

Hands of the Cause of God (in Arabic: *Ayádí Amru'lláh*)

Administrative institution—established by Bahá'u'lláh and consisting of individuals named by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi—charged with the functions of protecting and propagating the Bahá'í Faith; the generative body for one of two parallel lines of responsibility in Bahá'í administration.

ARTICLE OUTLINE:

- **Origins**
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- **Institutional Development and Appointment of a Third Contingent**
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local, regional, national, and international levels. The electoral process begins at the grass roots and culminates in the election of the [Universal House of Justice](#), the supreme council of the Bahá'í Administrative Order (See: [Administration, Bahá'í. Institutions of Bahá'í Administration](#). The Universal House of Justice), which has its seat at the [Bahá'í World Center](#) in Haifa, Israel. The members of the elected institutions function corporately for a prescribed term of office.

The second line of responsibility, of which the institution of the Hands of the Cause of God is the generative body, consists of institutions established by [Shoghi Effendi](#) and the Universal House of Justice that function at the international, continental, regional, and local levels (See:

[Administration, Bahá'í. Institutions of Bahá'í Administration](#). The Institution of the Counselors). The members, who are appointed, perform their duties in collaboration with the elected councils under the guidance of the Head of the Bahá'í Faith (since 1963, the Universal House of Justice). Although these appointed institutions have corporate functions at the international and, to a limited extent, the continental levels, most of the work at the grass roots is accomplished through individual activity by the

ORIGINS

The institutional framework of [Bahá'í administration](#) consists of two parallel lines of responsibility and authority: elected councils, which have legislative, executive, and judicial authority; and appointed individuals with specific responsibilities for protecting, advising, and influencing the community in its growth and development (See: [Administration, Bahá'í. Foundations of Bahá'í Administration](#). The "Rulers" and the "Learned" in the Bahá'í Administrative Order). [Bahá'u'lláh](#) refers to both lines of responsibility and authority in several of His most important writings.

Governing authority in the Bahá'í Faith is vested in institutions freely elected by adult Bahá'ís at the



Hands of the Cause of God and members of the first Universal House of Justice, elected in 1963, at Bahjí. National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

members.


Bahá'u'lláh first mentioned the "Hands of the Cause" (the term "Hands of the Cause of God" is frequently shortened to "Hands of the Cause" or "Hands") in 1887. In a letter addressed to Ibn Asdaq, whom He later appointed a Hand of the Cause, Bahá'u'lláh asks God "to confirm the chosen ones, that is those souls who are Hands of the Cause, who are adorned with the robe of teaching, and have arisen to serve the Cause."¹ In other writings Bahá'u'lláh refers to "hands" to be raised up to assist Him in the work of forwarding His cause² and also mentions their role in unifying and protecting the Bahá'í Faith.³ His Tablet of the World (*Lawh-i-Dunyá* ) , revealed in 1891, includes a prayer or invocation for the Hands of the Cause.⁴ In the last few years of His life, He named as Hands of the Cause four distinguished individuals, all living in Iran.

TABLE 1: HANDS OF THE CAUSE OF GOD APPOINTED BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

NAME	MALE/ FEMALE	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH	PLACE OF DEATH
Mullá 'Alí-Akbar Shahmírzadí, known as Hájí Ákhúnd	M	1258/ 1842–43	Shahmírzád, near Semnán [Simnán], Iran	21 Safar 1328/ 4 Mar. 1910	Tehran, Iran
Áqá Mírzá Muhammad-Taquí Abharí, also known by the designation Ibn Abhar [Ibn-i-Abhar]	M	1270/1853– 54	Abhar, between Qazvin and Zanjan, Iran	27 Rabí` II 1337/30 Jan. 1919	Tehran, Iran
Mírzá Muhammad-Hasan Tálaqání, also known by the title Adíbu'l-'Ulamá and the designation Adíb	M	Shavvál 1264/Aug.– Sept. 1848	Karkabúd, near Tálaqán, Iran	6 Dhi'l- Qa` dih 1337/3 Aug. 1919	Tehran, Iran
Áqá Mírzá 'Alí-Muhammad, also known by the designation Ibn Asdaq [Ibn-i-Asdaq]	M	1267/1850– 51	Mashhad, Iran	13 Farvardín 1307/2 Apr. 1928	Tehran, Iran

Note: Information for this table, including the presentation of personal names, was provided by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (memorandum to the Universal House of Justice, "Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project: Biographic Information about the Hands of the Cause of God," 25 July 2005).

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son and appointed successor, guided the work of the four Hands, who continued to function throughout most of the period during in which He was Head of the Faith (1892–1921). They played a prominent role in protecting the Bahá'í Faith from attacks by supporters of Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's younger half-brother, who challenged 'Abdu'l-Bahá's authority as Bahá'u'lláh's chosen successor (See: 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Life with Bahá'u'lláh, 1844-92. Exile and Imprisonment, 1853-92). The Hands of the Cause also worked to bring elected Bahá'í institutions into existence. In 1897 'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed them to form a consultative body, consisting of themselves and other outstanding teachers, in [Tehran](#), where they all resided at that time. Their efforts led to the formation in 1899 of the first elected Bahá'í council in the world, of which they were members (See: [Tehran. The Bahá'í Period to 1921](#)).

'Abdu'l-Bahá honored several notable Iranian Bahá'ís who died before the end of the nineteenth century by conferring the title *Hand of the Cause* on them posthumously. He appointed no living Hands of the Cause. The four Hands appointed by Bahá'u'lláh and the four known to have been appointed posthumously by 'Abdu'l-Bahá do not necessarily constitute a complete list of the Hands of the Cause from this early period. Shoghi Effendi clarifies that "The Hands of the Cause, of Bahá'u'lláh's days, will


be known . . . when the history of the Cause in Persia and the Near East is written and available."⁵ The Research Department of the Universal House of Justice has observed that those conditions have not yet been met.⁶

TABLE 2: OUTSTANDING BELIEVERS REFERRED TO POSTHUMOUSLY AS HANDS OF THE CAUSE BY 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*

NAME	MALE/ FEMALE	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH	PLACE OF DEATH
Áqá Muhammad Qá'íní, also known by the designation Nabíl Akbar [Nabíl-i-Akbar]	M	23 Ramadán 1244/29 March 1829	Naw-First, near Bírjand [Bírjand], Iran	9 Dhi'l- Hijjih 1309/5 July 1892	Bukhara, Russian Turkistan, now in Uzbekistan
Mírzá 'Alí-Muhammad, also known by the nom de plume and designation Varqá	M	unknown	Yazd, Iran	17 Dhi'l- Qa` dih 1313/1 May 1896	Tehran, Iran
Shaykh Muhammad-Ridá Yazdí [Note: No clear evidence has so far been found to resolve the identity of the man by this name mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.]					
Mullá Sádiq Muqaddas Khurásání, also known by the designation Ismu'lláhu'l-Asdaq	M	unknown	Mashhad, Iran	1291/1874– 1875	Hamadan, Iran

**In talks about early Bahá'is given in Haifa in 1915; see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Memorials of the Faithful, trans. Marzieh Gail, 1st softcover ed. (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997) 2.1: 7.*

Note: Information for this table, including the presentation of personal names, was provided by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (memorandum to the Universal House of Justice, "Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project: Biographic Information about the Hands of the Cause of God," 25 July 2005).

Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá appointed no living Hands of the Cause, He nonetheless laid the foundation for the systematic development of the institution. In His [Will and Testament](#) , He confirms the institution of the Hands of the Cause and establishes the institution of the Guardianship (See: Administration, Bahá'í. Foundations of Bahá'í Administration. The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice). He gives the Guardian exclusive responsibility for appointing and directing the Hands of the Cause: "The Hands of the Cause of God must be nominated and appointed by the guardian of the Cause of God. . . . This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction of the guardian of the Cause of God. He must continually urge them to strive and endeavor to the utmost of their ability to diffuse the sweet savors of God, and to guide all the peoples of the world, for it is the light of Divine Guidance that causeth all the universe to be illumined."⁷

'Abdu'l-Bahá defines in considerable detail the duties and functions of the Hands of the Cause and their relationship to the Guardianship. "The obligations of the Hands of the Cause of God," He states, "are to diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men, to promote learning, to improve the character of all men and to be, at all times and under all conditions, sanctified and detached from earthly things. They must manifest the fear of God by their conduct, their manners, their deeds and their words."⁸ He also stresses their protective function. They are to be "ever watchful"—alert to any who might oppose the Guardian or claim authority for themselves.⁹

Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament was released to the Bahá'í community shortly after His passing in November 1921, His grandson Shoghi Effendi, the designated Guardian, did not immediately

initiate any major development of the institution of the Hands of the Cause. During the next three decades, while guiding the expansion of the Bahá'í Faith and the extension of the network of elected Bahá'í councils (Local and National Spiritual Assemblies) throughout the world, Shoghi Effendi continued 'Abdu'l-Bahá's practice of making posthumous appointments. He named ten outstanding individuals Hands of the Cause. Representing the diversity of the Bahá'í membership during the period, they were men and women; Iranian, Egyptian, Iraqi, British, and American; white and black; of Muslim and Christian background. All had made extraordinary contributions to the development of the Bahá'í Faith as a worldwide community (See: [Dunn, Clara, and Dunn, John Henry Hyde](#); [Gregory, Louis George](#); and [Ransom-Kehler, Keith](#)).

TABLE 3: HANDS OF THE CAUSE APPOINTED POSTHUMOUSLY BY SHOGHI EFFENDI

NAME	MALE/ FEMALE	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH	PLACE OF DEATH	APPOINTMENT ANNOUNCED
Hájí Mírzá Abu'l-Hasan Ardikání, known as Hájí Amín	M	c. 1248/ 1832–33	Ardikán, near Yazd, Iran	6 Khurdád 1307/27 May 1928	Tehran, Iran	July 1928
John Henry Hyde Dunn	M	5 Mar. 1855	London, England	17 Feb. 1941	Sydney, Australia	26 Apr. 1952
John Ebenezer Esslemont	M	19 May 1874	Aberdeen, Scotland	22 Nov. 1925	Haifa, Israel	30 Nov. 1925
Louis George Gregory	M	6 June 1874	Charleston, South Carolina, USA	30 July 1951	Eliot, Maine, USA	5 Aug. 1951
Áqá Muhammad-Taquí Isfahání	M	unknown	Sidih, near Isfahan, Iran	13 Dec. 1946	Cairo, Egypt	13 Dec. 1946 or later
Keith Bean Ransom-Kehler	F	14 Feb. 1876	Dayton, Kentucky, USA	23 Oct. 1933	Isfahan, Iran	28 Oct. 1933
Martha Louise Root	F	10 Aug. 1872	Richwood, Ohio, USA	28 Sept. 1939	Honolulu, USA	2 Oct. 1939
Siyyid Mustafá Rúmí	M	1845 or 1849	unknown	13 Mar. 1942	Daidanaw, Burma, now Myanmar	14 July 1945
Abdu'l Jalil Saad ['Abdu'l-Jalíl Bik Sa'd]	M	unknown	unknown	25 June 1942	Cairo, Egypt	25 June 1942
Roy Cochran Wilhelm	M	17 Sept. 1875	Zanesville, Ohio, USA	20 Dec. 1951	North Lovell, Maine, USA	23 Dec. 1951

Note: Information for this table, including the presentation of some personal names, comes from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, memorandum to the Universal House of Justice, "Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project: Biographic Information about the Hands of the Cause of God," 25 July 2005; The Ministry of the Custodians, 1957–1963: An Account of the Stewardship of the Hands of the Cause (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992, 1997 printing with corr.); and the National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

Additional individuals may have been mentioned by Shoghi Effendi as Hands of the Cause before he appointed the first contingent in 1951, but their appointment was not announced publicly. Thorough archival research—some of it in Iran, where current conditions make such work impossible—will be necessary before their status can be confirmed. The Universal House of Justice has instructed that for now additional names should not be included in the list of Hands of the Cause (Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, memorandum to the Universal

APPOINTMENT OF THE FIRST AND SECOND CONTINGENTS

On 24 December 1951 Shoghi Effendi cabled the Bahá'ís of the world, announcing that he had taken the "long inevitably deferred step in conformity with provisions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Testament" of naming twelve individuals Hands of the Cause, "equally allocated Holy Land [i.e., the Bahá'í World Center], Asiatic, American, European continents"¹⁰.

**TABLE 4: HANDS OF THE CAUSE APPOINTED BY SHOGHI EFFENDI
FIRST CONTINGENT, ANNOUNCED 24 DEC. 1951**

NAME	MALE/ FEMALE	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE WHEN APPOINTED	DATE OF DEATH	PLACE OF DEATH
Dorothy Beecher Baker	F	21 Dec. 1898	Newark, New Jersey, USA	United States	10 Jan. 1954	Mediterranean Sea (near the island of Elba)+
Amelia Engelder Collins	F	7 June 1873	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA	Bahá'í World Center	1 Jan. 1962	Haifa, Israel
Ali Akbar Furutan [<i>'Alí-Akbar Furútan</i>]	M	9 Urdíbihisht 1284/29 Apr. 1905	Sabzevār [<i>Sabzivár</i>], Iran	Iran	26 Nov. 2003	Haifa, Israel
Ugo Giachery	M	13 May 1896	Palermo, Italy	Italy	5 July 1989	Apia, Western Samoa
Hermann Grossmann	M	16 Feb. 1899	Rosario, Santa Fe Province, Argentina	Germany	7 July 1968	Neckargemünd, Germany
Horace Hotchkiss Holley	M	7 Apr. 1887	Torrington, Connecticut, USA	United States	12 July 1960	Haifa, Israel
Leroy C. Ioas	M	15 Feb. 1896	Wilmington, Illinois, USA	United States	22 July 1965	Haifa, Israel
William Sutherland Maxwell	M	14 Nov. 1874	Montreal, Canada	Canada	25 Mar. 1952	Montreal, Canada
Tarazullah Samandari [<i>Tarázu'lláh Samandari</i>]	M	16 Ramadán 1292/17 Oct. 1875	Qazvin, Iran	Iran	2 Sept. 1968	Haifa, Israel
George Townshend	M	14 June 1876	Dublin, Ireland	Ireland	25 Mar. 1957	Dublin, Ireland
Valíyu'lláh Varqá	M	1263 sh. */1884– 85	Tabriz, Iran	Iran	12 Nov. 1955	Tübingen, Germany
Charles Mason Remey, <i>expelled as a Covenant- breaker 26 July 1960</i>	M	15 May 1874	Burlington, Iowa, USA	Bahá'í World Center	4 Feb. 1974	Florence, Italy

