

Visits of the Hands of the Cause of God to St. Lucia

Some information about the Hands of the Cause of God:

Baha'u'llah named four persons Hands of the Cause.

In 'Memorials of the Faithful' 'Abdu'l-Bahá mentioned four persons as being Hands of the Cause.

Shoghi Effendi named three of the Knights of Baha'u'llah as Hands of the Cause. These three Hands have visited St. Lucia.

Prior to 24 December 1951 Shoghi Effendi named ten persons posthumously as Hands of the Cause.

On 24 December 1951 Shoghi Effendi named the first contingent of twelve persons as living Hands of the Cause.

On 29 February 1952 Shoghi Effendi named the second contingent of seven persons as living Hands of the Cause.

Between 29 February 1952 and 2 October 1957, Shoghi Effendi, named five Hands of the Cause individually replacing those Hands who had passed away. This maintained their number at nineteen.

During October 1957 Shoghi Effendi named the third contingent of eight persons as living Hands of the Cause. This brought the number of living Hands of the Cause up to 27.

50 Hands of the Cause of God have been appointed, one defected.

More information on the Institution of the Hands of the Cause can be found in The Bahá'í World volumes, and the in the book Lights of Fortitude, by Barron Harper.

Visits of the Hands of the Cause of God to St. Lucia

St. Lucia has had the bounty of 8 visits by 7 Hands of the Cause. This amounts to one seventh of the number of the Hands who were faithful.

1. Amat'ul-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum 1910-2000

The first Hand of the Cause to visit St. Lucia was Amat'ul-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum. Violette Nakhjavani accompanied her and they stayed with the Trutza family, on the Pavee Road, from 22 - 25 May 1970.

She was born Mary Sutherland Maxwell in New York in 1910. She was given the name Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum when she married the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, in 1937. Outside the Bahá'í world she was known as Madame Ruhiiyyih Rabbani.

Her mother, May Maxwell, passed away in Buenos Aires in 1940 as a Bahá'í martyr. Her father, William Sutherland Maxwell, was appointed a Hand of the Cause in 1951. When he passed away in 1952, the Guardian appointed her as a Hand of the Cause.

She and Violette came to these islands about ten months after the start of the almost 4 year long "Great African Safari". This was just a part of her 30 years of traveling for the Faith, visiting and encouraging the Bahá'í friends around the world. During these world travels she did all kinds of interviews and was received by many heads of state.

Violette Nakhjavani wrote the following which was published in July 1973 Bahá'í News:

[Ruhiiyyih Khanum] never uses words which offend people or insult other people's beliefs. She brings out points of similarity and encourages everyone. I can never remember in these many years of having the privilege of being present at her meetings, of ever hearing a word of criticism of other religions or their leaders, or a word of argument or dispute. As a result of this attitude, at the end of meetings people are drawn to her and to the Cause of Baha'u'llah, no matter in what spirit they may have come. Often, with deep sincerity, she has praised in her speeches and on television and radio interviews the services of Christian missionaries in Africa, reminding people of the great deal of good they have done in the past and still continue to do.

Rúhíyyih Khanum passed away 19 January 2000 in Haifa, Israel. She is buried in a small garden, which was purchased for her by the Guardian when they got married, just across the street from where they had lived. Her obituary can be found in [The Bahá'í World, 1999-2000](#).

2. Rahmatu'llah Muhajir 1923-1979

The second Hand of the Cause to come to St. Lucia was Rahmatu'llah Muhajir. He was born in Iran in 1923, and was a 4th generation Bahá'í. At age 15 he went with his family pioneering. He later studied medicine, as he knew a medical degree would be an advantage when going pioneering. He graduated with honors in 1952.

Shortly after the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade he and his wife went on pilgrimage and had the great privilege of talking with the Guardian. They left Iran in January 1954 to pioneer in the Mentawai Islands of the Indonesian archipelago. For this they were designated Knights of Baha'u'llah.

He learned the local language and began to teach the Faith to the local elders. By April 1957 the Guardian, mentioning and recognizing the achievements of the Knights of Baha'u'llah around the world, also stated that there were now over eleven hundred adult Bahá'ís in the Mentawai Islands.

In October 1957 a telegram was relayed to Dr. Muhajir stating that he had been, along with seven others, elevated to the rank of Hand of the Cause. In 1958 when the Muhajirs left Siberut Island, to enable him to carry out his duties as a Hand of the Cause, there were four thousand Bahá'ís, 33 local Spiritual Assemblies and twelve Bahá'í schools.

Dr. Muhajir's international Bahá'í activities and worldwide travels, on behalf of the Faith, continued for the next 22 years and he was able to visit St. Lucia in October 1974 and October 1979.

