

Female Representations of the Holy Spirit in Bahá'í and Christian writings and their implications for gender roles

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE; MAID OF HEAVEN; WOMEN

> ADD TAGS

A response to feminist theologian Mary Daly's argument that a male representation of God reinforces patriarchy with the suggestion that sexual equality is independent of, and unrelated to, gender images of the Divine.

Female Representations of the Holy Spirit in Bahá'í and Christian writings and their implications for gender roles

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Abstract: *This article discusses the argument advanced by some feminist theologians that a male representation of God reinforces patriarchy and the oppression of women. In particular, it considers Mary Daly's statement that "if God is male then the male is God," in the light of the female imagery of the Holy Spirit in the Bahá'í Writings. It concludes by suggesting that the Bahá'í principle of the equality of men and women is independent of, and unrelated to, references to the Holy Maiden.*

Many Christian and post-Christian feminist theologians wrestle with the "maleness" of the Christian God. They pose the question, "Can a male saviour save women?" and declare, "If God is male, then the male is God."⁽¹⁾ Whilst the genders of the "Father" and "Son" of the Christian trinity are clearly defined, the "Holy Spirit's" gender seems rather more ambiguous. Consequently, some feminists have attempted to feminise it in an attempt to add a female dimension to the trinity.

In this paper, I will examine the first part of Mary Daly's statement that "God is male" in the light of both historical evidence for a female Holy Spirit, particularly in early Syriac writings, and contemporary feminist arguments for and against a female Holy Spirit. I will proceed to compare them with the undeniably female imagery of the Maid of Heaven, as the Holy Spirit is often described in the Bahá'í writings. I will attempt to evaluate how much the gender ascribed to an allegorical religious symbol affects the position of women in religion and society. For "If God is male, then the male is God," as Daly contends, then it should follow that the reverse holds true: that where there is a female aspect to the image of God it will be reflected in the position of women.

The Holy Spirit in the Christian tradition

A traditional Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit comes from both Old and New testaments and suggests there is no conflict between their teachings. The main symbol of the Holy Spirit is a dove, but other symbols are used, notably fire, water, oil and air. The dove symbol is most often reproduced in art and literature. In *Come Holy Spirit Come*, Peter De Rosa connects the symbol through both testaments:

the dove is first mentioned in the Bible in the story of Noah and the Flood (*Genesis* 8). It is only when the waters subside that the dove appears. It represents God's kindness and his forgiveness of a world whose sins had brought so great a calamity. The Hebrew word for dove is *Jonah*. The Old Testament book that tells the parable of the reluctant prophet being swallowed by a big fish after refusing to preach to the hated Ninevites is really, therefore "The Book of the Dove." *Jonah*, despite his loathing for the task, eventually identifies himself with the saving work God gave him to do; and the Ninevites, who do not know their right hand from their left, repent in sackcloth and ashes. Once more the dove has been the messenger of God's kindness and mercy.⁽²⁾

The New Bible Dictionary describes five aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament: creation, equipping for service, inspiring prophets, producing moral living, and foretelling the messiah.⁽³⁾ In his book *Holy Spirit*, Michael Ramsey goes further in linking the Holy Spirit in both testaments:

Behind the meaning of the Holy Spirit for Christianity there lie concepts of the Old Testament which form the background for the mission of Our Lord and the teachings of the apostles "Spirit" in the writings of the Old Testament is not a person or a definable object or substance. It is a mode of describing how the Holy God is active in the world which He created and especially in persons in whom his purpose is fulfilled.⁽⁴⁾

In *The Belief of Christendom*, Burnaby repeats the contention that there is no problem in reconciling the Holy Spirit in both testaments and goes on to consider the different aspects of the Holy Spirit in different parts of the New Testament.⁽⁵⁾ Why, he asks, are there so few references in the synoptic gospels? There are in fact only two, compared with many more in the Acts and the Epistles. He argues that Jesus believed that it was the Holy Spirit which allowed Him to cast out demons, and consequently His belief in the spirit is implicit in His activity as an exorcist. Furthermore, Jesus did not publicly claim to be the messiah because His understanding of messiahship was different from popular contemporary expectation.

