

Hands of the Cause of God

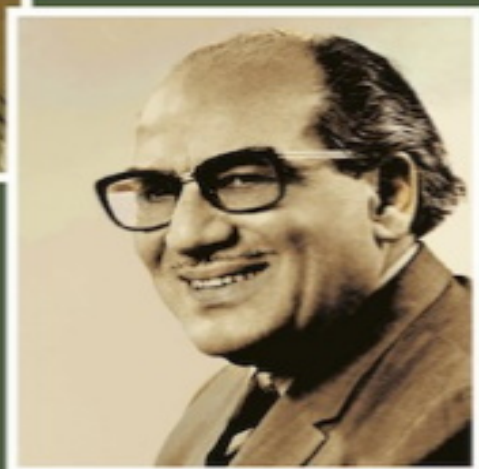
Volume III



Louis Gregory



Corinne True



Abul-Qásim Faizi

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Volume III

Louis Gregory

Corinne True

Abul-Qásim Faizi i

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the rising generation of youth throughout the world who are striving to respond to the call of the Universal House of Justice to build vibrant communities based upon justice, unity, and the love of God. May they be inspired and sustained by the example of the lives of these three Hands of the Cause of God, these immortal servants of the Blessed Perfection.

Acknowledgements

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Our deepest gratitude goes to Mrs. May Faizi. She not only wrote the full-length biography of her beloved father from which our brief article draws its content, but she also took the time to review and provide detailed feedback on the original draft. A number of the photos of Mr. Faizi were also provided by May who dug through her files to find them, and for which we are most grateful.

We wish to acknowledge the individuals who kindly took the time to read and comment on early drafts, thereby greatly improving the final versions: Michelle, Zahya and Breakwell Loyalka; Brent Poirer; Taraz and Amelia Mahony; Tannaz, Jian and Luca Morano.

We are grateful to Alice Williams who once again meticulously and beautifully added color to the original black and white photographs. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to Mr. Edward Sevcik, Archivist at the United States Bahá'í National Archives, for searching out and providing most of the photographs of the Hands of the Cause used in the book. We are grateful to the United States Bahá'í National Archives for permission to use the photos. The photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Lincoln Park, Chicago is downloaded with permission from the Bahá'í Media Bank, copyright © Bahá'í International Community.

Above and beyond all else, the purpose of this book is to call to mind the shining example of utter devotion, joyous sacrifice and complete dedication in service to the Faith exemplified by these three Hands of the Cause: Mr. Louis Gregory, of whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá said "he is like unto pure gold"; Mrs Corinne True, lovingly known as the "Mother of the Temple"; and Mr. Abul-Qásim Faizi, designated the "Conquerer of Arabia" by the beloved Guardian for his outstanding pioneering

services. May these great souls assist all who arise to serve the
“betterment of the world”.

Introduction to the Hands of The Cause of God

The Hands of the Cause of God had a very special role in history: their lives were completely focused on spreading and protecting the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh gave this title to four wonderful believers in Persia (modern day Iran). By giving this title, He raised them to a high position of service. These four souls helped the friends in Persia to teach the Faith and expand its influence, even though there were great dangers and difficulties. They also prepared the way for the first administrative institution in the Bahá'í world: the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tehran.

Following the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, the Hands helped the believers understand that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the Centre of the Covenant and that they needed to obey Him. In this way, the Hands protected the Faith from the forces of disunity and division.

'Abdu'l-Bahá did not appoint any living person as a Hand. However, He did mention that certain outstanding believers had reached that station; He only did this after they had died. Before passing away, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote a very important document—His Will and Testament. In this document, 'Abdu'l-Bahá outlined the role and function of the Hands, and gave Shoghi Effendi, as the Guardian of the Faith, the authority to appoint new Hands and to direct their activities. In particular, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote:

“The obligations of the Hands of the Cause of God 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.”

During the time he was Guardian, Shoghi Effendi appointed thirty-two individuals as Hands of the Cause of God. When Shoghi Effendi passed away in 1957, twenty-seven Hands were still alive. These wonderful souls faithfully guided the Bahá'í world through one of the

most difficult periods in its history. They protected the Bahá'í Faith from people who tried to divide the believers, and they prepared the Bahá'ís to elect the Universal House of Justice in 1963. The House of Justice has best expressed the importance of that service:

“The entire history of religion shows no comparable record of such strict self-discipline, such absolute loyalty, and such complete self-abnegation by the leaders of a religion finding themselves suddenly deprived of their divinely inspired guide. The debt of gratitude which mankind for generations, nay, ages to come, owes to this handful of grief-stricken, steadfast, heroic souls is beyond estimation.”

The following pages tell the stories of three of those beloved souls: Louis Gregory, Corinne True, and Abul-Qásim Faizi.

Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory

by **Vered Ehsani**



Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory

Pure Gold

“Where is Mr. Gregory? Bring Mr. Gregory!”

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá uttered these words at a lunch held in His honor, He amazed the guests gathered around the table. They were even more shocked when a black man came into the room and was invited to sit next to the Master.

Who was this honored guest?

Born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1874—only eleven years after Abraham Lincoln declared an end to slavery in the United States—Louis George Gregory provides us an example of a luminous life lived under the most oppressive social conditions.

Harsh segregation laws—referred to as “Jim Crow laws”—created daily challenges for black people. Yet despite the injustice surrounding him, Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory never fell victim to anger and hate.

He was raised by his mother and maternal grandmother. Both of these women were slaves until 1865 on a plantation called Elysian Fields in Darlington, South Carolina. His maternal grandfather was the owner of the plantation and its slaves, including Louis’s grandmother.

Even after all the suffering her family experienced, his grandmother taught him, “It’s better to be light-hearted than broken-hearted.” Louis Gregory took this lesson to heart, and it served him well in later years.

Studying Law to Pursue Justice

Despite the hostile environment surrounding him, Louis Gregory received his bachelor’s degree in 1896 from Fisk University. He became one of only two thousand African-Americans to have graduated from a university or college at that time.

After that, he went on to study law, as he saw it to be a means to help pursue racial justice in America's segregated society.

His dear friend Roy Williams explained Louis's single-minded dedication to his goal in this way: "Remembering the horrible picture from his early childhood of lynching in the South, he had made up his mind as a boy to dedicate his life and education to trying to stop this venomous hatred, terror and malice of racial injustice in his lifetime."

Upon completing his studies, Louis settled in Washington, D.C. Although the city suffered from much prejudice, Louis was able to establish himself as an outstanding lawyer there.





Louis Gregory as a young man

Becoming a Bahá'í

In 1907, Louis was working for the government. One of his coworkers, a white Southern man, encouraged him to attend a Bahá'í meeting: "I think that this is something that will interest you," the man said. "I am too old to investigate it. You are young, and I would like you to do so."

Intrigued, Louis attended the meeting, and many more after that. Every Sunday for the next eighteen months, he continued to participate.

Writing about his experience, he said, "The light they unfolded was so wonderful that for about a year, we sat in dumb amazement, listening to their patient, loving talks, not knowing whether to advance or retreat, yet held by supernal power."

In June 1909, Louis Gregory became a Bahá'í. Before this, prominent black leaders considered him an ally and coworker in the struggle against racism. When Louis began sharing that he was a Bahá'í, however, many of his friends thought he had become "mentally unbalanced." They warned him that he was "blasting all hopes of a career," and that he

would lose any chance of becoming a popular leader if he continued to say that he was a Bahá'í.

Undeterred, Louis wrote to the Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, telling Him that he had accepted the Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied with the following:

“I hope that thou may become the Herald of the Kingdom, become the means whereby the white and colored peoples shall close their eyes to racial differences and behold the reality of humanity, and that is the universal unity which is the oneness of the kingdom of the human race, the basic harmony of the world and the appearance of the Bounty of the Almighty.”

Thus encouraged, Louis committed himself to the Bahá'í Faith and the cause of racial unity. He traveled widely through the United States, giving talks and lectures, and connecting hearts whenever and wherever possible.

Soon after becoming a Bahá'í, Louis had a vision of Bahá'u'lláh with His head bent forward, right arm extended. “Four layers of mellow golden light” flowed from His right side, “each layer containing numberless spirals and beautiful figures.” When the glow vanished, Louis saw himself on a street “in which some enemies of the Cause of God were menacing the believers. I raised my right hand above my head and shouted, ‘It is all true! Mine eyes have seen the Glory!’”

When he was on pilgrimage in 1911 and told 'Abdu'l-Bahá of the vision, the Master explained that the figures in the light represented four kinds of people: those who join the Bahá'í Cause and labor for it; those who believe in it but remain quiet; those who hear of it but do not accept it; those who have not yet heard of it. Then there are those who “deny and oppose.” He told Louis, “You have already had experience enough to know what this means.”