When he traveled through these islands he accomplished very much in a very short time. And the Bahá'ís knew that he enjoyed a good joke. So, one time he was asked if he knew that the Bahá'ís in the islands called him The Lightning Hand? He at once came back with the question, "Do you know what they call me back home in India?" No, came the answer from several people. He said, "They call me The Missing Hand."

On 29 December, shortly after he had left St. Lucia, Dr. Muhajir suffered a fatal heart attack, in Quito, Ecuador. His obituary can be found in The Bahá'í World, volume XVIII.

3. Enoch Olinga 1926-1979

Enoch Olinga, with his wife Elizabeth visited St. Lucia in March 1977. He was born in 1926 in the Teso northeastern part of Uganda. He had served in two different armies, and had trained as an economist. Shoghi Effendi launched the two-year Africa Campaign in 1950. It was in 1951 when he first heard of the Faith and he was working as a translator for the government.

In February 1952, after a meeting for all the Africans interested in the Faith, Mr. Olinga returned and asked questions. The next morning he came back with a letter asking to be accepted into the Faith, and was the third Ugandan to accept the Faith and the first of the Teso tribe. Shortly after that his wife also accepted.

The first Local Spiritual Assembly of the area formed two months later. eighteen months later he responded to the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade call for pioneers to open new territories in Africa. He, the Nakhjavanis, and two other new African Bahá'ís, set out for the British Cameroons. They reached their goal on 15 October, the last day of the Holy Year. He was designated a Knight of Baha'u'llah, a title given the first Bahá'í to settle in countries previously unopened to the Faith.

He stayed in the Cameroons for ten years and was instrumental in establishment of the Faith in West Africa. He also served as the chairman of the new newly elected Regional National Spiritual Assembly of North-West Africa in 1956. Soon after his 1957 Pilgrimage, the Guardian named him 'Abu'l-Futah, the "Father of Victories" for his work in Africa. In October 1957 he was named a Hand of the Cause.

He was present at every conclave of the Hands after the passing of Shoghi Effendi in November 1957. With his endearing quality of laughter he brought welcome relief from the serious drama unfolding at the World Centre between November 1957 and April 1963. He always was asking the friends if they were happy, and wanted them to be truly happy.

After the death of Hand of the Cause Musa Banani, he was able to purchase the Banani-Nakhjavani home in Kampala where he had accepted the Faith. In September 1977 the Faith was banned in Uganda and he was heard to remark, "No! No one can ban the Faith of God..."

The ban on the Faith was not lifted for some months. But with the fall of the government the situation changed and the Universal House of Justice appointed an interim committee with Mr. Olinga as chairman.

On 15 September 1979 unknown gunmen murdered him, his wife and three of their children. His obituary can be found in The Bahá'í World, Vol. XVIII.

4. John Robarts 1901-1991

In February 1980 Hand of the Cause, John Robarts and his wife Audrey, visited the island. He was the fourth one to arrive here.

He was born in Waterloo, Canada in 1901 and passed away in Rawdon in 1991. He grew up within in an Anglican family. His great-grand father was born during a hurricane in Barbados and is buried there.

His disposition endeared him to those who met him and he was never without a job even during the great depression era. He and Audrey were married in 1928 after a three year engagement while each were in various places from each other.

He first heard of the Faith from his aunt Grace Robarts Ober shortly before his marriage. He and Audrey were exposed to it for the next ten years. During this time they wanted to make sure that if they became Bahá'ís they would do it as a team.

At about the time that Grace Ober died, at the 1938 National convention, he and Audrey accepted the Faith. And in so doing, alienated their families. The informality of the Robart's Firesides was also an eloquent teacher of the Faith.

The first National Spiritual Assembly was formed at Ridvan 1948. John was elected chairman, a post he held until 1953 when the family pioneered to Bechuanaland, now Botswana, Africa. As a result of this pioneering, he, Audrey and their son Patrick were named Knights of Baha'u'llah.

In 1954 Hand of the Cause, Musa Banani appointed John as an Auxiliary Board Member, along with 8 others, for the African continent. In the same year the family had the bounty of a nine-day Pilgrimage, and on the first evening met Shoghi Effendi. When asked years later about the Guardian's impression on him, John replied: 'He made an impression on me that seized my heart. I loved him so much...' Being able to take shorthand, John took notes of Shoghi Effendi's words during this pilgrimage.