+as a result of an air crash

*shamsí (the Iranian solar calendar)

Note: Information for this table, including the presentation of some personal names, comes from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, memorandum to the Universal House of Justice, "Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project: Biographic Information about the Hands of the Cause of God," 25 July 2005; and The Ministry of the Custodians, 1957–1963: An Account of the Stewardship of the Hands of the Cause (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992, 1997 printing with corr.).

A few months later, on 29 February 1952, Shoghi Effendi appointed a second contingent of seven, bringing the total to nineteen. In this contingent he included residents of Africa and Australia (See: [Dunn, Clara, and Dunn, John Henry Hyde](#)), further extending the institution's geographic range, and added to its diversity of background by choosing two individuals of Jewish descent (See: [Schopflocher, Siegfried](#)).

**TABLE 5: HANDS OF THE CAUSE APPOINTED BY SHOGHI EFFENDI
SECOND CONTINGENT, ANNOUNCED 29 FEB. 1952**

NAME	MALE/ FEMALE	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE WHEN APPOINTED	DATE OF DEATH	PLACE OF DEATH
Shuallah Alai [Shu'á'u'lláh 'Alá'í]	M	28 Ábán 1268/19 Nov. 1889	Tehran, Iran	Iran	16 Nov. 1984	Scottsdale, Arizona, USA
Musa Banani [Músá Banání]	M	1265 sh.*/1886–87	Baghdad, Iraq	Uganda	4 Sept. 1971	Kampala, Uganda
Clara Dunn	F	12 May 1869	London, England	Australia	18 Nov. 1960	Sydney, Australia
Zikrullah Khadem [Dhikru'lláh Khádim]	M	1283 sh.*/1904–05	Tehran, Iran	Iran	13 Nov. 1986	Chicago, USA
Adelbert Mühlischlegel	M	16 June 1897	Berlin, Germany	Germany	29 July 1980	Athens, Greece
Siegfried Schopflocher	M	26 Sept. 1877	Fürth, Bavaria, Germany	Canada	27 July 1953	Montreal, Canada
Corinne Knight True	F	1 Nov. 1861	Oldham County, Kentucky, USA	United States	3 Apr. 1961	Wilmette, Illinois, USA

*shamsí (the Iranian solar calendar)

Note: Information for this table, including the presentation of some personal names, comes from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, memorandum to the Universal House of Justice, "Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project: Biographic Information about the Hands of the Cause of God," 25 July 2005; The Ministry of the Custodians, 1957–1963: An Account of the Stewardship of the Hands of the Cause (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992, 1997 printing with corr.); the Khadem family; Encyclopedia Project research files; and the National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

Shoghi Effendi maintained the number of Hands at nineteen for the next five years, making single appointments to replace each of the five who had died.

TABLE 6: HANDS OF THE CAUSE APPOINTED INDIVIDUALLY BY SHOGHI EFFENDI

NAME	MALE/ FEMALE	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	DATE OF APPOINTMENT	RESIDENCE WHEN APPOINTED	DATE OF DEATH	PLACE OF DEATH
Agnes Baldwin Alexander, after the death of George Townshend	F	21 July 1875	Honolulu, Kingdom of Hawai'i	27 Mar. 1957	Japan	1 Jan. 1971	Honolulu, USA
Paul Edmond Haney, after the death of Dorothy Baker	M	20 Aug. 1909	Los Angeles, USA	19 Mar. 1954	United States	3 Dec. 1982	Haifa, Israel
Jalal Khazeh [Jalál Kházi'], after the death of Siegfried Schopflocher	M	21 Ramadán 1314/24 Feb. 1897	Tehran, Iran	6 Dec. 1953	Iran	21 Feb. 1990	Toronto, Canada
Rúhiyyih Rabbani [Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum], née Mary Maxwell, after the death of her father, William Sutherland Maxwell	F	8 Aug. 1910	New York, USA	26 Mar. 1952	Bahá'í World Center	19 Jan. 2000	Haifa, Israel
Ali-Muhammad Varqa ['Alí-Muhammad Varqá], after the death of his father, Valiyu'lláh Varqá	M	11 Muharram 1330/2 Jan. 1912, or 2 Dalv 1290/23 Jan. 1912	Tehran, Iran	14 Nov. 1955	Iran	22 Sept. 2007	Haifa, Israel

Note: Information for this table, including the presentation of some personal names, comes from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, memorandum to the Universal House of Justice, "Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project: Biographic Information about the Hands of the Cause of God," 25 July 2005; The Ministry of the Custodians, 1957–1963: An Account of the Stewardship of the Hands of the Cause (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992, 1997 printing with corr.); and the National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

In effect, because neither 'Abdu'l-Bahá nor Shoghi Effendi established a term of service for the Hands of the Cause, appointment was for the individual's lifetime. Unless they were retired or had independent means, the Hands of the Cause usually continued to work in their professions and to fulfill other Bahá'í administrative responsibilities to which they were elected or appointed. Many were members of National Spiritual Assemblies before the Universal House of Justice announced in November 1964 their ineligibility for election or appointment to administrative roles because of their "exalted rank" and "specific functions" as Hands of the Cause and because of their wish, affirmed by the House of Justice, to "be free to devote their entire energies to the vitally important duties conferred on them."¹¹

Although Shoghi Effendi would later describe the twofold responsibility of the Hands of the Cause as "the propagation and preservation of the unity of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh,"¹² for the first five years he assigned the Hands tasks related only to their role in spreading the Bahá'í Faith. During the Ten Year Plan (1953–63), a comprehensive expansion program of worldwide scope, he allocated to the Hands of

the Cause the role of "standard-bearers" of the plan.¹³ He asked five Hands to serve as his representatives at four intercontinental conferences he convoked in 1953 to launch the new plan, which included among its goals quadrupling the number of National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies, from twelve to forty-eight. As new Assemblies were formed (sixteen new Regional and National Assemblies as of October 1957, with thirteen formed in that year alone), Shoghi Effendi dispatched a Hand of the Cause to represent him at each Assembly formation.