Indeed, Louis was most certainly one who labored tirelessly and lovingly for the Bahá'í Cause. Through his extensive teaching work, he met all kinds of people and was able to guide many to accept the Faith while living among those who “deny and oppose.”

Promoting Racial Amity

Traveling through the various states as a black man was not easy in the era of Jim Crow laws. Louis Gregory faced racism which manifested itself in numerous ways.

Because of Jim Crow laws and social taboos, it was not possible for blacks and whites to associate together. Some meetings had to be held in secret. To further complicate the situation, Jim Crow laws and customs changed from place to place. In some places, a black person didn't have to step off of the sidewalk while passing a white person; in others, he would get into trouble if he did not! This of course did not discourage Louis Gregory or his friends.





Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory

Roy Williams, another black Bahá'í who did a lot of travel teaching with Louis, recalled, "In the South of that time, it was often impossible to get an interracial group together... In cities like Houston, Texas, before we could speak to anybody we had to be interviewed by the police department. We said what we had to say and said it without any fear."

On some of their trips, Louis and Roy worked with James Elmore Hays, the first native-born white Georgian to become a Bahá'í. Initially, Elmore was frightened when he heard that Louis was on his way, yet the steadfastness of Louis and Roy, and their absolute reliance on the power of prayer for guidance and safety, inspired and gave him strength. Together they worked to share the unifying message of Bahá'u'lláh and encouraged others to strive to overcome the deep prejudices and social taboos of that time and place.



Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory with friends in Carmel by the Sea, California, May 1926

During the race riots of 1919, Louis wrote, "...to adopt the expedients of people around us is to give ourselves over to the devastating fire which now consumes the world. The times are indeed troublous and full of unrest... The Bahá'í teacher must maintain a state of happiness if he is to do his work effectively. And this seems possible only by constant prayer and, as far as one can, ceaseless activity."

‘Abdu’l-Bahá warned that if racial prejudice was not stopped, "... the final result will be hardship and may end in bloodshed" and that "the foundation of the prosperity of the world of man will be destroyed."

Echoing this sentiment, Louis explained, “The two races little understand each other. Apprehensions, imaginations, prejudices, resentments, fears, hatreds destroy confidence in each other’s good intentions and create a wall of separation which is generally thought impassable.”

He mourned not only for the oppressed, but also for the oppressors. He felt, “Racial amity is a bounty (that releases oppressor and oppressed) from a psychosis that generally goes with a denial of rights which should be the common heritage of the free, thus sowing the seeds of conflict, present or future.”

He also held on to hope for the future, writing, “Earth and air, fire and water, the stars in their courses, the high tide of destiny and the Will of divine Providence are all arrayed against the forces of oppression.”

Charles Wragg, a white Bahá’í from Australia, toured the South with Louis in 1933 and described Louis’s response to any “abrasive reactions” they received:

“... On such occasions... his facial expressions were most illuminative, changing quickly from one of great anguish to a completely passive inward-look, as though searching his innermost being and beyond for a solution to a change in the relationship. This was his invariable reaction to difficulties and problems. I never saw him show anger, impatience or resentment...”



Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory in Montreal, 1927

“There are no whites and blacks before God”

One of the basic principles of the Bahá’í Faith is the unity of humanity. This includes unity among different ethnic and racial groups. We must see all people as members of one human family. However, because of the Jim Crow laws in effect at the time, segregation had become a normal part of everyday life for the majority of Americans.

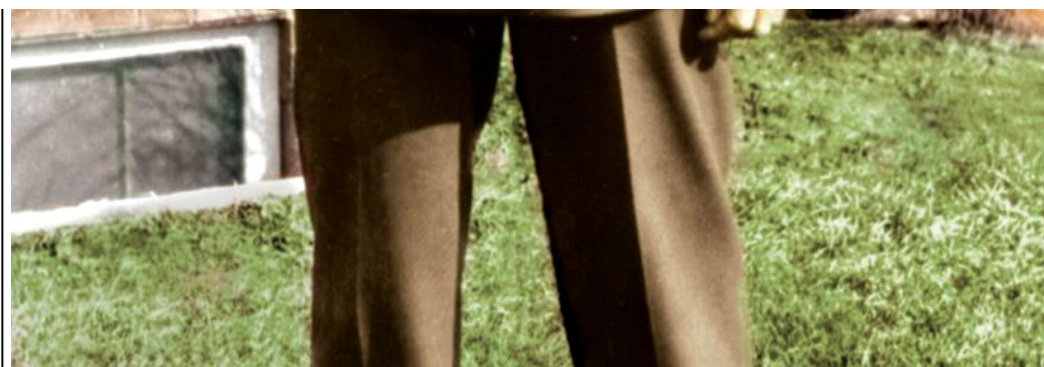
Even though ‘Abdu’l-Bahá clearly directed the Bahá’ís to hold interracial meetings, this didn’t happen at first. It took time for the community to evolve in its understanding of the underlying principle of unity. Initially, many American Bahá’í communities remained segregated, including the Washington Bahá’í community.

Louis wrote, “As soon as I became a believer... my colored friends got on my back and began to press me with troublous questions. If this were a new religion which stood for unity, why were its devotees divided?”

Why did they not meet together in one place? Were the Bahá'ís not full of prejudice like other people?"

Indeed, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, would later describe racial prejudice as "the most vital and challenging issue" facing the American Bahá'í community.





Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory

On 6 March, 1910, the Washington Bahá'ís had their first official integrated community gathering, a unity feast. Their plan was for every fourth Nineteen-Day Feast to be interracial. A community member explained that such a meeting was “a radical step in this section of the country and is in reality making history.”

The Master's response was clear and uncompromising: every Bahá'í meeting must be interracial. “The gift of God to this enlightened age,” He said, “is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion...”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá illustrated this point while attending a lunch held for Him in Washington, D.C. Before the meal, Louis Gregory came to the house where he had been invited to meet with the Master.

Lunchtime approached. The guests, including several prominent white members of Washington society, were invited to take their seats at the dining table. Louis, however, had not been invited to the lunch and was not called to join the others.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá seized this moment to provide those present with a never-to-be-forgotten lesson. Standing up at the lunch table, He looked around and loudly asked, “Where is Mr. Gregory? Bring Mr. Gregory!”

Louis was brought into the room where lunch was being served. To the amazement of the guests, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá rearranged the seating. He

invited Louis Gregory to sit next to Him in the place of honor at His right side.

Then, as if nothing unusual had happened, the Master gave a talk on the oneness of mankind.

“There are no whites and blacks before God,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declared on that same trip. “All colors are one, and that is the color of servitude to God... The world of humanity... is like a garden, and humankind are like the many-colored flowers. Therefore, different colors constitute an adornment...”

“I pray that you attain to such a degree of good character and behavior that the names of black and white shall vanish. All shall be called human.”





Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory with Ali Quli-Khan

Inspired by such sentiments from the Master, Louis remained a driving force behind the Bahá'í community's race amity work for over thirty-five years. At the specific request of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Louis Gregory and Agnes Parsons worked tirelessly to organize and convene a series of race amity conferences. These unique gatherings brought together thousands of people, both black and white, and began a process of building race unity that continues to this day.