Burnaby hypothesises that Jesus' reticence about the Holy Spirit may have resulted from similar reasons. He then states that "the key to the problem may well be found in the Fourth Gospel: 'There was not yet Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified' (John 7:39)."⁽⁶⁾ At Pentecost, Burnaby claims the promises of Joel and Jesus are fulfilled. The church becomes a community possessed by spirit, performing miracles and speaking in tongues. The Holy Spirit, says Burnaby, was guiding the church, "It is only by virtue of the Spirit presence that the Christian Faith is possible."⁽⁷⁾ Though all Christians accept the existence of the Holy Spirit, different groups attach varying importance to it. Followers of the charismatic movement, for example, place great emphasis on it and perceive the spirit as the living part of the trinity in the church today.

The Holy Spirit in the Bahá'í tradition

In contrast to the Christian view of the Holy Spirit as one part of a unique trinity, some Bahá'ís have suggested that all major religions include some concept of a trinity, albeit often only symbolic ones.⁽⁸⁾ In religion, three essential actors might be seen: a giver, a gift, and a recipient. God is the giver. His Messengers receive the Holy Spirit, His gift to them. In this way, a trinity exists in each of the major religions. For example, the Holy Spirit is variously described in the Abrahamic religions and Zoroastrianism as "the burning bush," "the sacred fire," "the dove," "the angel Gabriel," and "the Holy Maiden." They are all the outward symbols of the same truth. They represent the moment when the Holy Spirit or the wisdom of God became directly associated with His messenger.⁽⁹⁾

Bahá'ís regard the Holy Maiden as an allegorical representation of the Most Great Spirit common to all religion. The Maiden does not form any part of a trinity or "tri-God" in the Christian sense. But, rather it is a conduit, akin to the Muslim concept of Gabriel (who is mentioned in the Bahá'í writings). Bahá'ís believe Christian constructions of a trinity are flawed by a literal interpretation of symbolic imagery. Sears writes,

What tragedies have occurred because man elevates the outward symbol to the place of honour rightfully belonging to the inward truth.... The misunderstanding of the meaning of the Trinity led to more bloodshed among fellow Christians than all the persecutions by non-Christians.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Holy Maiden is an undoubtedly female symbol. She is sometimes represented as a bride of either the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh, such as in the *Hidden Words*.⁽¹¹⁾ Many of the references to her appear in texts that are still untranslated into English. A number of these references to "maids of Heaven" might be analogous with the "black eyed maidens" of the Qu'rán, but the parallel is probably only superficial. The Maid of Heaven, or Holy Maiden, plays an especially important part in Bahá'u'lláh's visionary, allegorical writings during His stay in Baghdad.

Bahá'u'lláh states that He had a vision of the Maiden whilst imprisoned in the Black Pit in Tehran during 1852-3. He recounts the vision in the "Sura of the Temple,"

While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden - the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord - suspended in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good-pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the brightness of the All-Merciful. Betwixt Earth and Heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both My inward and outer being tidings which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God's honoured servants. Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in Heaven and all who are on Earth saying: "By God! This is the best beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand."⁽¹²⁾

The Maid of Heaven thereafter appears as a personification of the spirit of God throughout Bahá'u'lláh's writings. She next appears in the "Ode of the Dove," a two thousand verse poem which Bahá'u'lláh wrote at the request of Kurdish divines. The poem is about the relationship between the Manifestation of God and the Most Great Spirit. It takes the form of a dialogue between Bahá'u'lláh and the Holy Maiden. Bahá'u'lláh praises and glorifies the Holy Maiden and dwells on His past sufferings, He speaks of His loneliness and grief, whilst affirming His resolution to continue with His ministry.⁽¹³⁾

The "Tablet of the Maiden" continues this theme. Again, two figures appear in the drama: Bahá'u'lláh, as the Supreme

Manifestation of God, and the Holy Maiden, symbolising some of the attributes of God previously hidden from humankind. In the course of the dialogue between the two, Bahá'u'lláh recounts His afflictions and describes the uniqueness of His station.⁽¹⁴⁾ Other tablets from this period, such as the "Tablet of the Deathless Youth," and the "Tablet of the Wondrous Maiden," also contain the symbolism of the Holy Maiden. All convey the glad tidings of the new revelation in highly allegorical language, with the symbol of the Holy Maiden representing the spirit of God.⁽¹⁵⁾ None of them have been translated into English; English-speakers find the most familiar references to the Holy Maiden in the *Hidden Words* (Persian number 77) and "The Tablet of the Holy Mariner."