In early 1952, when he announced the appointment of the second contingent of Hands, Shoghi Effendi first alluded to the creation of institutions directed by the Hands that would parallel "those revolving around the Universal House of Justice."¹⁴ A year earlier, in January 1951, he had appointed an International Bahá'í Council, initiating the process that would lead to the election of the Universal House of Justice. The Hands of the Cause played a central role in the process, as they had in establishing the first elected council in Tehran half a century earlier. Among the International Bahá'í Council's initial members were three who would soon be appointed Hands, and in 1957 five of its nine members were Hands (See: Bahá'í World Center. Development under Shoghi Effendi).

Shoghi Effendi took another step late in 1952 that further developed the administrative institutions revolving around the Hands of the Cause. To facilitate their work as "chosen instruments for the propagation of the Faith," he called on them to appoint nine-member Auxiliary Boards for the African, American, Asiatic, Australian, and European continents, beginning in April 1954, to serve as their "adjuncts, or deputies," and to work "in conjunction with the various National Spiritual Assemblies functioning on each continent."¹⁵ He also established five Continental Funds to advance the work of the Hands of the Cause and the Auxiliary Boards and named a Hand as Trustee for each Continental Fund.

Over the next three years, the institution of the Hands of the Cause developed in ways that served as models for future functioning. The Auxiliary Board members, reporting to the Hands of the Cause, made systematic visits to Bahá'í communities to encourage the prompt execution of the Ten Year Plan. The individual Hands of the Cause, in turn, advised the National Assemblies in their respective areas and also sent reports to the Hands of the Cause serving at the Bahá'í World Center, who functioned as liaison between them and the Guardian.

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF A THIRD CONTINGENT

On 4 June 1957, advising the Bahá'ís of the world that the institution of the Hands of the Cause was beginning a "new phase in the process of the unfoldment of its sacred mission," Shoghi Effendi enlarged the scope of its responsibilities. He called on the Hands, in addition to assisting in prosecuting the Ten Year Plan, to undertake "in close collaboration" with the National Assemblies "the primary obligation to watch over and insure protection to the Bahá'í world community."¹⁶

Protection within the context of the Bahá'í teachings has as its ultimate purpose preserving the Bahá'í Faith's unity, the integrity of its institutions as ordained by Bahá'u'lláh and further delineated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, and the authenticity of its scripture. Shoghi Effendi's 4 June 1957 letter was a strongly worded summons that appeared to foreshadow a new round of attacks on the Bahá'í Faith from adversaries of the Bahá'í community, both within and without. Shoghi Effendi called for "closer association of the Hands of the five continents" with the National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies in their areas. On such effort, he stated, depended "the spiritual health of the Bahá'í communities, the vitality of the faith of its individual members, the proper functioning of its laboriously erected institutions, the fruition of its worldwide enterprises, the fulfilment of its ultimate destiny."¹⁷

At the beginning of October 1957, Shoghi Effendi announced a further expansion of the institution. "In view of the recent assumption by them of their sacred responsibility as protectors of the Faith," he authorized the Hands of the Cause to appoint a second Auxiliary Board on each continent. This Board

was to be "equal in membership to the existing one, and charged with the specific duty of watching over the security of the Faith, thereby complementing the function of the original Board, whose duty will henceforth be exclusively concerned with assisting the prosecution of the Ten-Year Plan." In this same message he appointed a third contingent of eight Hands of the Cause, bringing the total of living Hands to twenty-seven. Addressing them as the "Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth," he further widened their diversity to include a member of the *Báb's* kindred (who are known by the term *Afnán* [Arabic: Twigs]), an Australian, and a sub-Saharan African.¹⁸ Three of the new Hands resided on the African continent, strengthening the allocation to a region where the Bahá'í Faith was expanding rapidly. Over the years, the Hands' geographic distribution, which had already changed as individuals died or relocated because of altered needs in the continents or at the Bahá'í World Center, or because of health and other personal reasons, would remain comprehensive but flexible.

**TABLE 7: HANDS OF THE CAUSE APPOINTED BY SHOGHI EFFENDI
THIRD CONTINGENT, ANNOUNCED OCT. 1957**

NAME	MALE/ FEMALE	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE WHEN APPOINTED	DATE OF DEATH	PLACE OF DEATH
Hasan Muvaqqar Balyuzi [Hasan Muvaqqar Balyúzi]	M	7 Sept. 1908	Shiraz, Iran	England	12 Feb. 1980	London, England
Abu'l-Qasim Faizi [Abu'l- Qásim Faydí]	M	1906 or 1907	Qum, Iran	Bahrain	19 Nov. 1980	Haifa, Israel
Harold Collis Featherstone	M	5 May 1913	Quorn, South Australia	Australia	29 Sept. 1990	Kathmandu, Nepal
John Ferraby	M	9 Jan. 1914	Southsea, England	England	5 Sept. 1973	Cambridge, England
Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir	M	4 Apr. 1923	Shah 'Abdu'l- 'Azím, near Tehran, Iran	Indonesia	29 Dec. 1979	Quito, Ecuador
Enoch Olinga	M	24 June 1926	Abaango, Uganda	British Cameroon, now Cameroon	16 Sept. 1979	Kampala, Uganda
John Aldham Robarts	M	2 Nov. 1901	Waterloo, Ontario, Canada	Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe	18 June 1991	Rawdon, Quebec, Canada
William Sears	M	8 Mar. 1911	Duluth, Minnesota, USA	South Africa	25 Mar. 1992	Tucson, Arizona, USA

Note: Information for this table, including the presentation of some personal names, comes from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, memorandum to the Universal House of Justice, "Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project: Biographic Information about the Hands of the Cause of God," 25 July 2005; and The Ministry of the Custodians, 1957–1963: An Account of the Stewardship of the Hands of the Cause (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992, 1997 printing with corr.).

Shoghi Effendi also convoked five intercontinental conferences to be held in 1958 to celebrate the

progress made in the plan and to deliberate on ways and means to complete it successfully. Again, he named five Hands of the Cause to act as his "special representatives" at the conferences.¹⁹

Shoghi Effendi's October 1957 letter proved to be his final message to the Bahá'ís of the world. A few weeks later, on 4 November 1957, he passed away suddenly at the age of sixty, having suffered a heart attack while recuperating in London from a bout of influenza. He was interred there on 9 November, with eighteen Hands of the Cause present among the mourners. The Hands of the Cause conferred and decided to hold a meeting of the entire body immediately at the Bahá'í World Center.