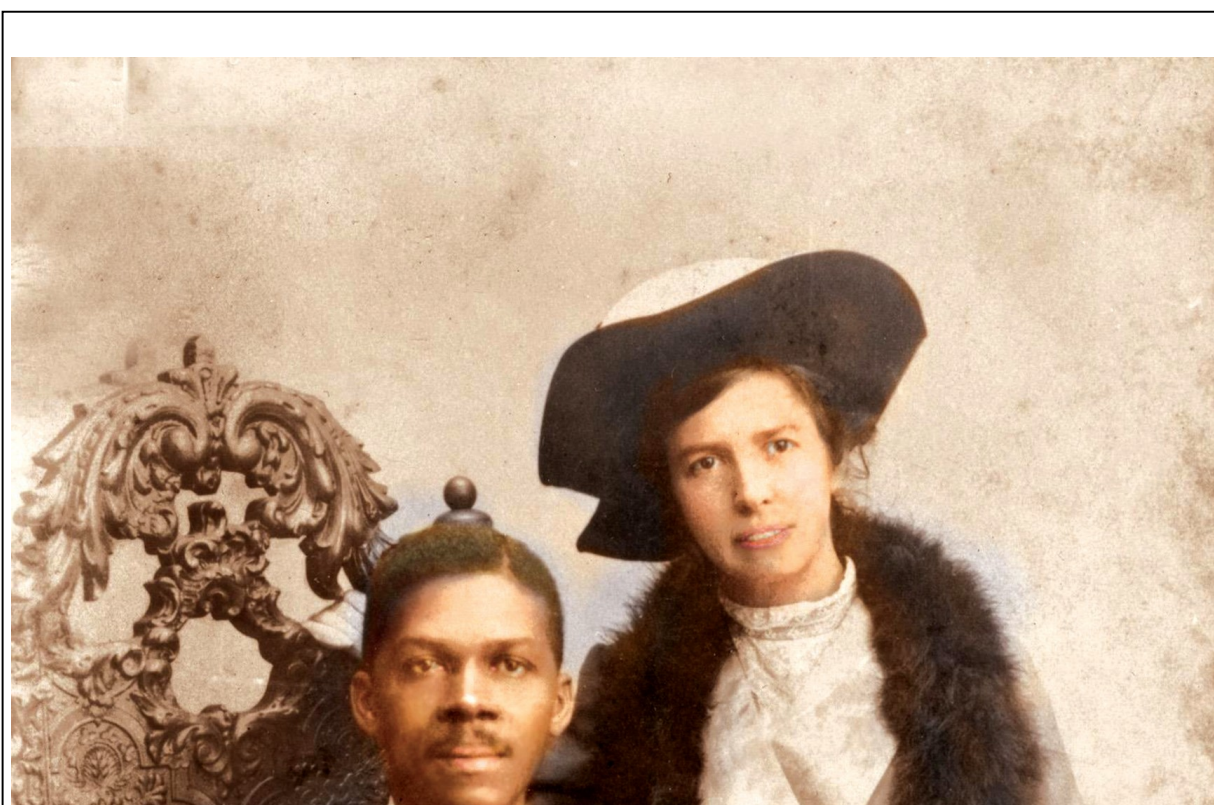
Within the American Bahá'í community, Louis Gregory served on many administrative institutions, often as the only non-white member. In 1911, only two years after embracing the Faith, he was elected to fill a vacancy on the local Bahá'í administrative body in Washington, D.C. Despite the continued existence of the Jim Crow laws that limited the opportunities for people of color, he went on to become the first African American to be elected to the national administrative body for the Bahá'ís in North America.

Louis Gregory was an unusually refined, gentle, and yet extraordinarily courageous individual. His educated, articulate and cultivated personality challenged the racial prejudices and assumptions that were common during the Jim Crow era. Many of the people who knew him, both whites and blacks, came to recognize him as a spiritual giant. As one person wrote, he was a source of “shimmering radiance that was so remarkable, that seemed to be part of him.”

The First Interracial Bahá'í Marriage

One of the striking features of Louis Gregory's life was his marriage to Louisa Mathew, a white British Bahá'í.

Louisa wrote, “Abdu'l-Bahá first revealed to me symbolically, through a white flower which he told me to give Mr. Gregory, and by looking at me in a peculiar way... that he wished me to marry Mr. Gregory. Curiously after this, love began to grow in my heart and the desire for the marriage, whereas before I only liked Mr. Gregory as a friend.”





Louis Gregory and Louisa Mathew, the first interracial Bahá'í marriage

Later, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told Louis, “I would be very pleased if you and Miss Mathew were to marry.”

Initially, Louis was stunned by the suggestion. Interracial marriage was illegal in a number of states and condemned almost everywhere in the country at the time. An interracial couple would find it difficult, if not impossible, to rent a place to live and would be unable to travel together or share the same hotel room. They could be faced with violence from angry mobs.

Knowing the challenges awaiting them, Louis and Louisa were married on 27 September, 1912, in a quiet ceremony in New York City.

Louis wrote of “the vile reproaches of people of both races” that he and Louisa faced. Even many Bahá’ís felt uncomfortable with their marriage, for theirs was the first between a black and a white Bahá’í. Despite the social prejudices against their relationship, Louis and Louisa were devoted to each other.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote to them, “O ye two believing souls! Continually do I remember you. I beg of God that through you, good fellowship may be obtained between the white and colored races, for you are the introduction to this accomplishment... I know also that your thought and mention by day and by night is the guidance of souls... white and black. Therefore be ye most happy, because ye are confirmed in this great matter.”

Noble-Minded, Golden-Hearted Louis Gregory

Louis Gregory passed away on 30 July, 1951. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith, sent the following cablegram in which he posthumously appointed Louis Gregory as a Hand of the Cause of God:

“Profoundly deplore grievous loss of dearly beloved, noble-minded, golden-hearted Louis Gregory, pride and example to the Negro adherents of the Faith. Keenly feel loss of one so loved, admired and trusted by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Deserves rank of first Hand of the Cause of his race. Rising Bahá’í generation in African continent will glory in his memory and emulate his example. Advise hold memorial gathering in Temple in token recognition of his unique position, outstanding services.”

His friend and fellow Bahá’í teacher, Roy Williams, wrote about Louis’s remarkable “humility, his utter disregard of arrogance and ostentation, his smiling, happy face— no complaints, no criticisms, no idea of the superiority of his position as an excellent lawyer, a graduate of Howard University... He was a very affable man and... he could tell simple, homespun stories... that would keep the other people present roaring with laughter.”

Perhaps ‘Abdu’l-Bahá described Louis Gregory best when He said, “That pure soul has a heart like unto transparent water. He is like unto pure

gold. That is why he is acceptable in any market and is current in every country.”

Hand of the Cause of God Corinne True

by **Elika Mahony & Tarrant Mahony**



Hand of the Cause of God Corinne True

Work for the Temple

Corinne True was seated in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Akka. The year was 1907. The suitcase of gifts from the American Bahá’ís lay nearby on the floor. Corinne had placed the precious scroll signed by over eight hundred believers behind her on the divan. The Master was sitting across the room as she presented the gifts. Before she could present the scroll, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá got up, came over to her and picked it up! Raising it high, He exclaimed, “*Mashriqu’l-Adhkár! This is what gives me great joy. Go back and work for the Temple; it is a great work, the best thing you could do, Mrs True.*”

Thus, in one moment, did the Master set out for Corinne True her life’s work.

Becoming a Bahá’í

Corinne True was born on 1 November, 1861, near Louisville, Kentucky. Her father was a Presbyterian minister, and Corinne grew up hearing stories from the Bible. Even as a child, Corinne believed wholeheartedly in Jesus Christ. She often thought about how wonderful it must have been to have lived when Jesus was on earth. Little did she know that Christ had already returned in the “Glory of the Father” (Bahá’u’lláh). He was indeed alive at that time. In the future, she would have the blessing of meeting His own Son (‘Abdu’l-Bahá)!

Corinne grew up and married her neighbor Moses True. Together, they started to raise a close and loving family. Corinne and Moses were both strong believers in God, but they were not satisfied with the answers provided by traditional religion. Two of their children had died in the early years of their marriage, and Corinne’s heart ached to find meaning and answers.

Yet despite her suffering, Corinne never lost her belief in a divine purpose behind the outwardly tragic events in her life. On the night her three-year-old son Nathanael passed away, he was sitting on Corinne’s lap. He seemed to be staring into space, but his face was luminous.

Suddenly, he reached his hands toward the ceiling and pleaded, “Oh, play with me.” A moment later, he was gone. Though deeply saddened to see Nathanael go, Corinne’s faith was strengthened. She believed that souls

in the next world had come to greet her son and that his last wish had been granted.

Corinne first heard of the Bahá'í Faith in Chicago during the autumn of 1899. A friend who knew of Corinne's suffering and her search for truth encouraged her to attend a lecture about the Faith. Corinne attended and instinctively knew it was true. When she returned home, her husband could tell by looking at her that she had discovered the treasure that she had long sought.



Corinne True with four of her children

Like most new Bahá'ís at the turn of the century, Corinne wrote to the Master to declare her faith. In reply, she received a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá that helped bring Corinne some comfort over the loss of her son:

“O thou who art tested with a great calamity! Be not grieved nor troubled because of the loss which hath befallen thee — a loss which caused the tears to flow, sighs to be produced, sorrow to exist and hearts to burn in great agony; but know... that thy pure son shall be with thee in the Kingdom of God and thou shalt witness his smiling face, illumined brow, handsome spirit and real happiness.”

Within a year, Corinne suffered the devastating loss of yet another of her children, her seven-year-old son Kenneth. Following Kenneth's passing, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote a second Tablet to Corinne.

“Be not grieved at the calamity which hath unexpectedly come upon thee... Know thou, that thy beloved son hath soared, with the wing of [his] soul, up to the loftiest height which is never-ending in the Kingdom of God... Truly, I say unto thee, were thou informed of the position in which is thy son, thy face would be illumined by the lights of happiness and thou wouldst thank thy forgiving Lord therefore and thou wouldst long for ascending to that praiseworthy position.”

These Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá helped Corinne accept these heart-breaking losses and brought her solace and patience in the face of adversity. Corinne's husband and children were amazed at her strength and drew comfort from it. Her calm was the rock that held the family together. Corinne knew this strength was not from her, but that it was given to her by the Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She was the rock of her family, and the Bahá'í Faith was the rock of her heart.

Building the Bahá'í Community in Chicago

Corinne received so much from the Faith that she could not keep it to herself. She wanted others to know and benefit from it, too! Even though she felt inadequate, she began to teach the Faith. Wholeheartedly, she worked to build up the community. She introduced the Faith to many towns in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois. She also became one of the most active members of the Chicago Bahá'í community.

During this time in America, women did not have equal rights, and many traditional prejudices limited their opportunities. Even within the Bahá'í community, some of these attitudes still prevailed. The membership of the first Bahá'í organization in Chicago, the "House of Spirituality", was limited to men. Against this background, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to Corinne:

"Know thou, O handmaid, that in the sight of Bahá, women are accounted the same as men...from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them... As to you... arrange ye holy gatherings, and found ye Spiritual Assemblies, for these are the basis for spreading the sweet savors of God..."

After this Tablet was received, a Women's Assembly of Teaching was formed in Chicago with Corinne as its first president. Sometimes, there were disagreements and conflicts between the House of Spirituality and the Women's Assembly of Teaching. But under the guidance of the Master, the community was able to achieve unity and made great strides in teaching the Faith.

In 1903, the friends in Chicago were inspired by the news of the construction of the world's first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, a Bahá'í House of Worship, in Ishqabad, Russia. The House of Spirituality wrote to the Master and asked for permission to also build such a Temple in Chicago. 'Abdu'l-Bahá responded, approving the idea. Shortly thereafter, Corinne received the following Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

"Now the day has arrived in which the edifice of God, the divine sanctuary, the spiritual temple, shall be erected in America!... The support of God will be with those believers... because this is the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in that country... Whosoever arises for the service of the is building shall be assisted with a great power from His Supreme Kingdom and upon him spiritual and heavenly blessings shall descend..."



Corinne True (front row, second from the left) with other early American Bahá'ís in Chicago

Her First Pilgrimage: “Go back and work for the Temple”

Corinne True made her first pilgrimage to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Akka in 1907. Prior to her departure, Corinne helped organize for over eight hundred of the Bahá'ís in America to sign letters to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá pledging their support for the Temple project.

Corinne’s husband glued all the letters together and made them into a scroll, which Corinne carried to Akka in a metal tube. The scroll was not all she carried. The Bahá'ís had given her many presents to bring to the Master. In the end, she had an entire suitcase just filled with gifts!

Corinne gladly took these presents, knowing that many of the friends would never go on pilgrimage themselves.

The journey from America to the Holy Land was long and difficult for Corinne, but her desire to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá far outweighed her fear of traveling. Her first meeting with the Master took place in Akka a few days after her arrival. Corinne was overwhelmed by His love and caring and instinctively knelt and kissed His hand. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was different from anyone she had ever met and from anything she had expected. Later she wrote: “I really was not prepared for such a Manifestation of Power... I found Him to be a powerful Dynamo – A Lion – as well as the Most Majestic Personage I ever hope to see.”

At dinner, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá talked about tests. He likened tests to a ship laden with food and headed to a people who needed it to live. The ship is tossed about by fierce winds and high waves. Those aboard are uncomfortable. But the ship must proceed, for the food it carries is the cause of life. Likewise, each of us must suffer the winds and waves of tests to bring life to the people.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words reached to the very core of Corinne’s heart where deep sorrow lay. He was the healer of her soul and His guidance was a potent medicine.

The next day, Corinne was again seated in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The suitcase of gifts lay nearby on the floor. The precious scroll Corinne carried separately, placing it behind her on the divan. The Master was sitting across the room as she presented the gifts. But before she could present the scroll, He got up, came over to her, picked it up and, raising it high, exclaimed,

“Mashriqu’l-Adhkár! This is what gives me great joy. Go back and work for the Temple; it is a great work, the best thing you could do, Mrs True.”

Corinne asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá what type of Temple should be built. He showed her a drawing and explained that the Temple must have nine sides, representing unity and perfection, and nine avenues leading out from the building. Between each avenue there should be a garden with a fountain in its center.

After this explanation, the Master gazed into Corinne's eyes. With great intensity, He explained to her the importance of the Temple.

“Devote yourself to this project — make a beginning, and all will come right. Pray for the strength you will need to achieve your goal.”

Corinne viewed that guidance as not only for the building of the Temple, but for every aspect of her life.

The Master's advice to Corinne on her pilgrimage was not limited to the building of the Temple. He also taught her how to live.

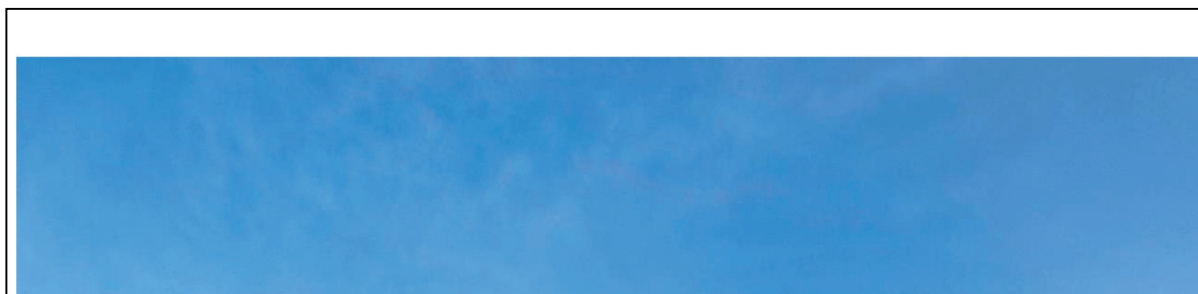
“When you go back I want you to look at every human being and say to yourself, “You are a letter from my Beloved, and I must love you because of the Beloved Who wrote you.” The letter may be torn, it may be blurred — but because the Beloved wrote the letter, you must love it.”

Corinne knew that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wanted her to love everyone who crossed her path.

The Work of a Lifetime

Corinne True's pilgrimage inspired her to devote her life to the establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's explanations helped her understand that the Temple was not simply a meeting place for the Bahá'ís in Chicago. It was to be the “Mother Temple of the West,” a force uniting the American believers, and a silent but mighty teacher.

Recognizing her devotion and capacity, the House of Spirituality made Corinne the Temple Fund Secretary. She started writing personal letters to every believer in North America.





The Mother Temple of the West

But Corinne never directly asked for contributions. Instead, she tried to inspire and educate the Bahá'ís about the Temple. She worked tirelessly, sometimes writing ten letters a day! When contributions were received, she would respond with another letter of thanks and encouragement. More than just being about the Fund, they were letters of inspiration and enlightenment.





Hand of the Cause of God Corinne True

Some of the Bahá'ís marveled at how Corinne could work so hard. But for Corinne, it was simple: 'Abdu'l-Bahá had asked her to devote herself to this project. "What an honor the Master has bestowed upon the Bahá'ís of America," she wrote, "to encourage us to Arise for the accomplishment of the Greatest Work ever accomplished in any Dispensation, namely the building of a House of Worship during the Day of the Manifestation of the Spirit upon the earth..."

Organizing the Kingdom: Establishing the Bahá'í Temple Unity

From 20-23 March, 1909, the Bahá'ís in America gathered to establish a national body to coordinate the Temple project. 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent a Tablet stressing the importance of the Temple and explaining to the friends that:

"...the founding of this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is to be the inception of the organization of the Kingdom..."

During the convention, the delegates unanimously approved the site that Corinne had found by the shores of Lake Michigan. They also formed the Bahá'í Temple Unity, the first nationwide body representing the Faith in America, and elected a nine-member Executive Board. Corinne was one of three women elected, and she was chosen to serve as its financial secretary.

The Bahá'ís gathered in Chicago did not know that another event of great importance was taking place at the very same time: 'Abdu'l-Bahá was laying to rest the sacred remains of the Báb in the Shrine on Mount Carmel.

In His letter to Corinne about the Convention, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained:

“In reality a wonderful coincidence hath taken place! On that blessed day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá hastened to Haifa... The sacred remains of His Holiness the Exalted One (the Báb) after sixty years of being moved from one place to another...were finally laid to rest on Mount Carmel, the mountain of the Lord, and in Chicago there was held at the same time the convention of the delegates of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár...”

