘Most Great Peace’. More information about this can be [found on this webpage](#), at the end of which the author states:

The Bahá’í writings explain that there will be three stages leading to the new divine civilization. First will be a period of great turmoil and suffering, which we are now witnessing. Then will come the Lesser Peace, which is the political unity of nations. After that will come the Most Great Peace.

The baritone is accompanied by divided strings doubled by harp. At the point where the text states: “and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come;” the mezzo-soprano solo enters in canon with the baritone and the only accompanying instrument is vibraphone. Note that throughout, the use of the word ‘God’ can be interpreted to mean the creative source of energy that was described earlier. Speaking of God’s Will is still within the scope of this explanation as such a Will is energy, similar to that of thought.

After this, the tenor solo joins in, making a trio, to the words: “the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers”, where strings play phrases now familiar to the listener. Note that the male gender is often used to mean all humanity, as the Bahá’í Faith acknowledges both men and women as equal in the sight of God. At the end, after the mode is transposed to G#, this phrase is heard on the celesta over a sustained chord rising from the string basses. Endings similar to this one have been heard in previous movements, where the listener should experience a peace that cannot be described by words.

Postlude

We come now to the twelfth and final movement – the Postlude. Overall, this is a song of praise to God; the movement’s outer sections, sung by the chorus, continue the exaltation from Bahá’u’lláh’s ‘Epistle to the Son of the Wolf’, started in the ninth movement. The music here is exuberant, joyful and full of praise. The central section is calmer and uses all the solo singers. The words, like all the words in this oratorio, can be found in [Appendix 3](#). The modes used in this movement are shown in Appendix 5I. They are not consciously derived from any mode from any specific region of the world but rather invented for the purpose of this work.

This movement opens with the three percussion players playing rhythms on a pair of bongos, tambourine and a pair of timbales. Strings enter with fast repeating patterns followed by melodic fragments played by the woodwind. The choir sings their praises in block harmony then, after a flurry from the strings, they sing running scale passages in counterpoint. All this music uses the first of the modes in Appendix 5I. At the end of this first section the music temporarily quietens (using the same mode but on F#) while the choir sings “the Self-Subsisting that altereth not”. After this, the music quickly builds to a strong climax which gives way to the central calm section, shifting the tonal centre to D and using the second mode in Appendix 5I.

This section is given over to the five soloists. Initially, low strings support scale like passages on harp and delicate celesta phrases. The four lower soloists sing in block harmony and the soprano sings a descant. With the words “Who is manifest through His signs”, the soprano soars to the heights, accompanied by vibraphone and strings. The final words of the quote are sung by all soloists *a cappella* in pairs (the bass on his own), finishing with violas, cellos, harp and celesta.

Driven by violins, violas and horns, the final section is introduced by music that gets faster, bringing it to the music that started this movement, using the first mode in Appendix 5I on E. This time, the brass section plays the melodic fragments of the opening, joined by the woodwind. Percussion instruments play as before. The only words sung during this final phase are “Praise be to God”, initially by chorus to the same block harmony as at the start, but using the same mode based on F#. The soloists enter one by one with the same words but set to short faster moving phrases. This is followed by choir, then soloists, singing similar phrases, before all join in the final praise with soloists joining the choir in union. By combining the first mode in Appendix 5I, based on E and F#, the third mode in that Appendix is formed and this is used to complete the movement. The tonality of this combined mode shifts to B \flat , as shown in the Appendix. Orchestral instruments are added until all play, except harp and celesta, bringing the whole work to an exuberant close.

In Conclusion

Musical Style

I have not described every musical connection that makes the various movements of this oratorio appear as one work. This is for the listener to discover – part of the enjoyment of the listening experience. Suffice it to say that there are many links and subtle references to the different movements, too complex to explain. This is an expression of the Bahá'í Message of Unity, that all humankind are our brothers and sisters, equal in the site of our Creator, regardless of skin colour, regardless of race, regardless of gender and regardless of culture.

The listener will also gain from absorbing the emotions that only music can provide; this being beyond words.

In the light of all the musical developments that have occurred during the twentieth century, the musical style of this oratorio may well seem for some to be relatively traditional. Yet there are aspects of the music that definitely belong to the period in which it was written. For example, take a look at the list of instruments used in the orchestra ([Appendix 4](#)) and reading through the description of the work in Chapter 2, it is not difficult to establish that the music is, in fact, very colourful, using unusual combinations of instruments and voices that can only be a result of some of the twentieth century developments.

Although traditional modes are used in the oratorio – modes belonging to certain countries – the harmonies and melodies are derived from these modes such that nowhere is there the 'traditional' use of triadic 'classical' harmony, even though triads, thirds and fifths are sometimes formed as defined by the mode. Classical 'functional' harmony is avoided, even where triadic chords appear. The possible exception is the period music at the start of movement seven, but even this is based on the harmonic progressions of that time. It is true that I have avoided the use of *avant garde* practices, such as aleatoric techniques (music with chance elements), serial writing, electronics or any of the other techniques that arose during and after the mid-twentieth century. In this century, however, many composers now avoid these techniques. They can still be used when a particular context demands their use, but, in my opinion, it is certainly not mandatory to use them for the music to be considered contemporary.