SIX-YEAR INTERREGNUM OF THE CHIEF STEWARDS, 1957–63



The Hands of the Cause of God gathered in their first conclave, Bahjí, Acre, 18–25 November 1957. National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

The [Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá](#) specifies that "It is incumbent upon the guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own life-time him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing."²⁰ On the evening of 4 November, on being notified of Shoghi Effendi's death, four members of the International Bahá'í Council took steps to safeguard his papers by sealing his apartment and office in Haifa. On November 15, the five Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, including Rúhiyyih Khánum Rabbani (née Mary Sutherland Maxwell), Shoghi Effendi's widow, entered his apartment to seal his safe and desk. Four days later, nine of the Hands of the Cause inspected the premises to

assure that nothing had been removed and to search for a will. Finding none, they issued a statement: "That the safe and desk have been opened and searched and the nonexistence of a Will and Testament executed by Shoghi Effendi was definitely established."²¹

Meanwhile, twenty-five Hands of the Cause had gathered at the Bahá'í World Center for their first institutional meeting, or conclave, which was held from 18 to 25 November. A twenty-sixth Hand, Clara Dunn, then in her late eighties, traveled to Haifa from Australia but was prevented by age and frail health from participating in the meeting. The twenty-seventh, Corinne True, was unable at the age of ninety-six to make the long trip from her home near Chicago.

The purpose of the conclave was to consider the status of the religion and the sudden, heavy responsibilities that had descended on the Hands of the Cause with no living Guardian to guide them. Still stunned and grief-stricken, many meeting one another for the first time, the Hands gathered in the large upstairs hall of the Mansion at Bahjí, Bahá'u'lláh's home during the final years of His life.

Those present ranged in age from thirty-one to eighty-four. Their experiences as Bahá'ís were equally wide-ranging: one of their number had been in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, several had been Bahá'ís since the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and a few were relatively recent converts to the Faith. The most experienced had been appointed not quite six years earlier, and eight had served for just two months. At the time only two of the Hands of the Cause from Iran were bilingual in English and Persian, the most widely spoken languages among the members, and only one of the Western Hands of the Cause spoke Persian. Thus the body's deliberations, which would have been challenging even without the language barrier, had to be fully translated into both English and Persian.

After just a week, the conclave produced its first statement. On 25 November 1957 the twenty-six Hands of the Cause, with Clara Dunn participating as a signatory, issued a unanimous proclamation confirming that Shoghi Effendi had left no heir and had not appointed another Guardian to succeed him. Having carefully examined 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament and various messages from Shoghi Effendi pertaining to the development of the institutions of the Bahá'í Faith, the Hands of the Cause

constituted a body of nine from among their number, as called for in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, to serve in the Holy Land and to act as Custodians of the Bahá'í Faith. Corinne True added her signature to this proclamation by affidavit on 30 November 1957. All National and Regional Assemblies, on receiving information about this action, pledged their "full support, faith and allegiance" to the Custodians.²² The civil authorities in Israel also gave the Custodians official recognition.

The duties of the Custodians, who functioned without officers and with a quorum of five, included taking care of Bahá'í World Center properties and other assets; corresponding with and advising National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies; acting on behalf of the Bahá'í Faith for its protection; and maintaining close contact with the rest of the Hands, who would henceforth devote their time to the successful completion of the goals of the Ten Year Plan. The Hands of the Cause maintained the number of Custodians, replacing those who died or were unable, for health or personal reasons, to remain at the Bahá'í World Center permanently. Those who served as Custodians, some for limited periods, were: Hasan Balyuzi, Amelia Collins, Abu'l-Qasim Faizi, John Ferraby, Ali Akbar Furutan, Paul Haney, Leroy Ioas, Jalal Khazeh, Adelbert Mühlischlegel, Charles Mason Remey, Horace Holley, William Sears, and Rúhiyyih Khánum. To maintain the quorum of five Custodians at the Bahá'í World Center, the Hands appointed alternates or substitute Custodians. Their numbers included Shuallah Alai, Ugo Giachery, and Ali-Muhammad Varqa, as well as several who also served as permanent Custodians for some time.

A conclave of the Hands of the Cause took place annually in the Holy Land (with the exception of 1962) until April 1963, when the last conclave was held just before the election of the Universal House of Justice, which ended the interregnum. The conclaves from 1957 to 1961 each sent a full and detailed message to the Bahá'ís of the world.

In 1959, only two years after taking up their assigned protective role, the Hands of the Cause faced a serious threat to the unity of the Bahá'í Faith. It came from an unexpected source: Charles Mason Remey, a colleague who had until recently served as a Custodian. A distinguished Bahá'í since the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the architect of several Bahá'í Houses of Worship (See: Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Houses of Worship around the World. Kampala; Houses of Worship around the World. Sydney; and Future Plans), Remey had been among the first Hands of the Cause appointed in 1951. Shoghi Effendi had also appointed him president of the International Bahá'í Council in 1952. Despite being in his mid-eighties, Remey had served as a Custodian from November 1957 through October 1959, when he and Hasan Balyuzi—both unable to continue as permanent members—were replaced. In April 1960, a few months after leaving Haifa, Remey made a sudden claim to be the second Guardian, although he had signed the 25 November 1957 proclamation in which the Hands of the Cause stated that Shoghi Effendi had not appointed a successor. Moreover, Remey was not a "branch," or descendant of Bahá'u'lláh, as specified in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, and could thus not have been named Guardian by Shoghi Effendi.²³ On 28 April 1960 the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land cabled an announcement of Remey's "PREPOSTEROUS CLAIM" and called on Bahá'ís everywhere to repudiate completely "THIS MISGUIDED ACTION."²⁴

Remey's claim was immediately rejected by the International Bahá'í Council; all the Hands of the Cause; all National Spiritual Assemblies except that of France, five of whose members supported Remey; and the vast majority of Bahá'ís around the world. The Custodians dissolved the National Spiritual Assembly of France and called for a new election. In July 1960—having found that Remey's actions were the result of "a persistent and well-thought-out campaign," rather than "the evidence of a great emotional disturbance and unbalance," perhaps temporary, as they had at first thought²⁵—the entire body of the Hands of the Cause expelled Remey from the Bahá'í Faith on the grounds that he had broken Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, which establishes clear guidelines for the succession of authority.

Undeterred by Remey's defection, the Hands of the Cause persevered in carrying out Shoghi Effendi's vision. He had left detailed plans to guide the development of the Bahá'í Faith until the end of the Ten

Year Plan in 1963. At a meeting held in November 1959, the Hands of the Cause decided it would be necessary to elect the Universal House of Justice at the end of the plan. They gave primary consideration to the instructions in Shoghi Effendi's cablegram of 9 January 1951, in which he appointed the International Bahá'í Council as the beginning of a process leading to the election of the Universal House of Justice. The Hands of the Cause initiated the second stage of the process by calling for the Council to be elected by the existing National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies. This first international Bahá'í election was carried out by postal ballot in April 1961.