Service and Loss

Corinne devoted herself entirely to the work of the Temple. The True's large home in Chicago became the unofficial headquarters of the Bahá'í Temple Unity. Her three daughters were now at home which brought her much happiness. Her husband, although not a declared Bahá'í, fully supported Corinne's work and assisted as much as he could.

On 26 November, 1909, a celebration of the Day of the Covenant was held at the True's home. During that event, Moses True told one of the visiting Bahá'ís, “If the Revelation is as you say it is... then I am a Bahá'í.” Sadly, Moses passed away just fifteen days later, following a heart attack while on the train to work.

Moses and Corinne True had been married for 29 years. Their marriage had been a happy and loving union, and Corinne missed him greatly. But because of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guidance, Corinne profoundly understood the spiritual reality of tests. To a friend she wrote: “As this is the Springtime in the Cause, great thunderstorms must attend to its establishment, and each soul will be able to find just how deep down into the Work it has thrust the tendrils of his or her heart, and if they are deeply, firmly rooted, the storms will only make them stronger.”

The Visit of the Master

Corinne's dedication to the Faith and the work of the Temple never let up, even with the passing of her husband. Rather, she immersed herself ever more deeply into service, confident that the Bahá'ís would achieve what the Master wanted. The intensity of her service was further strengthened by a Tablet she received from the Master in March 1910, which said:

“Although this calamity hath been great and intense, thou shouldst, at the time of adversity and misfortune, be patient, zealous, calm, firm and long-suffering. These are the qualities that befit such as thee.”



Hand of the Cause of God Corinne True with three of her adult daughters

In September 1910, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá traveled to Egypt. When the news reached America, the Bahá’ís were filled with hope that the Master would visit. However, there was discord within the community. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote that He would only come if there was unity:

“If ye are yearning for my meeting, and if in reality ye are seeking my visit, ye must close the doors of difference and open the gates of affection, love and friendship. Ye must pulsate as one heart, and throb as one spirit.”

Corinne continued to exert her utmost to teach the Faith, to promote the Temple project, and to increase the love and unity among the friends. In the fall of 1911, the friends in America heard the joyous news that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would visit the following spring. He arrived in New York on 11 April, 1912. Standing on the ship near the Statue of Liberty, He told reporters:

“There is the new world’s symbol of liberty and freedom. After being a prisoner for forty years I can tell you that freedom is not a matter of place. It is a condition. When one is released from the prison of self, that is indeed a release.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá traveled to Chicago for the Bahá’í Temple Unity Convention and to lay the cornerstone of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár. He arrived there on the night of 29 April. The next day, He went to the True home around noon. Corinne’s 24-year-old son, Davis, was at home suffering from tuberculosis. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spent a long time alone with him. Afterwards, He told Corinne that Davis was a wonderful young man and that He found him “much better than expected.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá had three lectures to make later that day, including one to more than one thousand people gathered at the final public session of the Bahá’í Temple Unity Convention. At His invitation, Corinne accompanied Him. The lectures were soul-stirring, and Corinne was carried away by His words into a world of the spirit, a world that words could not describe.

Davis passed away that day while Corinne was away. His last words before his passing were that he was happy that his mother was with

‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Later, Corinne realized that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had been protecting her from what was taking place at home. She understood that when the Master had told her that Davis was doing better than He expected, He had been referring to Davis’s spiritual condition.

The next day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá dedicated the site for the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár. Several Bahá’ís from different races and backgrounds helped dig the hole for the cornerstone. Corinne was one of them.

After placing the stone in the hole, the Master pushed the earth around it and declared, “The Temple is already built.” To Corinne, the Master’s words were a promise. There was no question that the Temple would be completed. It was simply a matter of when.

Before leaving Chicago, the Master invited Corinne and her three daughters to visit Him at His hotel. Corinne was moved to learn that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had taken time out of His hectic schedule to visit the grave where Davis was buried. The Master prayed not only for Davis, but also for Moses and the other children who were buried nearby.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá told Corinne that her children were not gone. Rather, they had been transplanted into a beautiful garden. He described the nearness of the spiritual world. The Master pointed out the window to the gardeners who were caring for the plants in a park across the street. The plants, He observed, are not conscious of the gardeners, and yet those same gardeners are right there with them, watering, feeding, and helping them grow.

“This family will be together,” He promised her, “and you are together right now.”



'Abdu'l-Bahá with a group of Bahá'ís at Lincoln Park in Chicago, Illinois, 3 May, 1912

Mother of the Temple

Corinne True spent the next forty years working with all her heart to make the wishes of the Master come true. After the passing of the Master, Shoghi Effendi guided the Bahá'ís in North America to begin holding elections for a National Spiritual Assembly. The first year such elections were held, Corinne received the highest number of votes — an indication of the love and respect she had earned. Over the years, her talks on the Faith inspired many, and she came to be lovingly known by all as “Mother True”.

In 1952, at the age of 91, Corinne went on her eighth and final pilgrimage. One night at dinner, Shoghi Effendi said to the pilgrims gathered around the table, “It should be stated that Mrs. True is to be regarded as the most venerable figure among the pioneers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the West.”

“Venerable” means worthy of admiration and respect, and “heroic in virtue”. What a beautiful appreciation of her services! Perhaps what is most remarkable about Shoghi Effendi’s statement is that Corinne True lived her entire Bahá’í life in Chicago. She never physically “pioneered” to a foreign land. Yet, under the loving guidance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Guardian, she had indeed spent her entire life “pioneering” — teaching the Faith, advancing the Temple project, and building up the North American Bahá’í community itself.

At dinner that evening, Shoghi Effendi gave Corinne a priceless gift: the leather wallet that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself had used during His travels in America. In the wallet was a gold coin dated 1907, the date of her first pilgrimage almost fifty years earlier. The Guardian’s gift touched her heart and filled her eyes with tears. The Guardian then praised her many services to the Faith. He said that she had “learned to be spiritual and at the same time to get things done.”



Hand of the Cause of God Corinne True

Corinne True had indeed “learned to be spiritual” and “to get things done.” Her crowning achievement was to witness the completion of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár for which she had worked so hard and for so long. At the outset, she optimistically thought that the Temple would be built within a few years, but she never relaxed in her efforts to make it happen.

In the end, it took almost fifty years for it to be completed. On 2 May, 1953, the “Mother Temple of the West,” the “holiest House of Worship ever to be raised by the followers of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh,” was dedicated in a public ceremony.

Hand of the Cause of God Corinne True, now 92 years old, was present. Mother True sat silently beneath the dome of the completed structure. No doubt her thoughts revolved around ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He had promised that the Temple would be built and had explained: *“Although in the future thousands of Mashriqu’l-Adhkárs will be erected, this Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, because it is the first to be built in America, is very important, and its impact and effect shall be boundless.”*

Having faithfully served both ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi for over sixty years, Corinne True passed away on 3 April, 1961, just months before her one-hundredth birthday. The Temple was built. She was reunited with her family. All of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s promises were fulfilled.

Hand of the Cause of God Abu'l-Qásim Faizi

by **Tarrant Mahony**



Hand of the Cause of God Abu'l-Qásim Faizi

A Breeze of Love

How can words describe a person like Mr. Faizi? The beloved Guardian called him a “luminous distinguished active youth”, “a wonderful man” and the “spiritual conqueror of Arabia”. When he passed away, the Universal House of Justice wrote that the entire Bahá’í world mourned the loss of this “indefatigable, self- sacrificing, dearly-loved” Hand of the Cause.

His fellow Hand, William Sears, movingly said that “a special sweetness has gone out of the world...” Who was this man who endeared himself to all who crossed his path, be they young or old, high or low, friend or stranger?

Young Faizi Encounters the Faith

Abu’l-Qásim Faizi, known to those who loved him as “Faizi”, was born in 1906 or 1907 to a Muslim family in Qum, Iran. When he was a youth, his family moved to Tihran where he was enrolled in the Tarbiyat School. This was a Bahá’í school that had earned the reputation as the best and most respected school in the city. His first day of school began with a fellow student reciting the daily prayer:

“O Thou kind Lord! We are poor children, needy and insignificant, yet we are plants which have sprouted by Thy heavenly stream and saplings bursting into bloom in Thy divine springtime. Make us fresh and verdant by the outpourings of the clouds of Thy mercy...”