In the night-season the beauty of the immortal Beauty hath repaired from the emerald height of fidelity unto the Sadratu'l-Muntahá⁽¹⁶⁾ and wept with such a weeping that the concourse on high and the dwellers of the realms above wailed at his lamenting. Whereupon there was asked why the wailing and weeping? He made reply: as bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwelt on the earth the fragrance of fidelity. Then summoned to return I beheld, and lo! certain doves of holiness were sore tried within the claws of the dogs of earth. Thereupon the Maid of Heaven hastened forth unveiled and resplendent from Her mystic mansion, and asked of their names, and all were told but one. And when urged the first letter thereof was uttered, whereupon the dwellers of the celestial chambers rushed forth out of their habitation of glory. And whilst the second letter was pronounced they fell down, one and all upon the dust. At that moment a voice was heard from the inmost shrine: "Thus far and no farther."⁽¹⁷⁾

Later works such as the "Súratu'l Bayán," revealed in 1873, are rather different in style from Bahá'u'lláh's Baghdad writings. Lamentation and torment are replaced by triumph and glorification of a new revelation.

Step out of thy Holy chamber, O Maid of Heaven...drape thyself in whatever manner pleaseth Thee.... Unveil Thy face, and manifest the beauty of the black eyed damsel....⁽¹⁸⁾

I am the Maid of Heaven, the offspring begotten by the Spirit of Bahá...⁽¹⁹⁾

If God is male...

Within Christian tradition, the Holy Spirit has been perceived by various people at various times as female or feminine. Sebastian Brock in *The Holy Spirit as feminine in early Syriac literature* examines the use of the feminine pronoun for the Holy Spirit in Syriac, and how this purely grammatical feature might have affected its role. He outlines the history of different translations and notes how the feminine usage changed.

From the fifth century onwards a revulsion against the idea of the Holy Spirit as mother must have set in. This may partly have been due to the misuse of the imagery by some heretical groups, though another factor should be kept in mind: in the Syriac speaking areas of the Eastern Roman Empire the large scale influx of new converts to Christianity will have included many people whose background lay in the pagan cults in which a divine triad of father, Mother and Son was prominent.⁽²⁰⁾

Brock concludes that the Syriac writers were following Old Testament writers who frequently used female imagery for God. Such imagery was also used by western authors, notably Dame Julian of Norwich, St. Bernard, and St. Anselm. Brock's article raises as many questions as it answers. He does not relate it to the position of women in the Syriac church nor does he justify why an influx of converts with a background of paganism should have resulted in the removal of feminine imagery (the reverse might have occurred).

Part of Brock's article is reproduced in Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Womanguides*. Her chapter, "The Divine Pleroma", is prefaced with a picture of a fourteenth century fresco in Urschalling Church, near Munich. The picture shows the trinity represented by two bearded men and a woman. Ruether writes,

The feminine Holy Spirit, between Father and Son; too much a female deity for patriarchal Christian orthodoxy but still too circumscribed by male power for feminist theology. But, still, she is worthy of our contemplation. What would it have meant for Christianity if the Trinity had been taught to us in this form?⁽²¹⁾

Unfortunately, Ruether makes no attempt to answer her own question. The question is, however, considered by Sarah Coakley in "'Femininity' and the Holy Spirit."⁽²²⁾ She answers issues raised by Yves Congar in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*⁽²³⁾ Coakley argues that a feminine Holy Spirit might not necessarily please feminists. She questions sex role stereotyping implicit in the use of the term femininity and the selective use of "comforter" images by Congar, rather than "fiery" ones. The early Syriac mother images are another example of stereotyped figures, and Coakley points to the ambiguity in the hovering and impregnating themes in creation, annunciation, and the sacraments.