There are currently many musical idioms in use by composers in this century, making it difficult for audiences to know what to expect from a new work, but we can broadly define two such musical 'extremes':

1. Music that is 'leading-edge', using all the advanced techniques at the composer's disposal. I believe that this approach appeals more to the academics and university professors. Such music often alienates the normal concert-going audiences, with a few exceptions; hence audiences are often very small.
2. Music that appeals to a wider audience. This music often resorts to traditional techniques of form, melody and harmony, with perhaps a few contemporary techniques thrown in so that the composer can say his or her work is 'of its time'. The

academics generally disregard such music as old-fashioned and not relevant to today, criticising it as music written 'down' to the audience. The music could be based on or influenced by more popular *genres*, such as jazz.

These are the extremes, yet much music today is written in a personal style that lies somewhere between these two extremes. I regard my music in general and this oratorio in particular as falling into this 'in between' category. It derives much from the traditional music of the countries from where the modes are taken, for example, Arabia, Persia (Iran), India, as well as the use of Tibetan Ceremonial music and 15th century period music, as can be seen by reading the section on Christianity. The harmonies that arise from the modes are by no means traditional and the same can be said about many of the rhythms I use. The same can also be said about the use of instrumental and vocal combinations, resulting in unusual musical colour. For me, this makes the idiom personal to my ideals and matches the philosophy behind this work.

Many composers, in particular since the end of the nineteenth century, have deviated from the classically derived diatonic scales, those major and minor scales that all early students of music learn. Examples include Debussy's use of the whole-tone scale, also modes used by Russian composers such as Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov that give some of their work a more 'eastern' characteristic. Later, Vaughan-Williams used some of the early church modes and, later still, Olivier Messiaen developed a system of symmetrical modes which he called 'modes of limited transposition'. These modes are an extension of the whole-tone scale principal as used by Debussy and, because they are symmetrical, defining a tonic (or key) is not practically possible. The composers mentioned, however, did manage to emphasise a tonic so that their mode can be said to have a defined key. Other composers have used pentatonic scales derived, for example, from the music of China, Japan, Bali and Java and similar East Asian countries. Notable is the use of Javanese Gamelan by Colin McPhee and later used by Britten in his ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas*. I therefore do not believe it is necessary for any composer to explore *avant garde* techniques in order to write music relevant to our current times.

The above demonstrates that many twentieth-century composers have been influenced by music from many other cultures which only helps to bring us closer to people from around the globe.

Texts

Most, if not all, oratorios focus on texts relevant to one particular faith, mostly Christian. One exception is perhaps Tippett's *A Child of our Time* in which, although it quotes Negro Spirituals, the main focus is on events of the Second World War during which time it was written. The current oratorio is, to my knowledge, the first that focuses on all major known religions, unless others have been written that have not yet been distributed, published, performed or presented in some other form.

Although the texts are based on the fundamental principles of the Bahá'í Faith, in particular the concept of Unity of all religions, the philosophy of the texts I both chose and added

myself are, admittedly, my own. The ideas I express are not necessarily shared by all because, as I have said several times, we are all responsible for our own individual spiritual destiny, regardless of the religion to which we subscribe. I share my thoughts in this booklet, not because I believe them to be right and that everyone should follow them, but because I hope to open up the thoughts of the reader and listener of my music and ideas behind it. The ultimate truth is way beyond any individual understanding but I believe we can progress our thoughts and understanding by reading about the various religious Faiths and by absorbing scientific ideas and conclusions, such as can be obtained by a metaphysical interpretation of religious texts.

The texts I chose were a natural starting point to the creation of this oratorio and, once I focussed on the overall concept of progressive revelation, finding the texts came to me relatively quickly. Similarly, the music came to me quickly and I often felt that it was being dictated to me! This often happens when a composer has a particularly important idea to express; an idea that he or she feels *must* be presented. So where does the music come from? It has to be a spiritual source, even if not directly from the Great Spiritual Creator, from other created spiritual entities (which some might call angels), Some composers have admitted to music being dictated by past composers. Who knows? All I know is that the initial ideas of both texts and music came relatively quickly, leaving me the hard work of putting it all together.

A final word about music

Music is capable of expressing the highest emotions. It is also capable of transforming the listener to 'higher' levels of consciousness, of spiritual awareness. Bahá'u'lláh has written in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas ('The Most Holy Book'):

We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high... (Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 38)

He continues:

...make it not, therefore, as wings to self and passion.

Unfortunately, there is much music around today that does the opposite of being a ladder that lifts our souls to the realm on high. Rather, such music lowers the consciousness away from anything remotely spiritual. In the same paragraph, Bahá'u'lláh asks us to "Take heed, however, lest listening thereto should cause you to overstep the bounds of propriety and dignity." I am not going to define the *genres* of music to which He could be referring, but sensitive listeners will be able to discover such music for themselves and, preferably, avoid it if possible, or at least to be aware of its nature.