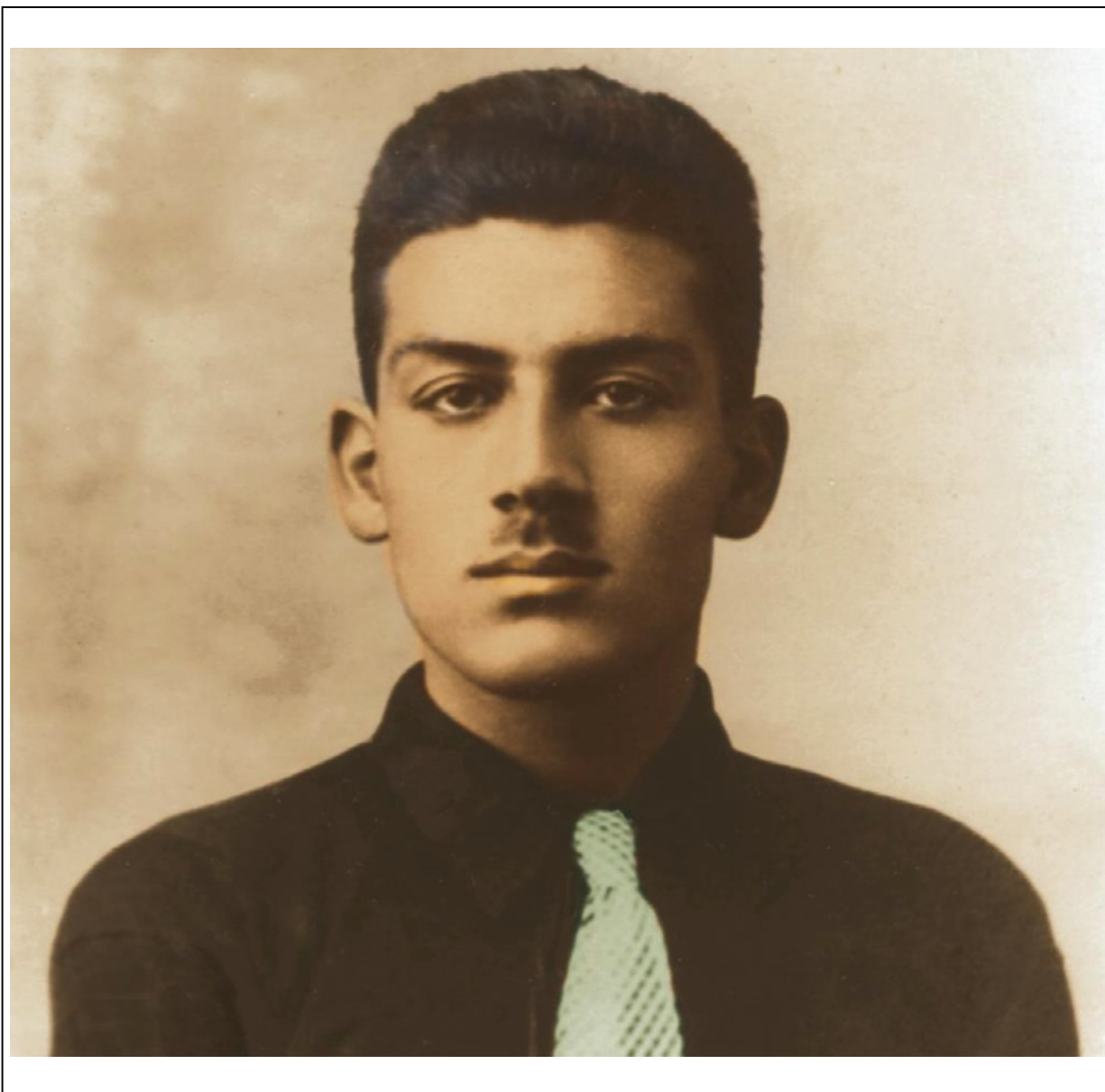
Faizi was riveted. The prayer opened before him an ocean of beauty and knowledge unlike anything he had ever experienced. Thus began his lifelong love for the Writings and prayers of the Faith, a love that he would later share with countless souls on all continents.

Faizi quickly became attached to his fellow students and wanted to spend all his time in school. When he heard that his friends were going to a special class on Fridays, he got up at dawn and followed along, not knowing that these were Bahá’í classes.

An extraordinarily radiant young man taught the class, and Faizi formed an instant attachment to him. The class began with the students reciting quotations that they had learned from various Holy Books, including the words of Moses, Christ and Muhammad.

The kindly teacher realized that Faizi was new to the class and did not ask him to recite. Instead, he gave him a quotation from the Bahá'í writings and asked him to learn it for the following week. The teacher explained that these words were not only to be memorized, but to be understood, pondered, and put into practice.

The words Faizi heard in his Bahá'í class had a deep and lasting impact on his soul and were the inspiration for the man he would become. He was so fascinated by what he was learning that he waited impatiently for Fridays to come so that he could see his beloved teacher and learn more of those glorious words. To the end of his life, Faizi never stopped thanking God for having guided him to his first Bahá'í teacher and the ocean of light that he opened before his eyes.



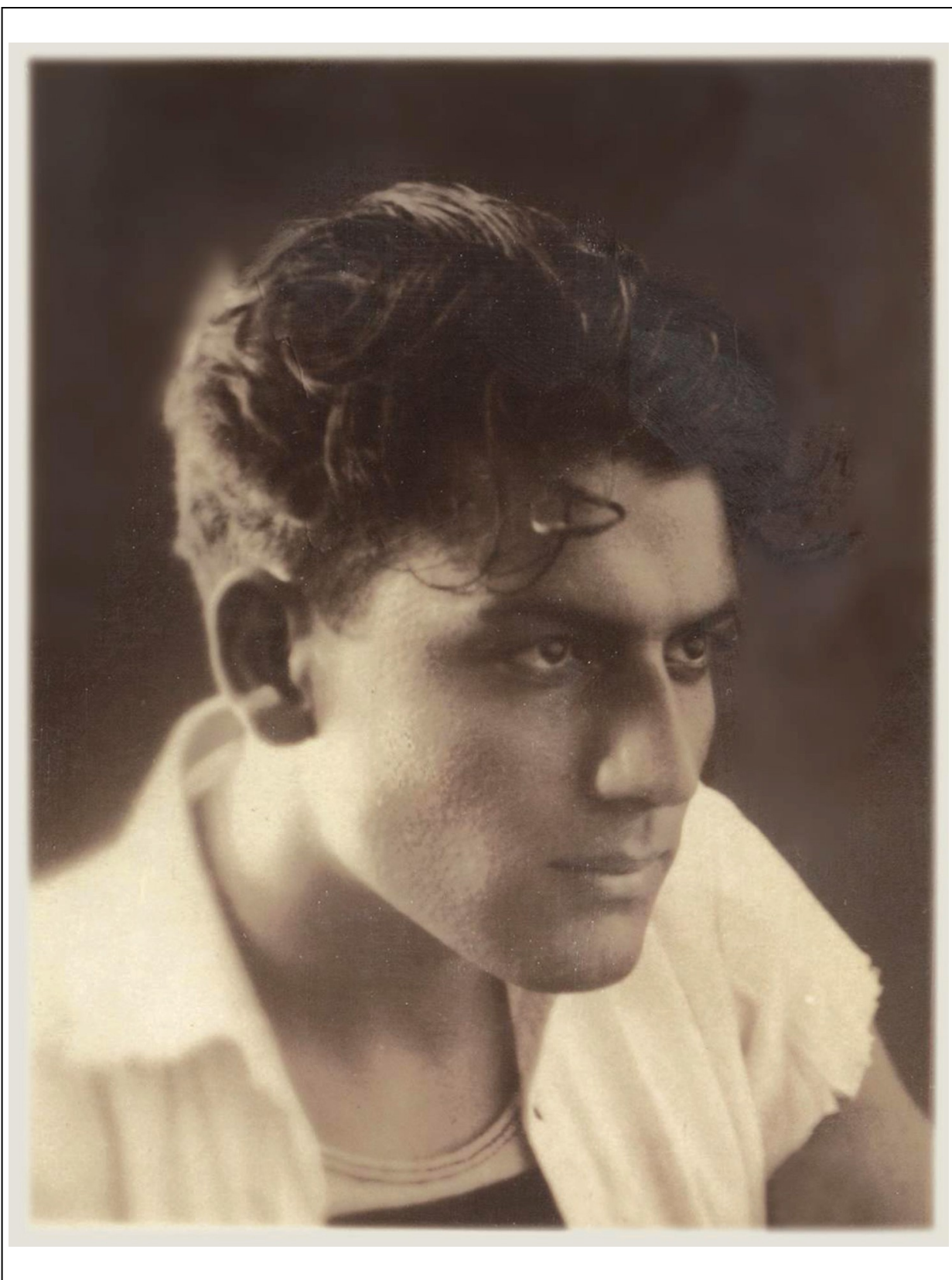
Faizi as a young man – around age 18

University Years: Meeting the Beloved Guardian

Faizi enrolled in the American University in Beirut in 1927. One of his fellow Bahá'í students was Hasan Balyuzi, another future Hand of the Cause. Their lifelong friendship began during their university days.