The nature of the term "feminine" is further questioned when she considers what qualities are instilled by the Holy Spirit and/or necessary for its activity. Receptivity to the Holy Spirit might reinforce the notion of prayer as "womens' work." The terms masculine

and feminine, she argues, can only be non-judgementally understood as "traditionally assigned to females (males)."⁽²⁴⁾ Having dismissed Congar's ascription of femininity and motherhood to the Holy Spirit as of no lasting theological value, Coakley concedes that whilst feminising the Holy Spirit might have a useful shock value and could help some women feel less "unchurched," in the long term it might restrict the Holy Spirit to traditional female traits.⁽²⁵⁾

People aligned with Christian feminists who reject feminising the Holy Spirit because it might stereotype women may find some of the "erotic" imagery about the Holy Maiden equally unwelcome. This imagery has been considered at length by John Walbridge in "Erotic Imagery in the Allegorical Writings of Bahá'u'lláh."⁽²⁶⁾ He considers the Maiden in four attitudes: "revealed" (as in the epiphany of the Black Pit), "in love" (such as in the bridal imagery of the Tablet of the Deathless Youth), "heartbroken" (such as in the Tablet of the Maiden), and "afterwards" (which refers to Bahá'u'lláh's post-Baghdad writings). A few examples illustrate the nature of this imagery.

I found myself sick with love and passionate longing for her. I lifted my hand and drew back the hem of her veil from her shoulder. Her hair fell in twining curls nearly to her feet. As the winds stirred it from off her shoulder blade, the heavens and earth were perfumed with its fragrance....⁽²⁷⁾

I raised My hand once more and uncovered her breast that had been hidden beneath her gown.⁽²⁸⁾ A puzzled Maiden asks Bahá'u'lláh who He is. He replies, "A servant of God and the Son of His maidservant."⁽²⁹⁾ Detecting His sadness she continues to question. He refuses to tell his sorrows knowing that she cannot bear them, but she looks into his breast and discovers that his heart and liver have been eaten away by sorrow. In horror, she exclaims it would have been better if He had not been born. She throws herself at his feet and dies of sorrow.

The Christian concept of the Holy Spirit as the living church, and the church as the bride of Christ is not entirely dissimilar with Bahá'u'lláh's treatment of the Maiden. Cultures practising arranged marriages often view a bride as a symbol of hidden but soon-to-be-revealed knowledge. In a paper "The Maid of heaven, the image of Sophia, and the Logos," Michael Sours identifies the connectedness of the bridal imagery in the Old Testament, "In one sense, the great King Solomon can be viewed as corresponding to Bahá'u'lláh, and Sophia as the Maiden or heavenly bride."⁽³⁰⁾ The parallels between the image of the Maid of Heaven and logos Christology are fairly general and probably intentional. According to Sours,

Bahá'u'lláh frequently draws on the Biblical narratives. Qur'anic verses and Sufi poetry for inspirational and didactic purposes. Such instances occur often without any citations and it seems that the reader is expected to already know the stories or it is assumed that in time they will. If there is any connection between the image of Sophia and Bahá'u'lláh's symbolism of the Maiden it may express the eternal Logos dimension of His Revelation and involve an affirmation of the fulfilment related to possible eschatological interpretation of the Wisdom literature.⁽³¹⁾

Then the male is God

At first glance, Daly's sentiments appear to be validated. The Bahá'í Faith, with a feminine representation of the Holy Spirit, also has a principle of the equality of men and women, while Christians, with their all-male trinity, once argued about whether women had souls. However, a closer analysis suggests otherwise. First, although the Holy Spirit in Christianity and the Holy Maiden in the Bahá'í Faith have similar functions - the medium by which God's message is conveyed to His Messenger - their positions in the respective religions are different. The Holy Maiden is not as important as the Holy Spirit. It is repeatedly stressed that she is nothing more than an allegorical symbol.⁽³²⁾

By contrast, the Holy Spirit is the person or force empowering the church. To suggest that the Bahá'í view of women hinges on the existence of this symbol is to suggest that Christians should take an abiding interest in ornithology because of the dove symbol.