'Abdu'l-Bahá had this to say in a talk He once gave, concerning the link between Divine Teachings and music:

Music is an important means to the education and development of humanity, but the only true way is through the Teachings of God. Music is like this glass, which is perfectly pure and polished. It is precisely like this pure chalice before us, and the Teachings of God, the utterances of God are like the water. When the glass or

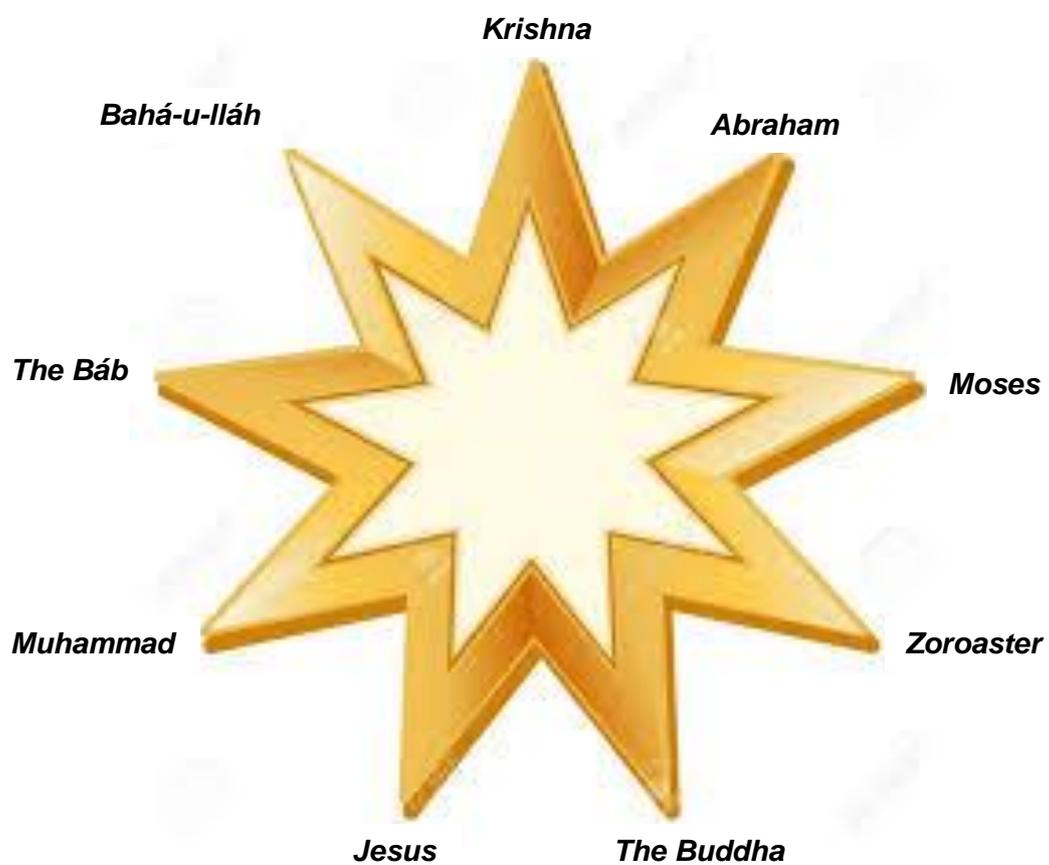
chalice is absolutely pure and clear, and the water is perfectly fresh and limpid, then it will confer life; wherefore, the Teachings of God, whether they be in the form of anthems or communes or prayers, when they are melodiously sung, are most impressive. (Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 410)

Let us therefore focus on music that has a positive message to convey, or that gives the listener a sense of elevation. The composers and their music I have already mentioned are a good starting point as such music requires attentive listening and, in some cases, absorbing the *energy* created by the sounds – a form of meditation. I have listed in [Appendix 6](#) some of my own music in which I have aimed to comply with these requirements. May you enjoy your listening and be uplifted by it.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Nine-Pointed Star Representation of the Manifestations of God

This is the representation as used in the oratorio.



Appendix 2: Format of the Oratorio

Part 1: The Early Years

1. Prelude
2. Krishna
3. Abraham and Moses
4. Zoroaster

Part 2: The Age of Enlightenment, Son of Man and the Seal of the Prophets

5. Interlude
6. The Buddha
7. Jesus
8. Muhammad

Part 3: A New Universal Cycle - the Cycle of Fulfilment

9. Interlude
10. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh
11. 'Abdu'l-Bahá
12. Postlude

Appendix 3: Selected Texts

Note, all texts with no reference are written by the composer.