Together with Hasan Balyuzi and other Bahá'í students then in Beirut, Faizi studied hard, played football, read poetry, watched movies, went on

hikes and did all the other things that young and energetic students full of life do during their university years.



Faizi in an acting role during university years, Beirut

Unlike other students, however, a unique bounty was theirs: Shoghi Effendi, the youthful Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, was nearby in Haifa and had invited them to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines during their holidays.

Faizi was twenty years old when he first went to Haifa and met the Guardian. He later wrote of this life-changing moment:

“The Guardian, who was in the flower of youth and full of spiritual strength and heavenly majesty, came forward and said, ‘Come, let us meet each other as two brothers’ and with great calm lifted me from my seat... my eyes streaming with tears I found my head resting on his shoulder.”

During their university years, Faizi and Hasan Balyuzi went on pilgrimage together as often as they could. On one visit, Shoghi Effendi asked them to translate a document written by Queen Marie of Romania, the first Queen to become a Bahá'í. They immediately started translating and sent it to Shoghi Effendi as soon as they were done.

When Shoghi Effendi took them to the Shrine of the Báb later that day, he said to them, “I received the translation. It is correct but not eloquent. I changed some phrases.” Faizi and Hasan Balyuzi were so happy that the Guardian had accepted their little work and begged Bahá'u'lláh to confirm them “to be forever at his service.”

Faizi and some of the other students were staying in the Old Haifa Pilgrim House. One evening, they went out on the balcony. From there, they could see the light on in the Guardian's room in the House of the Master at the foot of the mountain. They decided to stay up to see when the light would go off. They waited up until two in the morning, but the light was still on.

The next day when Shoghi Effendi greeted them, he told them that he was obliged to stay up late because he had a great deal of work, but that they should go to bed early. No doubt the memory of the Guardian's light burning long into the night inspired Faizi throughout the many long days

and nights of his energetic, tireless service to the Cause he loved so much.

Homefront Pioneering to Najafábád

Faizi's dream throughout university was to graduate and return to teach at the Tarbiyat School in Tihiran. Sadly, just as he was on the threshold of achieving his goal, the Iranian government shut down all Bahá'í schools, the Tarbiyat School included.

Faizi was devastated. Although his fluency in English, Persian, and Arabic meant that he was soon able to get a high-paying job, he had no interest in money or prestige. He only wanted to serve the Faith.

His broken heart soon brought on broken health, and he became ill and bed-ridden. At this lowest point in his life, a friend told Faizi that the Bahá'ís in Najafábád were looking for a teacher for their children. For Faizi, it was the "light of hope" in the darkness of despair, and he immediately volunteered to go. He wrote in his journal:

"God knows with what joy and enthusiasm I wrote to the National Assembly and requested that they give me the honour of undertaking this task. A thousand thanks to that esteemed body that they accepted my offer."

The National Assembly wrote to the Guardian of Faizi's offer. The Guardian's secretary, writing on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, replied:

"...the Guardian states that this decision which has been spontaneously taken by him will attract divine blessings and is a clear proof of the high resolve, the purity of motive, the self-sacrificing spirit of that favored servant of the Sacred Threshold. The Guardian is infinitely grateful to him and is well-pleased with him and is fervently praying for the success of that luminous and active youth."

Najafábád was one of the oldest Bahá'í communities in the world. It was the home of the great Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh, Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín. It was also the site of a Bahá'í school built in 1910 under the instruction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

However, in 1934, all Bahá'í schools were closed by government order, and the Bahá'ís were without a means of systematically educating their children.

The night Faizi arrived in Najafábád, he met with the community. Faizi described its effect upon him:

“The atmosphere was wonderfully spiritual... Among those present were some who had travelled on foot to see Bahá'u'lláh in the Holy Land and brought back His Tablets to their native land and those who had gathered the scattered remains of the martyrs in their area... The presence of these reminders of the heroic age of the Faith had a profound effect on me... Who was I compared to these mountains of steadfastness, these waves of love and kindness, these shining stars of the firmament of true knowledge?”



A teacher with a sense of humour: note the size of Faizi's book!
Najafábád

There were about seven hundred children and youth in Najafábád at that time. Although Faizi had a degree in education, he had no experience in organizing classes for such a large number of children and “felt helpless” in the face of such a huge task.

This challenge, however, did not stop Faizi. He immediately began making detailed plans for classes for all the community — from kindergarten-aged children to adults. Within the space of two weeks, twenty classes were started and “began running like a well-organized factory; an unseen hand had tightened every screw and set the wheels in motion.”

The classes Faizi arranged covered both academic and Bahá'í subjects as well as practical matters such as cleanliness and hygiene. In addition, he organized classes for the women in the community — no small task considering how hard the women in the village worked, rising before dawn and working until late at night.

During his few free evenings, the friends would gather in his small room and chant Tablets, prayers, and poems. The joy and spiritual bonds created by these activities remained in the hearts of the friends for years to come.

Faizi's energy was boundless, and his love and wisdom moved the hearts of all who met him. One Muslim baker in the town had a short meeting with Faizi and later told the Bahá'ís:

“I have met many learned and good-hearted people but I have never met anyone like Faizi... He is an amazing, unique man... The world must benefit from him and hear what he has to say... I wanted to kiss his feet but realized that he is weary of such things.”

Such was the impact that Faizi had after but one brief meeting!

Marriage to Gloria Alá'í

In 1938, after two years in Najafábád, Faizi received a visit from two families, the Banánís and the Alá'ís, who were on their way to pilgrimage.

Faizi had known the Alá'í's daughter, Gloria, when she was growing up in Beirut. When he saw Gloria again after so many years, he exclaimed, "You are a young lady now!"

Upon returning to Tihiran after their pilgrimage, Gloria's father found a letter waiting for him from Faizi. The letter included several love poems written in Faizi's beautiful calligraphy as well as Faizi's marriage proposal to Gloria. A few days later, Gloria asked her father his opinion, but he told her that first the couple must decide. Only then do the parents give their consent.

Gloria felt deep love for Faizi and was also eager to share in the "wonderful work he was doing." She accepted. Her father wrote to the Guardian to ask his approval, and the Guardian responded that "this wedding is the object of God's favors and blessings and will in the future produce praiseworthy results for the Cause."

The young couple began their married life in Najafábád. Gloria eagerly supported all the work that Faizi was doing. She also taught English to some of Faizi's keenest students and helped the women of the community with various practical skills. The community loved the young couple. With the help of Faizi's adored mother who lived with them, their home became a center of joy and constant activity.

During this time, Faizi and Gloria helped the Bahá'ís establish a library. When one of the friends suggested that the library should be named after Faizi, "the colour drained from Faizi's face and he became visibly dejected." Ultimately, to Faizi's great joy, the library was named after the early hero of the Faith, Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín.

Pioneering to Arabia

Two years later, responding to the call of the Guardian, Faizi and Gloria decided to pioneer to one of the countries in the Gulf of Arabia. They faced many difficulties, including having to spend a year in Iraq while

trying to get a visa. Eventually they achieved their goal, arriving on the islands of Bahrain on 25 December, 1942.

The living conditions in Bahrain at that time were difficult and primitive, with no running water and limited food. Bahrain itself produced only dates and fish. Due to the dangerous conditions caused by World War II, few boats reached the island with other food.

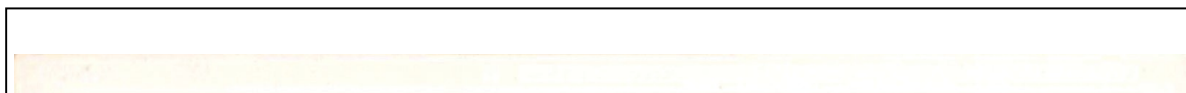
At this time, the Bahá'ís in Najafábád wrote to Faizi and Gloria, asking what they could send. The Faizis suggested a type of simple Persian flat bread that lasts a long time. The Bahá'ís in Najafábád felt that such bread was too ordinary for their dear friends. Instead, they sent a special type of delicate bread made in Najafábád that the Faizis loved.

When the bread arrived four months later, however, it was full of little bugs! Normally, anyone would have thrown the bread out immediately. But since they had no other food, Gloria broke the bread into small pieces, dried them in the sun, and picked out the bugs! Faizi and Gloria said it was the best food that they had had in a long time.

Faizi's work was teaching English in a government school, and he was greatly respected by the students and other teachers. After two years, however, a fanatical man and some merchants took a petition to the ruler of Bahrain, claiming that Faizi was leading their youth astray. The ruler decided that Faizi must leave the country within twenty-four hours.