The Bahá'í commitment to the equality of men and women is based upon specific texts. The gender of the Maid of Heaven in this sense is incidental. Even those who argue that the Bahá'í Faith has answered all the questions that feminist theology might pose, make their claim without reference to the Holy Maiden. Furthermore, despite the acceptance of the equality of men and women as a principle of faith, despite the female imagery, I am unconvinced Bahá'í women are less affected by patriarchal society than women of other faiths. There is no marked improvement in the situation of women in Iran or Arabic-speaking countries despite access to the scriptures in which the Holy Maiden appears.

So what difference does a symbol make? In *Metaphor and religious language*, Janet Soskice says,

Choice (of symbols) is not unconditioned; we do not choose the model of God as a shepherd over that of God the poultry keeper or cattleman at random. A favoured model continues to be so by virtue of its own applicability certainly, but also because the history of its application makes it freighted with meanings.⁽³³⁾

Symbols are reflections of human understanding of God through the prism of culture. They may be God-given through Revelation, but the understanding of them is limited by language and imagination, which are entirely human. Artificial attempts to ascribe "feminine" attributes to symbols can only limit them further and reinforce female stereotypes. After all, "black-eyed, veiled virgins" are not exactly exemplars of raised female consciousness even if they may symbolise God. There is no evidence that a female image of God results in a higher status for women. William Oddie, in *What will happen to God?*, writes,

Certain objections to this line of argument immediately present themselves. Most obviously, perhaps, it is far from clear that matriarchal religions, or religions with a mixed pantheon of gods and goddesses, were generally reflected by a higher position for women in the society; there is in fact, considerable evidence to the contrary. Certainly, matriarchal religions were never mirrored by matriarchal societies ... and there is no evidence that any such society has ever existed; myths to this effect are not regarded as being historically reliable tradition by anthropologists. The societies which worshipped fertility goddesses were, in fact, in the modern feminist sense, just as patriarchal as the Hebrew society by which some of them were replaced.⁽³⁴⁾

In answer to Daly, God is God, indivisible and all-powerful. Male domination of patriarchal culture means that men, rather than women, interpreted and expanded the meaning of symbols. God cannot be "feminised" or replaced with a goddess. Rewriting the scriptures in "femspeak" is an artificial construction. The true equality of men and women must be within the context of the unity of humankind. That means changing society so that women matter, not changing the symbols. Daly's flawed dictum brings to mind the Mad Hatter's retort to Alice, "You see what you eat, is not the same as you eat what you see."

End Notes

1. M. Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (London: The Women's Press, 1991) 19.
2. Peter De Rosa, *Come Holy Spirit Come* (London: Fontana, 1975) 13.
3. J. Douglas (ed.), *The New Bible Dictionary* (London: Intervarsity Press, 1975).
4. M. Ramsay, *Holy Spirit* (London: SPCK, 1975) 10.
5. J. Burnaby, *The Belief of Christendom* (London: SPCK, 1959).
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. W. Sears, *The Wine of Astonishment* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985) 103-4.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 107.
11. Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1975) Persian number 77.
12. Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Company, 1950) 101.
13. A. Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, vol. 2, (Oxford: George Ronald, 1988) 63.
14. *Ibid.*, 125.
15. *Ibid.*, 213, 218.
16. In the Bahá'í interpretation, the lote-tree beyond which there is no passing can refer to the Manifestation of God and is a title of Bahá'u'lláh. See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 96 (cf. the tree of extremity in *Qur'án* 53:14,16).
17. Persian Hidden Words 77, op cit.
18. Bahá'u'lláh, "Tablet of the Holy Mariner," in *Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1986) 714.
19. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983) 284.
20. S. Brock, "The Holy Spirit as feminine in early Syriac literature," in J. Soskice (ed.) *After Eve* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1990) 82.
21. R. Ruether, *Womanguides* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985) 24.
22. S. Coakley, "'Femininity' and the Holy Spirit?" in M. Furlong (ed.) *Mirror to the Church: Reflections on Sexism* (London: SPCK, 1988) 124-35.
23. Y. Cogar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3 (New York/London 1983) 161-2.,
24. S. Coakley, "'Femininity' and the Holy Spirit?" 130.
25. *Ibid.*, 135.
26. J. Walbridge, "Erotic Imagery in the Allegorical Writings of Bahá'u'lláh," unpublished paper presented at the Religious Studies Special Interest Group of the Association for Bahá'í Studies - ESE, Newcastle upon Tyne 1991.
27. *Ibid.*, provisional translation.
28. *Ibid.*, provisional translation.
29. *Ibid.*, provisional translation.
30. M. Sours, "The Maid of Heaven, the image of Sophia and the Logos," *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 4.1 (1991): 47-66.
31. *Ibid.*
32. W. Sears, *Wine of Astonishment* 104.
33. J. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) 84.
34. W. Oddie, *What will happen to God?* (London: SPCK, 1984) 77.