All quotes from the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Part 1: The Early Years

1. Prelude

Chorus (spoken): IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD, THE EXALTED, THE MOST HIGH.
(Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p1)

Chorus (sung): Know of a certainty that, in every Dispensation, the light of Divine Revelation hath been vouchsafed to men in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity.
Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p87

2. Krishna

Chorus: Krishna, Krishna, the first point of the star, Krishna!

Tenor: Essence and symbol of Divine Love, with human life and love as a reflection of the Divine.

Mezzo-soprano: So did Pandu's Son behold
All this universe enfold
All its huge diversity
Into one vast shape, and be
Visible, and viewed, and blended
In one Body - subtle, splendid,
Nameless - th' All-comprehending
God of Gods, the Never-Ending Deity!
Bhagavad Gita 11:13, (translated by Edwin Arnold)

Chorus: What of Love?

Tenor & Baritone: I am alike for all! I know not hate,
I know not favour! What is made is Mine!
But them that worship Me with love, I love;
They are in Me, and I in them!
Bhagavad Gita 9:29, (translated by Edwin Arnold)

Chorus: What happens after death?

Bass & Chorus: And thus it has been said elsewhere: He who has his senses hidden as in sleep, and who, while in the cavern of his senses, but no longer ruled by them, sees, as in a dream, with the purest intellect, Him who is called Pranava, the leader, the bright, the sleepless, free from old age, from death, and sorrow, he is himself also called Pranava, and becomes a leader, bright, sleepless, free from old age, from death, and sorrow.
Upanishads vol. 2, Maitrayana-Brahmaya-Upanishad, v25

Chorus chants 'Aum' from the word 'Pranava'.

3. Abraham and Moses

Chorus: The second and third points of the star are Abraham and Moses, Divine Manifestations of the Jews.

Baritone: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.
Exodus 20:2-3

Chorus: Abraham, the father of the Covenant; prototype of all believers and a link in the chain of prophets. Abraham was instructed by God:

Bass: As for you, you shall keep my Covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.
Genesis 17:9

Tenor: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Chorus: Moses, the leader of the Israelites to the Promised Land, the Lawgiver.

Baritone & Bass: Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey."
Exodus 3:16-17

Chorus: The Law has been summarised:

Soprano: What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.
Talmud for the Shabbath 31a

Chorus: What of death? What happens after death?

Tenor: And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.
Daniel 12:2

Chorus: ... the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.
Ecclesiastes 12:7

4. Zoroaster

Chorus: The fourth point of the star: Zoroaster. Zoroastrians worship one God, Whom they call Ahura Mazda, meaning 'Wise Lord'. They say He claims:

Bass: I am the Keeper; I am the Creator and the Maintainer; I am the Discerner; I am the Most Beneficent Spirit.
The Teachings of Zoroaster, by S.A. Kapadia

Soprano & Chorus: According to the ritual we worship Ahura Mazda; according to the ritual we worship the Bountiful Immortals; and we sacrifice to the sacrificial word correctly spoken, and to every Mathra as to a sacred word of reason.

The Zend-Avesta – Visperad 13:1

Chorus: All that is created must be treated with love and respect.

Mezzo-soprano: And so thou, O youth of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, of good religion! Didst love me for that greatness, goodness, fairness, sweet-scentedness, victorious strength, and freedom from sorrow, in which I appear to thee.

The Zend-Avesta, Fragments (Sacred Books of the East, 2:11)

Chorus: And what of death? It is said Zoroastrians believe that when a person dies, it is the body that dies and the spiritual components continue to exist in the spiritual existence.

Tenor & Baritone: I will speak of that which the Holiest declared to me as the word that is best for mortals to obey; while he said: "they who for my sake render him obedience, shall all attain unto Welfare and Immortality by the actions of the Good Spirit".

The Zend-Avesta, Avesta – Yasna 45:5

Part 2: The Age of Enlightenment, Son of Man and the Seal of the Prophets

5. Interlude

Chorus (spoken): IN THE NAME OF THE ONE TRUE GOD

Bahá'u'lláh, Tabernacle of Unity, p3

6. The Buddha

Chorus: The Buddha, the fifth point of the star, taught his followers that the highest aim is the state of Nirvana, a state of ultimate peace, the release of all suffering.

Baritone: Pluck out your desire, like one does an autumn lotus with one's hand. Devote yourself to the path of peace, the Nirvana proclaimed by the Blessed One.

Dhammapada 20:13 (translated by J. Richards)

Chorus: So what is the 'Noble Eightfold Path'?

Bass: Following this Path you will put an end to suffering. I have taught you the Way after realising the removal of the arrow myself.

Dhammapada 20:3 (translated by J. Richards)

Chorus: What do Buddhists say about love?

Soprano and Mezzo-soprano: Let one live in love;
let one be adept in one's duties;
then joyfully one will see the end of sorrow.

Dhammapada 25:17 (translated by J. Richards)

Chorus: If Nirvana is our goal, can there be immortal life?