The Hands of the Cause of God and eight of the nine elected members of the International Bahá'í Council, 1961–63, gathered at Bahjí. National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

In April 1963 the Hands of the Cause achieved the final stage in the evolution of the International Bahá'í Council into the Universal House of Justice: during an international convention held at the Bahá'í World Center, members of fifty-six National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies elected the first Universal House of Justice. In a renunciatory action, the Hands of the Cause removed themselves from consideration for election, asking—as they had done in 1961, when the International Bahá'í Council was elected—that they be left "free . . . to discharge their duties."²⁶ On 21 April 1963 they announced the results of the election in a cabled message disseminated to the Bahá'ís of the world.²⁷

For six years, from 1957 to 1963, the Hands of the Cause of God maintained the unity and integrity of the Bahá'í Faith and led its unprecedented expansion during the Ten Year Plan. The Universal House of Justice paid tribute to them in its first message, addressed to more than six thousand Bahá'ís gathered in London for the first Bahá'í World Congress, 28 April–2 May 1963. Calling the occasion, which marked the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of His mission and celebrated the completion of the Ten Year Plan, "the crowning victory of the lifework of Shoghi Effendi," the Universal House of Justice also paid tribute to the Hands of the Cause: "For they share the victory with their beloved commander, who raised them up and appointed them. They kept the ship on its course and brought it safe to port."²⁸ On 7 June 1963 the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land performed their last action as Custodians when they officially transferred their authority to the Universal House of Justice, stating that "the office of Custodians of the Bahá'í World Faith has thus ceased to exist."²⁹

EXTENDING THE FUNCTIONS OF THE HANDS OF THE CAUSE INTO THE FUTURE

In 1964, with twenty-two remaining Hands of the Cause, five fewer than at the time of Shoghi Effendi's death, the Universal House of Justice inaugurated a nine-year global plan that named as one of its primary goals the "development of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, in consultation with the body of the Hands of the Cause, with a view to the extension into the future of its appointed functions of protection and propagation."³⁰ Following a fourteen-day gathering of the Hands of the Cause at the Bahá'í World Center in November 1964, the House of Justice advised the Bahá'ís of the world that it had found "no way to appoint, or to legislate to make it possible to appoint, Hands of the Cause of God," this being the prerogative of the Guardianship.³¹

The Universal House of Justice further stated that "Responsibility for decisions on matters of general policy affecting the Institution of the Hands of the Cause," which had been carried out formerly by Shoghi Effendi, "now devolves upon the Universal House of Justice as the supreme and central institution of the Faith."³² In line with that responsibility, the Universal House of Justice announced several initial decisions. It refined the continental zones to which the Hands of the Cause were assigned, increased the number of Auxiliary Board members, and freed the Hands of the Cause and

their Auxiliary Board members from service in other appointed or elected positions.³³

A major step in the evolution of the institution of the Hands of the Cause occurred in June 1968. To carry forward the functions of the Hands of the Cause, the Universal House of Justice established eleven Continental Boards of Counselors—for Australasia (Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and the islands of the Pacific), Europe, and three zones each in Africa, the Americas, and Asia—and appointed thirty-six individuals to serve as Counselors (See: Administration, Bahá'í. Institutions of Bahá'í Administration. The Institution of the Counselors). The Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land became the liaison between the Universal House of Justice and the Counselors.

The Universal House of Justice subsequently redefined the continental zones, increased the number of Counselors, and established five-year terms of service. Currently, a total of eighty-one Counselors serve on five Continental Boards: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australasia, and Europe.

In June 1973 the Universal House of Justice announced another major institutional development, the formation at the Bahá'í World Center of the International Teaching Center (See: Administration, Bahá'í. Institutions of Bahá'í Administration. The Institution of the Counselors). This step, taken with the assistance of the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, "brings to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land and provides for its extension into the future," the Universal House of Justice stated, "links the institution of the Boards of Counselors even more intimately with that of the Hands of the Cause of God, and powerfully reinforces the discharge of the rapidly growing responsibilities of the Universal House of Justice."³⁴ A few months later, in October 1973, the Universal House of Justice extended the functions of the institution of the Boards of Counselors at the grassroots level by authorizing Auxiliary Board members to appoint assistants to work with Local Spiritual Assemblies, groups, and individuals.



The Hands of the Cause with Counsellors of the International Teaching Centre, 1973: (front row, left to right) Mr. Ali-Akbar Furutan, Mrs. Florence Mayberry, Madame Ruhíyyih Rabbani, Mr. Abul-Qasim Faizi, (back row, left to right) Mr. Paul Haney, Mr. Aziz Yazdi, Mr. Hooper Dunbar. 1973, Haifa, Israel. © Bahá'í International Community. Bahá'í Media Bank

The operating nucleus of the International Teaching Center at its inception in 1973 included the four Hands of the Cause resident in Haifa at that time: Rúhíyyih Khánum, Abu'l-Qasim Faizi, Ali Akbar Furutan, and Paul Haney. The Universal House of Justice also appointed three Counselor members, a number that would grow over the years to the current total of nine. All Hands of the Cause—a total at that time of seventeen—were members of the International Teaching Center, receiving and sending reports and, when in Haifa, joining its deliberations when they wished. "Through the emergence of this Center," the House of Justice states, "the seal has been set on the accomplishment of the goal . . . of ensuring the extension into the future of the specific functions of protection and propagation conferred upon the Hands of the Cause in the Sacred Text. Through the work of the International Teaching Center, which supervises and coordinates the work of the Boards of Counselors around the world, the love, the guidance, the assistance of the Hands, through the Boards of Counselors, their Auxiliary Board members and their assistants, permeates the entire structure of Bahá'í society."³⁵

WORLDWIDE ACTIVITIES AFTER 1963

Under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, the Hands of the Cause who resided at the Bahá'í World Center fulfilled special duties, as needed, to protect the religion. At the request of the Universal House of Justice, they also continued to arrange for pilgrimages to the Bahá'í World Center until the responsibility could be taken on by the staff of the Universal House of Justice.

The remaining Hands of the Cause, reassigned to the five continents, carried out an array of activities. They consulted with National Spiritual Assemblies; supervised the work of the Auxiliary Boards; visited Bahá'í communities; attended conferences and other gatherings; and represented the Bahá'í Faith in meetings with dignitaries.



Madame Rúhiyyih Rabbani, a Hand of the Cause, and Violette Nakhjavani with a Bahá'í who hosted them at Aumu village, Papua New Guinea, 12 July 1984. © Bahá'í International Community. Bahá'í Media Bank

Especially after 1968, when they were freed from administrative duties by the appointment of the Continental Boards of Counselors, the Hands of the Cause living outside the Holy Land were increasingly able to widen the scope of their activities from the continental to the international level. While they continued to consult with the National Assemblies and the newly formed Boards of Counselors on the continents where they resided, many of the Hands traveled more widely throughout the globe than before. Rahmátu'lláh Muhájir, an Iranian physician who lived and worked in Southeast Asia for many years, visited every region and was on the road almost constantly for two decades until his death in Quito, Ecuador, in 1979. He was closely associated with many plans for large-scale expansion of Bahá'í communities in rural areas of the developing world, where he also encouraged the establishment of schools and health projects. Other Hands of the Cause—including William Sears, an American who resided for many years in Africa; Enoch Olinga of Uganda; Zikrullah Khadem, an Iranian who moved to the United States in 1960 because, of the Hands originally allocated to the Americas, all but the nonagenarian Corinne True had either died or been called to serve at the Bahá'í World Center; Collis Featherstone of Australia, who died while visiting Kathmandu, Nepal; and Ugo Giachery, an Italian, who died in Western

Samoa—journeyed from their home continents to an extraordinary number of locales around the world.