For the Christian faith, the Holy Spirit is clearly recognizable in charismatic figures (the saints), in whom the gifts of grace (charismata) of the Holy Spirit are expressed in different forms: reformers and other charismatic figures. The prophet, for instance, belongs to these charismatic types. The history of the church knows a continuous series of prophetic types, beginning with New Testament prophets, such as Agabus (in Acts 11:28), and continuing with the 12th-century monk Bernard of Clairvaux and such reformers as Luther and Calvin. Many Free Church and ecclesiastical reform movements owe their genesis to such spirit-filled teachers, who are often decried as anomalous. The deacon likewise is originally the holder of a charismatic office of selfless service. Many Christian and post-Christian feminist theologians wrestle with the "maleness" of the Christian God. They pose the question, "Can a male saviour save women?" and declare, "If God is male, then the male is God."⁽¹⁾ Whilst the genders of the "Father" and "Son" of the Christian trinity are clearly defined, the "Holy Spirit's" gender seems rather more ambiguous. I will attempt to evaluate how much the gender ascribed to an allegorical religious symbol affects the position of women in religion and society. A traditional Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit comes from both Old and New testaments and suggests there is no conflict between their teachings. The main symbol of the Holy Spirit is a dove, but other symbols are used, notably fire, water, oil and air. In Baha'i Writings the feminine is represented as the "Maid of Heaven": "Say: Step out of Thy holy chamber, O Maid of Heaven, inmate of the Exalted Paradise! Drape thyself in whatever manner pleaseth Thee in the silken Vesture of Immortality, and put on, in the name of the All-Glorious, the brodered Robe of Light. On this scale, christian god would score as number 2. Jesus on the other hand was clearly male, but Holy Spirit doesn't even have humanish form, so he can't really be attached to either gender imo. Well, personally speaking, I wouldn't mind connecting with some goddess too. Haven't so far been able to do that - at least not on level I have connected with god. The Holy Spirit also helps Christians in their weakness and intercedes for them. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, believers are saved, filled, sealed, and sanctified. The Holy Spirit reveals God's thoughts, teaches, and guides believers into all truth. The Holy Spirit also helps Christians in their weakness and intercedes for them. Female entrepreneur. Gender representation on corporate boards of directors. Economic development. Explorers and travelers. `Abdu'l-Bahá stated that gender equality was not simply righting historical social injustices against women, but would serve as a key factor in wide-ranging societal changes that would help develop a new civilization in which more 'feminine' qualities such as tender-heartedness and receptivity would balance previously dominant 'masculine' forces.[4] The Bahá'í writings state that until women are provided. The women members of the International Bahá'í Council, and their dates of their service were:[22]. Rúhiyyih Khanum (1951–61) Liaison with Shoghi Effendi; Hand of the Cause of God. Amelia Collins (1951–61) Vice president; Hand of the Cause.