Tenor and Chorus: Awareness is the path of immortality;
thoughtlessness is the path of death.
Those who are aware do not die.
The thoughtless are as if dead already.
Dhammapada 2:1 (translated by J. Richards)

Basses of the chorus use overtone singing and tenors and basses chant 'Aum'

7. Jesus

Semi-chorus: The sixth point of the star is Jesus. The Christ Spirit came to earth in the form of Jesus, a Jew, to give us a greater understanding of the Law of God, of neighbourly love and immortality. Through His death, He could save us from our sins.

Mezzo-soprano, Tenor and Baritone: (Setting of 'Kyrie' by Guillaume Dufay)

Soprano: After the lapse of time the Israelites deteriorated and became subject to the Romans and the Greeks. Then the brilliant Star of Jesus rose from the horizon upon the Israelites, brightening the world, until all sects and creeds and nations were taught the beauty of unity. There cannot be any better proof than this that Jesus was the Word of God.
'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p42

Chorus: Jesus announced His commandments:

Baritone: The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.
Mark 12:29-31

Chorus: Jesus said of love:

Mezzo-soprano & Tenor: You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
Matthew 5:43-45

Chorus: Christ, the Son of God, says of eternal life:

Bass: Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.
John 5:24-25

8. Muhammad

Chorus: The seventh point of the star is Muhammad, founder of Islam.

Tenor: Muhammad recognised the sublime grandeur of Christ and the greatness of Moses and the prophets.
'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, pp48-49

Chorus: Muhammad reaffirmed the Laws revealed by Moses and summarised by Jesus:

Bass: If ye love God, then follow me: God will love you and forgive your sins, for God is forgiving, merciful.
The Qur'an, Sura 3:29 (translated by Rodwell)

Mezzo-soprano: Worship God, and join not aught with Him in worship. Be good to parents, and to kindred, and to orphans, and to the poor, and to a neighbour, whether kinsman or new-comer, and to a fellow traveller, and to the wayfarer, and to the slaves whom your right hands hold...
The Qur'an, Sura 4:40 (translated by Rodwell)

Chorus: So we are taught to love our Lord God and fellow humans.

Soprano: Desire not the world, and God will love you; and desire not what men have, and they will love you.
Gail - Six Lessons on Islam, p. 21

Chorus: On the subject of death, Muhammad declares:

Bass: No one can die except by God's permission, according to the Book that fixeth the term of life. He who desireth the recompense of this world, we will give him thereof; And he who desireth the recompense of the next life, we will give him thereof! And we will certainly reward the thankful.
The Qur'an, Sura 3:139 (translated by Rodwell)

Part 3: A New Universal Cycle – the Cycle of Fulfilment

9. Interlude

Chorus: In the name of God, the One, the Incomparable, the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.
Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p1

10. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh

Chorus: The last two points of the Star represent The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, forerunner and founder of the Bahá'í Faith.

Mezzo-soprano: His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad made a covenant concerning His Holiness the Báb and The Báb was the One promised by Muhammad, for Muhammad gave the tidings of His coming.
'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 358

Soprano: Indeed God is but one God, and far be it from His glory that there should be aught else besides Him. All those who shall attain unto Him on the Day of Resurrection are but His servants, and God is, of a truth, a sufficient Protector.
Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p61 (translated by Habib Taherzadeh)

Chorus: The path to guidance is one of love and compassion, not of force and coercion. This hath been God's method in the past, and shall continue to be in the future!
Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p77 (translated by Habib Taherzadeh)

Tenor & Bass: Bear thou witness that verily He is I, Myself, the Sovereign, the Omnipotent. He is the One Who ordaineth life and death and unto Him shall all return. Indeed there is none other God but Him and all men bow down in adoration before Him.
Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p9 (translated by Habib Taherzadeh)

Chorus & Soloists: The Báb was indeed the One promised but, more importantly, He foretold the coming of a far higher station, Bahá'u'lláh, - 'He whom God shall make manifest'. Bahá'u'lláh, confirmer of past Holy Teachings; Writer of new truths that will lead humanity to peace, has shown the unity of all religion:

Baritone: If thou be of the inmates of this city within the ocean of divine unity, thou wilt view all the Prophets and Messengers of God as one soul and one body, as one light and one spirit, in such wise that the first among them would be last and the last would be first.
Bahá'u'lláh, Gems of Divine Mysteries, p33 (translated by Javáhiru'l-Asrár)

Tenor: For they have all arisen to proclaim His Cause and have established the laws of divine wisdom.
Bahá'u'lláh, Gems of Divine Mysteries, p33 (translated by Javáhiru'l-Asrár)

Tenor & Baritone: They are, one and all, the Manifestations of His Self, the Repositories of His might, the Treasuries of His Revelation, the Dawning-Places of His splendour and the Daysprings of His light.
Bahá'u'lláh, Gems of Divine Mysteries, p33 (translated by Javáhiru'l-Asrár)

Soprano, Mezzo-soprano and Female Chorus: Through them are manifested the signs of sanctity in the realities of all things and the tokens of oneness in the essences of all beings. And since in their inmost Beings they are the same Luminaries and the self-same Mysteries, thou shouldst view their outward conditions in the same light, that thou mayest recognise them all as one Being, nay, find them united in their words, speech, and utterance.
Bahá'u'lláh, Gems of Divine Mysteries, pp33-34 (translated by Javáhiru'l-Asrár)

11. 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Chorus: Bahá'u'lláh's son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, re-enforced His Father's many teachings. He also had a clear vision for the future of mankind.