In 1956 John was elected one of the three African Regional Assemblies. Shortly after they moved to Southern Rhodesia, which is now Zimbabwe. On the morning of 5 October 1957 the Robarts received the following telegram: LOVING CONGRATULATIONS ELEVATION HAND CAUSE GOD. FERVENT PRAYERS DIVINE GUIDANCE ALWAYS. The Robarts thought it was for each other, but another telegram asked John to come to Kampala for the first meeting of the Hands for Africa, 15 October 1957.

During the Conclaves of the Hands he often roomed with Enoch Olinga. John would save up humorous stories just for Enoch, and these stories would also bring welcome relief to the Hands during the long days of consultation.

He was always stressing the power of the Long Obligatory Prayer, the Tablet of Ahmad, the Remover of Difficulties, a teaching prayer and the repetition of the Greatest Name 95 times a day.

As a Hand he did international traveling continually and eventually moved back to Canada. He passed away on 18 June 1991. His obituary can be found in The Bahá'í World, Vol. XX.

5. 'Ali Muhammad Varqa 1912-2007

'Ali Muhammad Varqa was born during 'Abdu'l-Baha's journeys to the West in 1912. His father, Valiyu'llah, was with 'Abdu'l-Baha's entourage. The baby's uncle took a photo and sent it to the father. One of the believers took the photo to 'Abdu'l-Baha who wrote, in Persian, on the two arms of the infant Confirmed Hand and gave the child the name of his martyred grandfather.

The young man took degrees in economics and history at University of Tihiran. He got married in 1935 and the couple had three daughters. In 1950 he earned his Ph.D. from the Sorbonne in Paris and went on to teach at the University of Tabriz. During this time he served on various national and local Bahá'í committees.

His father was appointed Trustee of the Huququ'llah and in 1951. When his father passed away in November 1955 Shoghi Effendi appointed Dr. Varqa to replace his father as Trustee and elevated him to be a Hand of the Cause.

He was able to do a number of important things for the Guardian prior to the Guardian's passing.

He attended the Conclaves of the Hands after Shoghi Effendi's passing. In the summer months, in Haifa, he would act as a substitute to relieve the Hands resident in the Holy Land for other duties.

He also represented the World Centre at inaugural elections of National Spiritual Assemblies prior to the first Election of the Universal House of Justice during Ridvan 1963, 120 B.E.

After that he attended many inaugural National Spiritual Assembly elections and did extensive traveling throughout the world, especially to areas where French was the major language.

In the 1970s he had the special task of assembling reliable accounts in the early days of the development of the Faith in various parts of the world.

In 1978 he was advised about returning to Iran for a variety of reasons. As the Iranian Revolution occurred the next year, he has never returned to Iran.

Since his appointment to the Institution of the Huququ'lláh, it has expanded from its narrow base among the Persian believers to include every Bahá'í worldwide. Since 1987 Boards of Trustees has been established around the world, even to St. Lucia.

He was still working at his office in the Seat of the Universal House of Justice in 2004. He passed away in Haifa on 22 September 2007. His obituary will appear in the Bahá'í World volume 2007-2008.

6. Zikru'llah Khadem 1904-1986

Mr. Khadem was born in Tehran in 1904. Zikru'llah mean 'the mention of God', while Khadem means servant. In the area of Tehran where they lived the Bahá'í children would be cursed and pelted with stones. After his formal education he taught at the Tarbiyat school in Tehran and later went to work for an oil company as an interpreter and language tutor to English-speaking employees. Later he opened language school using a method he had developed.

He made his first of six pilgrimages in 1925. Shoghi Effendi suggested that he convey to the youth of Iran the Guardian's love and encouragement, and suggested that they deepen themselves and to learn English.

Upon returning home he was a changed person as his only desire was to please Shoghi Effendi. His only thought was to serve his Lord.

In 1933 he was married to Javidukht Javid and had five children. During the late 1930s he and his wife traveled extensively throughout Iran to carry out assignments given to him by Shoghi Effendi. After they had visited every city in Iran, the Guardian asked them to visit them all a second time.

While taking photos of the graves of Bahá'í martyrs he was arrested and jailed. With Bahá'ís' assistance he was released and the photos returned.

Shoghi Effendi encouraged him to use his skills in English to translate Bahá'í works from English into Persian.

He was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran in 1938 and served on that body until 1960.

On a Friday morning during the fast of 1952, a cablegram arrived from the Guardian, dated 28 February, elevating him to rank of Hand of the Cause of God. He would spend the rest of his life praying fervently, night and day, to become worthy of his appointment.

On 25 March, in a second cable from the Guardian, he was referred to as the 'itinerant Hand'. Very soon after that he left his employment to be in the service of Shoghi Effendi full time. He began to travel constantly and extensively. From the time of his appointment he visited more than a thousand Bahá'í Centres, many more than once.