Faizi went to the British government agent and asked for a letter saying that the reason he was being deported was because he was a Bahá'í. Faizi was concerned that people might wrongly assume he was deported for having done something wrong. The British government representative said not to worry — the ruler only had authority over citizens of Bahrain. Faizi was a non-Bahraini citizen and was therefore under the authority of the British. They would not deport him.

Since he could not deport Faizi, the ruler instead cancelled his contract. Soon, Faizi and Gloria were almost out of money. Gloria prayed that God would work a miracle, and quickly at that.





Faizi and Gloria in indoor Arab dress, Bahrain

A few days later, Faizi received a letter informing him that he had won first prize in a writing contest he had entered a year before. He placed the prize money in Gloria's hand and said, "Here's your miracle!"

Despite the hardships, the Faizis remained in Bahrain for the next fifteen years. Faizi later wrote that the only thing that strengthened him and kept him and his family alive "for fifteen years in the most terrible conditions ever possible" was his daily remembrance of Shoghi Effendi, and his desire to once again attain his presence.



Faizi with unknown children

In April 1957, the election was held for the very first National Spiritual Assembly of the Arab region. This was the crowning achievement of Faizi's and Gloria's services, and those of their fellow pioneers. Shortly after the election, Faizi traveled to Germany at the request of the National Assembly of Iran to visit the Bahá'í youth. While in Germany, Faizi was stunned to learn that he had been appointed a Hand of the Cause of God. A month later, on 4 November, 1957, Faizi and the rest of the Bahá'í world were devastated by the news of the sudden passing of the beloved Guardian.

Faizi travelled from Germany to London where he attended the funeral of Shoghi Effendi. Rúhiyyih Khánum told Faizi that, if he was able to hold back his tears, she wanted him to chant the "Prayer for the Departed". Her request gave Faizi some sense of calm, and he chanted the prayer without shedding a single tear. It was his last farewell to his beloved Guardian, which he bade with a burning heart.

Service as a Hand of the Cause of God

Faizi's appointment as a Hand of the Cause and his subsequent designation as one of the nine Hands chosen to live in the Holy Land to serve as "custodians" prevented him from returning to Bahrain. The rest of his life was spent constantly traveling to teach the Faith, and to help deepen the Bahá'ís. When he wasn't traveling, he was busy writing, translating, and promoting the interests of the Faith with every ounce of his being.

Faizi had the deepest love and respect for his fellow Hands of the Cause. Although it is not possible to convey such feelings adequately in words, the depth of Faizi's love, tenderness, and wisdom can be glimpsed from the following account of a conversation that he had with his fellow Hand of the Cause Amelia ("Milly") Collins when she was older and in poor health.

In times of distress and sorrow, Milly would often repeat, "Why? Why?" One day she was asked what she meant by that question. She explained, "Why am I alive? I am ill, weak and not able to travel and teach. What is the use of my life?"

It was a winter's day when this conversation took place in the office of the Hands of the Cause where a small kerosene stove was burning. Faizi said to her, "Milly dear, isn't the weather very cold now?"

"Yes," she replied.

"How is it that we can sit here, hold meetings, read letters, send messages to the Bahá'í world, in such comfort and ease? It is because of that little stove that is burning. It doesn't say anything. Does it make speeches? Does it travel? Never! The stove burns as long as it has kerosene. It gives its heat to us very generously, and in that warmth we work. This is true of our physical comfort; then how much more do we need spiritual heat to give us energy and power to go on and carry the load to the year sixty-three, when we shall surrender all into the hands of the Supreme Body. Now, dearest, you are our spiritual stove. You burn, and we speak, write, travel."



Hands of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga, Abu'l-Qásim Faizi and Adelbert Mühschlegel, Plön Youth Conference, 1972

The Gifts of His Pen

One of Faizi's greatest talents was his ability to write beautifully. Some of the most moving literature the Bahá'í world has are the gifts of his pen. Among these are *Milly*, his "love letter" describing the life and services of his fellow Hand of the Cause of God, Amelia Collins.

Another gem is *Meditations on the Eve of November 4th*, which Faizi wrote out of his burning love for Shoghi Effendi.



Hand of the Cause of God Abu'l-Qásim Faizi greeting the President of India, October 1967

Faizi also contributed greatly to the work of translating between Persian and English. He translated Haji Mirza Haydar Ali's moving autobiography, *Stories from the Delight of Hearts*, from Persian into English. Faizi was so inspired by the *The Priceless Pearl*, the unique and immortal biography of Shoghi Effendi written by Rúhiyyih Khánum, and

worked with such zeal and energy on it that the Persian version was published before the English original!

A list of his publications shows that he authored or translated no less than thirty-seven books in English and Persian, in addition to innumerable articles that he wrote for various magazines.

This accomplishment is even more remarkable when one considers that Faizi somehow found the time to do his writing amidst his already hectic schedule. As a friend of his insightfully observed, "Writing requires enthusiasm and talent, which he [Faizi] had; it also requires time, freedom, seclusion and quiet, none of which he had. Most of his stories were written in a hotel room while he was traveling, or sitting at a café table in South America or India."

His Love for the Friends

Faizi spent much of his life traveling to visit and encourage the Bahá'ís around the world, often traveling for months on end. His words and kindness touched their hearts and brought joy and illumination to countless souls.

On one trip, Faizi was visiting a distant village. It was late at night, and he was preparing to depart, but the car would not start. So Faizi had no choice but to stay. The local friends were eager to continue the evening's discussion. Eventually one young man, who had been quiet throughout the evening, hesitatingly asked if he could ask Faizi some questions.

Faizi warmly encouraged him and said, "My dear, ask whatever is in your heart!" The young man was overcome with emotion at Faizi's kindness. But before he could ask his question, an older man said that they should let Faizi sleep as it was 2:30 am! Further questions could wait until the morning.

Faizi smilingly responded, "Anyone who himself wants to sleep should but, please, do not express an opinion on my behalf. Whoever wants to go to sleep do so; everyone is free to either sleep or stay awake. I may not have the opportunity again to spend such enjoyable, sweet hours."

Faizi then turned to the young man and encouraged him to start asking his questions. Such was the compassion, understanding, and love that Faizi shed upon all who crossed his path.



Faizi with Bolivian Bahá'ís, 1963

His Lifetime of Service

Faizi spent his every breath of life in service to the Faith that he had instinctively recognized as a young boy at the Tarbiyat School in Tihiran. His services took him around the world many times, and his difficult travels ultimately took its toll on his health.

Once, after a particularly exhausting trip, he felt too tired to even look at his desk. But he willed himself to carry on, believing that, “Everything in

this transient life is doomed to vanish except the humble efforts which we exert with the sole aim and purpose of elevating the beloved Faith that we have embraced. This is eternal. This will be our password to the presence of our beloved Master.”

On another occasion, when he was ill from his travels, friends sent him petals from the Holy Shrines. Faizi wrote to thank them for their gift and said, “Rising and falling I tread the path of His love; please pray that the last fall will be at His feet holding His hem and receiving the smile of forgiveness.”

Faizi passed away in Haifa on 19 November, 1980. The Universal House of Justice wrote to the Bahá'í world:

“HEARTS FILLED WITH SORROW PASSING INDEFATIGABLE SELF-SACRIFICING DEARLY LOVED HAND CAUSE GOD ABUL-QASIM FAIZI. ENTIRE BAHAI WORLD MOURNS HIS LOSS. HIS EARLY OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN CRADLE FAITH THROUGH EDUCATION CHILDREN YOUTH STIMULATION FRIENDS PROMOTION TEACHING WORK PROMPTED BELOVED GUARDIAN DESCRIBE HIM AS LUMINOUS DISTINGUISHED YOUTH. HIS SUBSEQUENT PIONEERING WORK IN LANDS BORDERING IRAN WON HIM APPELLATION SPIRITUAL CONQUEROR THOSE LANDS. FOLLOWING HIS APPOINTMENT HAND CAUSE HE PLAYED INVALUABLE PART WORK HANDS HOLY LAND TRAVELLED WIDELY PENNED HIS LITERARY WORKS CONTINUED HIS EXTENSIVE INSPIRING CORRESPONDENCE WITH HIGH AND LOW YOUNG AND OLD UNTIL AFTER LONG ILLNESS HIS SOUL WAS RELEASED AND WINGED ITS FLIGHT ABHA KINGDOM...”





Hand of the Cause of God Abu'l-Qásim Faizi in Adrianople

Source Material

The following are the primary source materials used in researching these stories and are included for those interested in further reading.

Louis Gregory

Gayle Morrison. “To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America”.

Corinne True

Nathan Rutstein. “Corinne True: Faithful Handmaid of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”.

Abu’l-Qásim Faizi

May Faizi-Moore. “Faizi”.

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