Bass: Praise be to God! the mediaeval ages of darkness have passed away and this century of radiance has dawned, -- this century wherein the reality of things is becoming evident, -- wherein science is penetrating the mysteries of the universe, the oneness of the world of humanity is being established and service to mankind is the paramount motive of all existence.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p279

Tenor: Shall we remain steeped in our fanaticisms and cling to our prejudices? Is it fitting that we should still be bound and restricted by ancient fables and superstitions of the past; be handicapped by superannuated beliefs and the ignorances of dark ages, waging religious wars, fighting and shedding blood, shunning and anathematising each other? Is this becoming?

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p279

Soprano and Mezzo-soprano: Is it not better for us to be loving and considerate toward each other? Is it not preferable to enjoy fellowship and unity; join in anthems of praise to the most high God and extol all His prophets in the spirit of acceptance and true vision? Then indeed this world will become a paradise and the promised Day of God will dawn.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p280

Chorus: 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms His vision of the future; God's promise:

Mezzo-soprano, Tenor and Baritone: The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p19-20

12. Postlude

Chorus and Soloists: Praise be to God, the Eternal that perisheth not, the Everlasting that declineth not, the Self-Subsisting that altereth not. He it is Who is transcendent in His sovereignty, Who is manifest through His signs, and is hidden through His mysteries.

Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p1

Appendix 4: Orchestration for 'Nine-Pointed Star'

2 Flutes, 2nd doubling Piccolo
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in B \flat , 1st doubling Clarinet in E \flat
Bass Clarinet in B \flat
Alto Saxophone in E \flat , doubling Tenor in B \flat
2 Bassoons, 2nd doubling contra-bassoon

4 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in B \flat
2 Tenor Trombones, 2nd doubling Bass Trombone
Tuba

Timpani (suggested sizes: 32", 28", 25" & 23")
3 Percussion players, see below*
Celesta

Harp

Soprano solo
Mezzo-soprano solo
Tenor solo
Baritone solo
Bass solo

SATB Chorus

Strings (NB, Basses require low C)

* List of percussion instruments

1. Marimba, Crotales, Pair of Bongos, Set of 5 Tom-toms, Tubular Bells, Vibraphone, Three Gongs ('semi-pitched'), Wood Block.
2. High Djembe, Glockenspiel, Tambourine, Pair of Congas, Cabasa, Bass Drum, Side Drum.
3. Low Djembe, Maracas, Large Suspended Cymbal, Tam-tam, Finger Cymbals (unpitched), Pair of Timbales, Triangle.

Appendix 5 - Modes Used in Each Movement

PART 1

Appendix 5a - Modes used for Movement 1 - 'Prelude'

Mixolydian Mode Also on B Dorian Mode

The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is labeled 'Mixolydian Mode' and contains a sequence of notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, A, G, F, E, D, C. The second staff is labeled 'Dorian Mode' and contains a sequence of notes: C, D, Eb, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C. The text 'Also on B' is placed between the two staves.

Appendix 5b - Modes used for Movement 2 - 'Krishna'

Dorian Mode Also on A Also on E (without notes in brackets)

The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is labeled 'Dorian Mode' and contains a sequence of notes: C, D, Eb, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C. The second staff is labeled 'Also on A' and contains a sequence of notes: C, D, Eb, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C. The notes F and G in the second staff are enclosed in brackets. To the right of the second staff, the text 'Also on E (without notes in brackets)' is written.

Same as Ukrainian Dorian Mode (see Appendix 5c)

The image shows a single musical staff with a sequence of notes: C, D, Eb, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C. This is identical to the Dorian Mode shown in the previous block.

Appendix 5c - Modes used for Movement 3 - 'Abraham and Moses'

Ahavah Rabbah Mode Also on E, F, G and B Ukrainian Dorian Mode

The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is labeled 'Ahavah Rabbah Mode' and contains a sequence of notes: C, D, Eb, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C. The second staff is labeled 'Ukrainian Dorian Mode' and contains a sequence of notes: C, D, Eb, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C. The text 'Also on E, F, G and B' is placed between the two staves.

Appendix 5d - Modes used for Movement 4 - 'Zoroaster'

Persian Mode (plus an extra 5th) Also on E, A, B flat and C sharp

The image shows a single musical staff with a sequence of notes: C, D, Eb, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C. This is identical to the Dorian Mode shown in the previous blocks.

PART 2

Appendix 5e - Modes used for Movement 5 - 'Interlude'

(As in Movement 1) Also on E

The image shows a single musical staff with a sequence of notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, A, G, F, E, D, C. This is identical to the Mixolydian Mode shown in Appendix 5a.