In 1958 he was a substitute Hand in the Holy Land for a short time, and in 1959 volunteered to reside in the Western Hemisphere. By 1960 he and his family settled in the United States.

In 1972 the Universal House of Justice asked him to research and document the places associated with the lives of the Central Figures of the Faith. He started on the project he called a 'Registry of Bahá'í Holy Places'. In 1977 he completed a 134 volume work which he presented to the House of Justice.

In 1984 at the U.S. National Convention he energetically and persuasively encouraged the friends to petition the House of Justice for permission to have the law of Huqúqu'lláh apply to them.

Mr. Khadem passed away on 13 November 1986. His obituary appears in The Bahá'í World XX volume.

7. Harold Collis Featherstone 1913-1990

Mr. Featherstone was born 5 May 1913 in Quorn, South Australia, and although his name was Harold Collis, he was known as Col or Collis. The school where he attended reported that he was diligent, well-behaved, and polite, thoroughly reliable and straightforward.

He moved to Adelaide in the 1930s and was much influenced by what the Unitarian minister read of the scriptures of other great religions in his sermons.

The information he learned while working for an engineering firm of tool and die fixtures proved invaluable to his setting up a business, which he owned for 35 years, making pressed metal parts.

In 1938 he and Madge Green were married on 5 March and from 1939 to 1954 they had five children, all girls but one.

Madge first heard about the Faith from Bertha Dobbins in 1944. Collis was interested when she told him. From a passage in *The Dawn Breakers*, the Báb's address to the Letters of the Living, Collis felt that this message was from God. They enrolled in December 1944.

There were a great many challenges to the Bahá'ís in Australia at the time. The Featherstones embraced them willingly and also received much from the Guardian by way of guidance and encouragement.

In 1949 Collis attended the National Convention as a first time delegate. He was elected to serve on the Assembly, which he did until 1962, often as chairman. At one time they moved to another town as home front pioneers.

He was able to obtain a license to import Bahá'í books, as books were not readily available in Australia. When his cigarette smoking interfered with his desire to fast, he gave up the habit. When he wanted to present the Bahá'í teachings more effectively, he took a course in public speaking. For all that he did he was once described as 'spirit in action'. In addition to their many Bahá'í activities he and Madge helped European and English migrants settle in Australia.

Their ninth year as Bahá'ís, 1953, saw the start of the 10-Year World Crusade and they attended the New Delhi Conference. Afterward, they went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines and were able to meet Shoghi Effendi.

Also in 1953 six members of the National Spiritual Assembly left Australia to pioneer. The Featherstones were unable to go and so helped Bertha Dobbins pioneer to the New Hebrides, for which she was named a Knight of Baha'u'llah.

In 1954 Thelma Perks and Collis were appointed to the newly established Auxiliary Board for the 'Australian continent', which included New Zealand and the Pacific region. He also found himself secretary of the Asian Teaching Committee, which was

established primarily to assist in the settlement of pioneers mainly in the Pacific region.

It was as a Board member that he took the first of his many overseas trips. As a member of the National Spiritual Assembly during the early years of the Crusade he was deeply involved in various legal matters such as Assembly's by-laws and recognition of the Bahá'í marriage ceremony.

On Monday morning 7 October 1957 received a phone call from the National Spiritual Assembly secretary about a cable just received from the Guardian. Madge recalled, 'It was like a bolt out of the blue that hit him like a bombshell.' The cable read:

ANNOUNCE YOUR ELEVATION RANK HAND CAUSE CONFIDENT NEW HONOUR WILL
ENABLE YOU RISE GREATER HEIGHTS SERVICE BEELOVED FAITH.

The Guardian died less than a month later and Collis life underwent dramatic changes. He traveled with Clara Dunn to the 1st Conclave of the Hands. After this his 'world' travels increased. He resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly in 1962 to devote more time to the duties of the Hands.

In 1963 the first Universal House of Justice was elected by 56 National Spiritual Assemblies. Collis would fondly recall the meetings of the nascent House of Justice with the Hands of the Cause at the London Bahá'í Centre and the sense of relief the Hands felt that God was at last enthroned in this living institution.

During his 36 years of his international travels, Collis made 529 visits to 108 countries averaging 14.7 journeys a year. He represented the Universal House of Justice at several conferences and at the inaugural conventions of a number of National Spiritual Assemblies.

On 14 September 1990, he and Madge journeyed toward Asia and to attend an International Youth Conference. In Kathmandu, Nepal he suffered a fatal heart attack on 29 September and was buried in the Baha'i Cemetery which overlook the beautiful valley of Kathmandu under the snowcapped peaks of the Himalayas. His obituary is in The Bahá'í World, volume XX.