Over the years, no one traveled more extensively than Shoghi Effendi's widow, Rúhiyyih Khánúm. During the interregnum between Shoghi Effendi's death and the election of the Universal House of Justice, her responsibilities as a Custodian occupied much of her time. In 1964, however, she was able to begin traveling systematically, eventually visiting 185 countries and territories, some repeatedly. Among her most extensive journeys were four lengthy trips between 1969 and 1973 through sub-Saharan Africa (known as her Great Safari); a six-month Green Light Expedition through South America, February–August 1975, which she recorded on film and during which she visited indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin and the Andes; eight- and seven-month-long trips through Asia and the Pacific in 1978 and 1984; and four months of travel throughout the former Soviet Union in 1993. In 1996 she spent a month in Brazil, where the Bahá'í community was commemorating its seventy-fifth anniversary. During this visit, she represented the Bahá'í World Center at a special session of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, met with the president of the country at his palace, visited locales in the north and south of the nation, and traveled to the Amazon to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Green Light expedition. In 1997, a little more than two years before her death at the age of eighty-nine, she participated in events in Luxembourg, Spain, and Switzerland.

In their journeys and at the Bahá'í World Center, the Hands of the Cause met innumerable religious leaders, including the Dalai Lama; presidents, prime ministers, and other heads of state; and members of royalty and dignitaries ranging from Prince Philip Mountbatten, the Duke of Edinburgh, to United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar. Ugo Giachery, born into an aristocratic family on the island of Sicily, had a particularly close relationship with His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II, Head of State of Western Samoa, the first reigning monarch to become a Bahá'í. In addition to participating in

official meetings with dignitaries, several of the Hands engaged in sensitive negotiations with governments on behalf of the Bahá'í Faith.

Hands of the Cause continued to represent the Universal House of Justice, as they had Shoghi Effendi, at the formation of new National Spiritual Assemblies in every continent, at international and regional Bahá'í conferences, and at foundation ceremonies for Houses of Worship and dedication ceremonies marking their completion. These activities gradually decreased as the number of Hands of the Cause able to travel was reduced by illness and death.

In 1973 sixteen of the seventeen surviving Hands were able to function actively. The next decade saw the loss of seven Hands of the Cause, including the two youngest, and the following decade another seven. In November 1992 the three surviving Hands—Rúhíyyih Khánum, Ali Akbar Furutan, and Ali-Muhammad Varqa—addressed the Second Bahá'í World Congress in New York City at which some twenty-seven thousand Bahá'ís gathered.



A historical photograph of the Hand of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga with some Fijian Bahá'ís in 1971. © Bahá'í International Community. Bahá'í Media Bank

Many Hands of the Cause participated actively in International Bahá'í Conventions held in Haifa at five-year intervals from 1963 until 1998 (the convention in April 2003 was canceled because of world events affecting travel) and in conferences of the Continental Counselors held after the international conventions and on separate occasions in December 1985–January 1986 and December 1995. In January 2001 a conference attended by nearly one thousand Counselors and Auxiliary Board members from 172 countries commemorated the inauguration of the newly constructed seat of the International Teaching Center (See: Bahá'í World Center. Development under the Universal House of Justice). The two surviving Hands of the Cause—Ali Akbar Furutan and Ali-Muhammad Varqa—were invited to address the conference, which marked the first such worldwide gathering of the members of the institution created to perpetuate their work.

LASTING INFLUENCE

The Hands of the Cause exerted a profound impact on the lives of thousands of Bahá'ís and others who met them or heard them speak throughout the globe and at the Bahá'í World Center. These individuals in turn, by sharing their personal reminiscences, continue to affect others who never had the opportunity to meet the Hands of the Cause.

All the Hands of the Cause were effective communicators, and many were particularly talented as public speakers. Dorothy Baker, for example, a veteran lecturer at American colleges and before diverse audiences in the United States and Latin America, was regarded as one of the best Bahá'í speakers in the United States. Rúhíyyih Khánum, who spoke French and Persian as well as her native English, gave talks in an engagingly direct, extemporaneous style. Ali Akbar Furutan was an eloquent speaker whose mastery of Persian was legendary. Abu'l-Qasim Faizi—another excellent speaker fluent in Persian, Arabic, French, and English—was erudite but humorous, authoritative but humble. William Sears, who had worked professionally in both radio and television, captured the attention of audiences around the world and regularly brought them to both tears and laughter.

In their addresses to Bahá'ís, individual Hands of the Cause often focused on themes with which they were particularly associated. Zikrullah Khadem conveyed a profound love of Shoghi Effendi; John Robarts inspired or rekindled commitment to the power of prayer; Collis Featherstone, punctuating his

talks with humor, quoted from the Bahá'í writings and encouraged his listeners to study them. The Hands of the Cause developed deep personal bonds with individuals and maintained the connection, in many cases, through an extensive personal correspondence with people in all parts of the world.



A gathering of North American Bahá'ís, 14 June 1931, including five individuals whom Shoghi Effendi would later name as Hands of the Cause: Roy Wilhelm (second from left), Martha Root (third from left), Horace Holley (seated, front center), Siegfried Schopflocher (seated on rock), and Louis Gregory (standing, right). Wilhelm, Root, and Gregory were all appointed posthumously. National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

A number of the Hands, including those based in Haifa, also continued to fulfill their responsibilities to promote learning and uplift souls by engaging in research, writing, and media production, often managing to combine these activities with extensive international travel. Those who were already known as accomplished authors before their appointments continued to render distinguished services.

Horace Holley, for example, had been a prolific writer for decades; after becoming a Hand, he went on to publish a collection of essays entitled *Religion for Mankind*,³⁶ a number of study guides to Bahá'í books, and several pamphlets. George Townshend, an Anglo-Irish former cleric and another prolific author, published his last major work, *Christ and Bahá'u'lláh*, in 1957.³⁷ John Ferraby's widely read introductory work, *All Things Made New: A Comprehensive Outline of the Bahá'í Faith*,

appeared in 1958.³⁸ Hermann Grossmann—who had been writing about the Bahá'í Faith since the 1920s—published additional works, including *Was ist die Bahá'í Religion?* (What is the Bahá'í Religion?) and *Der Bahá'í-Glaubige und die Bahá'í Gemeinschaft* (The Bahá'í Believer and the Bahá'í Community).³⁹ He also translated writings by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá into German.