Appendix 5f - Modes used for Movement 6 - 'The Buddha'

Rāgas are taken from the Southern Indian Melakarta collection

Rāga Kharaharapriya (Also Dorian mode, as in Movement 2) Rāga Natabhairavi

The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is labeled 'Rāga Kharaharapriya (Also Dorian mode, as in Movement 2)' and contains a sequence of notes: C, D, Eb, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C. The second staff is labeled 'Rāga Natabhairavi' and contains a sequence of notes: C, D, Eb, E, F, G, A, B, A, G, F, E, D, C.

Rāga Bhavapriya Also on C Rāga Natakilapriya

Appendix 5g - Modes used for Movement 7 - 'Jesus'

The initial sections of this movement are based on scales used in early music at the time of Guillaume Dufay. Indeed, a Kyrie by Dufay is quoted and, before this, the music is a pastiche of the same period. The scale used after the Dufay quote is as follows:

Phrygian Mode with an extra C natural Also on G sharp, A, and E

Appendix 5h - Modes used for Movement 8 - 'Muhammad'

Maqam Hijaz Also on E Maqam Husayni 'Ushayan

Maqam Hijaz, modified

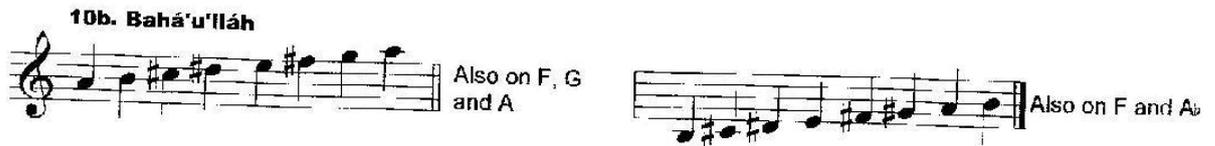
PART 3

Appendix 5i - Modes used for Movement 9 - 'Interlude'

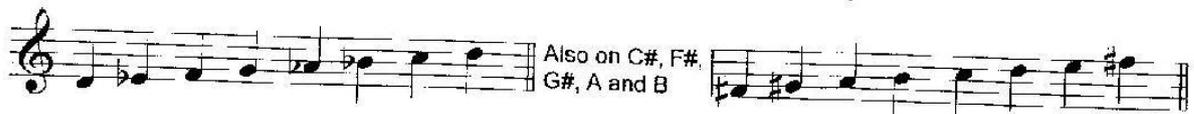
(As in Movement 1) Also on E

Appendix 5j - Modes used for Movement 10 - 'The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh'

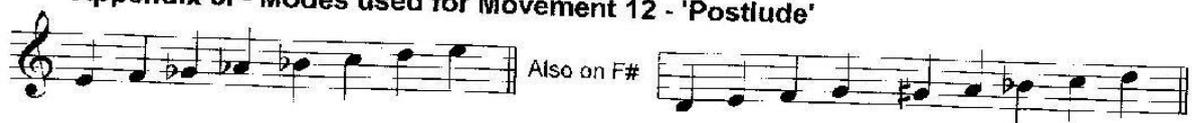
10a. The Báb Also on E



Appendix 5k - Modes used for Movement 11 - 'Abdu'l-Bahá'



Appendix 5l - Modes used for Movement 12 - 'Postlude'



Appendix 6: Some Relevant Scores and Descriptions of Music by the Author

A selection of my most significant scores follows below. Links to recordings are shown where a recording is available; otherwise scores can be [viewed online](#). This website lists a complete set of my scores to date, including songs and choral music that set both Christian and Bahá'í texts. The purely instrumental music listed below is a reflection of texts to which they refer.

1998, revised 2009

1. *Cantata – 'Divine Word'*, for SATB choir baritone solo and string orchestra.

The first two movements are settings of texts by the composer, entitled *Divine Soul* and *Divine Manifestations* and asks questions about the nature of the soul and body of Spiritual Messengers (Manifestations), such as Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, etc. The last two movements set texts by Bahá'u'lláh and are entitled *Divine Message* and *Divine Guidance*. *Divine Message*, set for the baritone solo, suggests that mankind will never truly understand the nature of these Divine Manifestations, and *Divine Guidance* stresses that we should quench all error so that we might stand a chance of reaching God.

2001

2. *What is Earth?* for mixed choir

With words mainly by the composer, this is a kind of dramatic representation of an imaginary lecture about the earth in which bored students ask awkward questions. Many aspects of the word 'earth' are revealed, finalising in a quotation from Bahá'í Writings about the earth being one country.