Rúhíyyih Khánúm Rabbani published a popular introductory book called *Prescription for Living* in 1950.⁴⁰ As a Hand of the Cause, she wrote several more books; a humorous play called *A Spiritual Assembly's Growing Pains*;⁴¹ and a volume of poetry about the loss of Shoghi Effendi.⁴² Her seminal biography of Shoghi Effendi, *The Priceless Pearl*, was first published in 1969.⁴³ She also compiled *The Ministry of the Custodians, 1957–1963*, a collection of documents produced by the Hands of the Cause during the interregnum, to which she contributed a short but historically invaluable introduction.⁴⁴ In addition to her film *The Green Light Expedition*, she directed and produced another documentary called *The Pilgrimage*, which introduced viewers to the shrines and holy sites at the Bahá'í World Center.⁴⁵

Hasan Balyuzi, unable to travel after 1963 because of ill health, concentrated on scholarly research and writing, to which he would make major contributions until his death in 1980. His works include major biographies of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá; *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith*; *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh*; and *Muhammad and the Course of Islám*.⁴⁶

Abu'l-Qasim Faizi wrote a variety of articles and books, including a biography of Amelia Collins, one of the Hands of the Cause with whom he worked closely.⁴⁷ Works in English that he translated into Persian include letters written by Shoghi Effendi and Rúhíyyih Khánúm's *The Priceless Pearl*. He also translated works from Persian into English.


Ugo Giachery penned a memoir called *Shoghi Effendi: Recollections*.⁴⁸ Adelbert Mühschlegel wrote poetry in German. Ali Akbar Furutan engaged in scholarly research and wrote articles and books in Persian, some of which have been translated into English and other languages, including *Mothers, Fathers, and Children: A Practical Guide to Parenting* and a personal memoir, *The Story of My Heart*.⁴⁹

William Sears coproduced a television series on the Bahá'í Faith, recorded talks, gave dramatic presentations, and continued to produce a stream of popular books, including *Release the Sun*, a history of the Bábí movement; *Thief in the Night*, which deals with the fulfillment of biblical prophecies; *God Loves Laughter*, a humorous biographical account; and *A Cry from the Heart: The Bahá'ís in Iran*, a

personal response to persecution of the Bahá'ís following the Islamic Revolution in 1978–79.⁵⁰

Despite his advanced age, Tarazullah Samandari, who had met Bahá'u'lláh, not only journeyed widely throughout the Northern Hemisphere from 1953 until his death in 1968, but, because of his expertise as an authority on the handwriting of Bahá'u'lláh and His amanuenses, also assisted the Universal House of Justice with identifying and classifying archival manuscripts and letters. Rahmátu'lláh Muhájir also helped to catalog sacred texts at the Bahá'í World Center. Over a period of five years in the 1970s, Zikrullah Khadem compiled in 137 volumes an international registry of Bahá'í holy places and historic sites associated with the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, including places 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited in England and North America. Jalal Khazeh started a newsletter in Spanish that circulated throughout Latin America. Ali-Muhammad Varqa assisted the Universal House of Justice by compiling accounts of the early history of Bahá'í communities around the world.

After 1995 all three surviving Hands of the Cause resided in Haifa. Thus, although age and health gradually curtailed their travels, they were able to interact with workers at the Bahá'í World Center—a large proportion of whom are youth volunteers from around the world—and with pilgrims and visitors. Rúhiyyih Khánum spoke annually to an average of two thousand pilgrims who visited the House of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (See: Bahá'í World Center.Early Development), where she resided from her marriage to Shoghi Effendi in 1937 until her death in 2000. Literally until the end of his life, Ali Akbar Furutan addressed pilgrims and visitors and, almost every evening, conversed with them informally at the Pilgrim House and the Reception Center near the Shrine of the Báb (See: Bahá'í World Center.Development under the Universal House of Justice); at the conclusion of one such evening, on 26 November 2003, he died suddenly at the age of ninety-eight.

When Ali-Muhammad Varqa became a Hand of the Cause in 1955, he succeeded his father both as a Hand and as the Trustee of *Huqúqu'lláh* (Arabic: the Right of God). An institution established by Bahá'u'lláh in His book of laws, the [Kitáb-i-Aqdas](#)  (Most Holy Book), *Huqúqu'lláh* provides for payment by Bahá'ís, as a private act of conscience, of a percentage of accumulated savings, after the deduction of essential expenses and exempt properties, to a fund at the disposition of the Head of the Faith. The law was binding only on Bahá'ís from the Middle East until 1992, when the Universal House of Justice made it applicable worldwide. Thus, as Trustee of *Huqúqu'lláh*, Dr. Varqa oversaw major institutional developments in the 1990s: the establishment of a central office at the Bahá'í World Center and the creation of an international network of deputies and representatives who receive payments and systematically educate Bahá'ís about the law.

The last living Hand of the Cause, Dr. Varqa, died in Haifa on 22 September 2007. An Iranian by birth, a Sorbonne-educated university professor, a multilingual world citizen, a person of distinguished bearing but abiding personal humility, he demonstrated in his own life the essential nature of the institution of the Hands of the Cause, its evolution into an international institution since its inception in the late nineteenth century, and its lasting influence on the Bahá'í world.

As early as April 1967, characterizing the services of the Hands of the Cause during that year as having "shone with an unflinching light," the Universal House of Justice observed: "These few gallant and dedicated believers, whose place in history is forever assured by virtue of their appointment to their high office, are indeed a precious legacy left to us by our beloved Guardian, and as the years go by



Shown here, left to right, are the three Hands of the Cause still living in 1992: Ali-Muhammad Varqa, Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum, and Ali Akbar Furutan. © Bahá'í International Community. [Bahá'í Media Bank](#)

there is increasingly added to the honor and respect which is their due, by reason of their exalted rank, the love and admiration . . . evoked by their constant services."⁵¹

Author: *Eunice Braun and the Editors*

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Notes:

1. Bahá'u'lláh quoted (translated by the author) in H. M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh: With Some Historical Background* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985) 173.
2. See, for example, Bahá'u'lláh, Súriy-i-Haykal (Súrih of the Temple), *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing, 2006) 31: 26; 34: 28; 41: 32.
3. Bahá'u'lláh quoted in 'Abdu'l-'Alí 'Alá'í, *Mu'assisih Ayádiy-i-Amru'lláh* (Tehran: Mu'assasiy-i-Milliy-i-Matbú'át-i-Amrí, 130/1973–74) 11, 12; the latter reference also appears in Asadu'lláh Fádil Mázandarání, *Amr va khalq*, 4 vols. in 2 (1954–74; Hofheim–Langenhain, Ger.: Bahá'í-Verlag, 1985) 4: 422.
4. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, trans. Habib Taherzadeh, 1st pocket-size ed. (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988, 2005 printing) 7: 83.
5. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 19 Apr. 1947, quoted in Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, "The Hands of the Cause of God," memorandum to the Universal House of Justice, 13 Sept. 1992.
6. Research Department, "The Hands of the Cause of God."
7. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944, 1997 printing) 12–13.
8. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Will and Testament* 13.
9. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Will and Testament* 12.
10. Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950–1957* (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971, 1999 printing) 20.
11. Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age* (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996) 20.9: 45.
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