2005

3. *Messengers of Light*, for large orchestra and contralto solo

This mainly orchestral piece was asked for as an assignment to my Masters Degree. The 'Messengers' in the title relates to the Founders of the major religious Faiths Who have brought the Word of God to mankind. The music expresses a range of mankind's reaction to the messages They brought, ranging from fear and rejection at the start of the piece, leading to a complete acceptance by the end. The Message itself is represented in the fourth of the five movements by setting the ninth of the Persian *Hidden Words* by Bahá'u'lláh. The words are to be sung by a solo contralto. It is my intention that listeners from a wide range of backgrounds and Faiths will be able to derive meaningful interpretations of this piece.

2007/8

4. *Three Human Attributes*, for piano duet.

This piano duet, completed in January 2008, is in three movements, each movement focussing in turn on the human attributes of body, mind and spirit. The respective titles are *Physical Condition*, *Mind and Human Intellect* and *Rational Soul*, titles that reflect words by 'Abdu'l-Bahá about this subject.

A recording of this piece, as part of a concert given in Skopje, Macedonia by members of *Ensemble Contempora* in 2015, is [available here](#).

2008

5. *Four Kinds of Love*, for piano solo.

'Four Kinds of Love' is an extended work in four movements, lasting around 20 minutes. The four movements are meant to be a kind of meditation on a philosophy of the following: the love of mankind for mankind; the love of mankind for God; the love of God for mankind and the love of God for the identity of God, (God is Love). The word 'God' is meant to engulf all possible meanings from the Creator to the Universal Divine, or whatever an individual thinks God is. The philosophy is taken from Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

A recording of this piece, as part of a concert given in Pretoria, South Africa in 2017, performed by Benjamin Fourie, is [available here](#).

6. *Universal Love*, for violin and piano.

This piece is an arrangement of the third movement of *Four Kinds of Love: The Love of Man for God*. It is a very simple expression of Love which I see as being Divine in origin. There is one theme which is varied in various ways throughout the five minute duration.

A recording of this piece, as part of a concert given in Queenstown, New Zealand in 2011, performed by Cathy Irons (violin) can be [heard here](#) (click 'all songs' and scroll down).

2009

7. *Reformation*, for piano solo.

The title of this ten minute solo refers to the change processes that involve the world of humanity. Focussing on society's need for change, or reformation, the title page carries a quote from 'Abdu'l-Bahá stating what is already in the process of change and what needs to be changed so as to make the world a safer and better place in which to live.

The piece is very dramatic as it also reflects the quotation about the Most Great Peace in Chapter 2 of this booklet, the section about 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the oratorio's eleventh movement.

A recording of this piece, as part of a concert given in Port Elizabeth, South Africa in 2018, performed by Dominic Daula, can be heard at this [YouTube website](#).

8. *Canticle – We Will All Sing Hallelujahs*, for soprano and baritone solos, mixed choir, piano, two percussionists and string orchestra.

This is a setting of a poem called *Abhá!* by Keith Bayliss. The poem describes the effect of spreading Holy Scriptures to all people, how the world and the 'brotherhood of man' would be a much safer and happier place to be. Although specifically addressing this from a Bahá'í point of view, the message is equally applicable to all religious beliefs and principals. The title of the original poem, *Abhá!*, is the Arabic for 'The Most Glorious'. The poem is in three verses, each ending with a repetitive statement, '...We will all sing hallelujahs, The Truth! The One! Abhá!' and these lines are treated as a refrain in this setting.

2011

9. *Cantata – Healing the Planet*, for mixed choir, soprano, tenor and bass soloists, trumpet, organ and percussion.

My purpose in writing this Cantata was to look at the questions about the environment and climate change from a spiritual perspective. I wrote many of the words in addition to quoting from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His grandson, Shoghi Effendi. The four movements are *State of Crisis*, *Change of Heart*, *Spiritual Revelation* and *Vision of the Future*.

A version with orchestra instead of organ was made in 2018.

2014

10. String Quartet No. 2 – 'Five Aspects of Spirit', for standard String Quartet (two violins, viola and cello).

The five movements relate to each of the five aspects of Spirit, namely vegetable, animal, human, Spirit of Faith and the Holy Spirit. These are based on the descriptions of these various aspects given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Some Answered Questions' and 'Bahá'í World Faith'.

A recording of this piece, as part of a concert given in Skopje, Macedonia by members of *Ensemble Contempora* in 2015, is [available here](#).

2017

11. *These Fruitless Strifes*, for large orchestra.

This is a major work for large orchestra, lasting nearly 28 minutes. It arose out of the increase in terrorism during this century, in particular, since the attack in Manhattan, New York on 11 September 2001. The work therefore faces terrorism head on and shows how terrifying it is. It can be seen as a formal protest against such violent acts.

It spans five movements entitled *The Conflict, Buried Alive – Under the Rubble, Elegy for the Departed, Lament for the Mourners* and *Transformation – Spirit of Hope*. This is a very dramatic work which, although it focuses on one major devastating historical event, it can apply to any similar situation, including outright war. The work is prefaced by the following quote by 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations -- that all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that all bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease and differences of race be annulled -- and so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away and the most great peace shall come. Is not this that which Christ foretold? "Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind".