



Dr. Zia M. Bagdádí.

DR. BAGDÁDÍ'S WORK ON THE STAR OF
THE WEST

Mr. Windust, who was one of the founders and editors of the *Star of the West*, spoke of Dr. Bagdádí's services to that magazine, as follows—Dr. Bagdádí became associate editor of this Bahá'í publication, June 5, 1911, beginning with issue No. 5, Volume II, wherein we read: "It gives us pleasure to welcome to the editorial staff of the *Star of the West*, Dr. Zia Mabsut Bagdádí ("Zia Effendi"), the youngest son of the late M. Muşţafá Bagdádí. Dr. Bagdádí received his early education in the Orient at the Arabian Literature school, Turkish Government school and the American school. His childhood was blessed by seeing and being with the Blessed Perfection Bahá'u'lláh, and in every year of his youth he visited the Center of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He came to America in September, 1909, to complete a course in medicine, graduating

from the Chicago College of Medicine and Surgery in May of this year (1911). He intends to practice in America and be engaged in serving the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. We are confident the *Star of the West* has in him an able and willing associate."

In the *Star of the West*, Volume III, No. 15 issue, we find the following: "A word of explanation is given regarding the re-appearance of our Persian section after many months. As the editor, Mirzá Aḥmad Sohrab, accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá on most of His journeyings throughout America, it was almost impossible for him to look after the Persian section, and now that he has returned to the East, it has become necessary to place that department in other hands. Dr. Zia Bagdádí, who has been associated with him in this work, has consented to render this service. He is located in Chicago."

Throughout the remainder of the issues of Volume III, and all of Volumes IV and V

—there were 19 issues in each volume—Dr. Bagdádí compiled and wrote the manuscript in the form of pages, which were photographed, reduced to page size, etched on zinc, which became the printing plates for the Persian sections of the *Star of the West*—a total of 262 pages. His beautiful style of writing was distinctly Arabic in character. This labor was accomplished by Dr. Bagdádí in addition to translating Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and speaking on the Cause wherever the opportunity arose—all this aside from his practice of medicine and surgery.

DR. BAGDÁDÍ WITH ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
IN CHICAGO

Reference was made to the photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, together with five of the Oriental Bahá’ís, taken by Mr. Killius in Lincoln Park, Chicago, in 1912. Standing directly behind ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, on the right, is Dr. Bagdádí. In looking at this photograph, one is impressed with the thought that our beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, has, in his cablegram, perfectly described the qualities of Dr. Bagdádí.

This photograph was taken directly across the street from the Plaza Hotel. In this connection, it is interesting to note that when it was taken, no one dreamed that in this same part of Lincoln Park, the Chicago Historical Society would erect the splendid museum which stands there today.

DR. BAGDÁDÍ’S DEVOTED LABOR FOR THE
TEMPLE

Shoghi Effendi, in his cablegram requesting the holding of this memorial gathering for Dr. Bagdádí, states: . . . “Advise Bahá’í Communities of Chicago and surrounding regions hold befitting memorial gathering in Temple for which he so valiantly and devotedly labored.” . . .

In this connection we were reminded by Mrs. True, of the photograph taken on this Temple site March 21, 1921, and published in the *Star of the West*, Volume XII, No. 2. It was the beginning of actual work for the construction of the first Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in America; that is, the breaking of ground for the digging of the first of the nine caissons to bed rock—the one directly in

line with Haifa from the center of the building. In this photograph Dr. Bagdádí is seen digging the first shovelful of earth—the other friends present following him in breaking the ground. It was indeed fitting that Dr. Bagdádí should have this honor, and his association with this great event¹ is sufficient evidence of the esteem his fellow-believers had for his valiant and devoted labors for the Temple and the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh.

NOTEWORTHY QUALITIES OF DR. BAGDÁDÍ

Mr. Windust spoke of the time when his family met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in an upper room at the home of Mrs. Davies in Chicago. When He saw the youngest child, He took her upon His lap and called for someone to bring candy for the little one. Dr. Bagdádí instantly responded, leaping down the stairs two or more steps at a time, obtained the candy, and sprang up stairs with it, handing the bowl to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a courier would present an urgent message to a king. It was an impressive demonstration to many who witnessed it, of the divine qualities of “instant, exact and complete obedience” Dr. Bagdádí so remarkably possessed.

Mrs. Grace Ober also testified to this outstanding characteristic of Dr. Bagdádí, by telling the following experience: “I was keeping house in New York for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His party of interpreters at the time when He attended the Peace Conference at Lake Mohonk. Late at night, the bell rang furiously and at the door stood Dr. Bagdádí, no hat upon his head, his hair disheveled, and his clothes covered with dust. He rushed into the house saying ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had sent him to bring a rug to Lake Mohonk at the earliest possible moment. I begged him to have something to eat, to bathe and rest for a little while. But quickly finding what he wanted he rushed away with it. During the short time he was in the house I learned that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wished to present a gift to the Secretary of the Peace Conference, Mr. W. H. Short, Sec’y of the

¹ This breaking of ground for the actual construction of the caissons to bed rock should not be confused with the boring operations begun on September 24, 1920, to obtain a core of soil strata before beginning the digging of the caissons, which began March 21, 1921.—Editors



Friends assembled on Mashriqu'l-Adhkár grounds, Chicago, March 21, 1921.
Dr. Zia M. Bagdádí digging first shovelful of earth.

New York Peace Society, before the close of its sessions next day, and that it was necessary that some one of His party go to the city for it and return at once. Dr. Bagdádí had instantly volunteered. He discovered there was no passenger train at that hour and boarded a freight train, arriving in the condition I described. I learned later that in returning he again rode on a freight train as there was no other transportation at that early morning hour. Dr. Bagdádí was the embodiment of the quality of "Instant, exact and complete obedience."

The chairman expressed the thought that every one present at this memorial gathering, who knew Dr. Bagdádí, no doubt cherished in his heart and memory some particular remembrance or many remembrances of our dearly beloved Dr. Bagdádí.

FIRMNESS IN THE COVENANT, AN OUTSTANDING QUALITY OF DR. BAGDÁDÍ

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá came to America in 1912, He awakened and began to educate the Bahá'ís to the Most Great Characteristic of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, namely, The Center of the Covenant—that which the previous Divine Manifestations did not bring. From that time until the day of His ascension in 1921, He stressed its importance with ever increasing emphasis, thus preparing them for the hour when His Will and Testament was brought to light.

During these years Dr. Bagdádí was a pillar of strength to the Bahá'ís of America manifesting firmness in the Covenant and all that it implies. He alone seemed to understand the deep meanings of this most great characteristic—that is: through the power of the Covenant no one can create a sect or division in the Bahá'í Faith; through this most great characteristic, the Center of the Covenant will protect the Cause from now until at least one thousand years, and perhaps until thousands of years have passed away.

Those who attended the eighth session of the Bahá'í Congress at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, April 30th, 1919, will never forget Dr. Bagdádí's presentation of this most important matter. Although he had been ill for three days, he arose to astonishing heights and depths of understanding in this address, unfolding all the qualities Shoghi Effendi mentions in the cablegram prompting this memorial gathering—of "exemplary faith, audacity, unquestioning loyalty, indefatigable exertion"—combined with a dramatic appeal that was arresting and soul stirring. This outstanding address of that remarkable Congress was taken stenographically and printed in Volume XI of the *Star of the West*.

DR. BAGDÁDÍ WRITES OF SEEING AND BEING WITH BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

In the year 1929, Dr. Bagdádí wrote a book telling of his birthplace and travels in

the Orient under the title, *Treasures of the East*. In it he describes the peerless panorama of the Plain of 'Akká surrounded by mountains and sea, in the center of which is the Mansion of Bahjí, located about one mile from the Mediterranean and three miles from the town of 'Akká, Palestine. It was here Bahá'u'lláh lived the last few years of His exile until He departed to the Supreme World in 1892. Dr. Bagdádí tells that here, when he was a child, he had the great privilege of seeing and being with Bahá'u'lláh. He wrote:

"I had the greatest honor and privilege to see Bahá'u'lláh and sit at His feet many days and nights in this Mansion. Here He used to hold my hand while walking to and fro in His large room, revealing Tablets, chanting the prayers with the most charming and melodious voice, while one of the attendants took them down. Here I saw Him teaching and blessing the pilgrims who came from all lands. On hot days He would take me with Him to the outer alcove of the Mansion where it was somewhat cooler. I would stand in a corner with folded arms, my eyes fixed on His incomparable countenance, while the gentle breezes blew on His soft jet black hair which reached almost to the waist, flowing beneath the taj, like a crown, that covered His head and a part of His broad, full, high forehead.

"From His light-colored garments which were similar to those of all the ancient prophets, I had always inhaled the fragrance of the pure attar of roses. At times He would spend half an hour on the alcove, and my eyes would remain fixed on His majestic face. But whenever He glanced at me with His brown, piercing, yet most affectionate eyes, then I had to turn mine away and look down on the floor.

"At my birth, Bahá'u'lláh named me 'Zia' (Light) and gave me the Turkish title 'Effendi.' But on my first visit to Him, when He inquired about my health, I replied in Arabic 'Mabsoot' (I am happy). He questioned, 'How is your father?' I answered, 'Mabsoot'; and 'How is your mother?' He asked. 'Mabsoot' was my reply. He laughed heartily and after that He always called me Mabsoot Effendi (The Happy One)."

MRS. LAURIE C. WILHELM

BY ROY C. WILHELM

Mother's strong religious tendency began with her mother who was religious fundamentally though I do not recall her ever having attended a church; and she did not believe that a system in which professional religionists preached for hire was in accord with the admonitions and example of Jesus. During my early years Grandmother often spoke to me of so many of the Bible prophecies being fulfilled and said she believed the Promised Age was near and we must all be watchful to recognize the Great Day when it came. Mother and father were members of a denomination to which they sent me in my youth—though they were not orthodox in their views, rather they shared Grandmother's beliefs that the Creator of all humanity was interested in all humanity.

About 1890 Mother became dissatisfied with the churches and began searching for reality. She investigated various teachings including the philosophies of the East, Christian Science, etc. I sometimes wondered, "What next?" Mother also felt deeply that the Great Day was near, that it might come even in our time—and how would we be able to recognize its fulfillment!

Mother had a friend, kindred in thought, in Miss Laura Jones, also of our old home town—Zanesville, Ohio: they often met together, and wondered if the Spirit might be upon the earth at this time: how shall we find Him, etc. Shortly after the early 90's Miss Laura moved to Chicago. There she heard of the Bahá'í Faith, and wrote to Mother that she had found that for which they had been seeking. In her letter she included some pamphlets, among which was a copy of the "Hidden Words." Mother read these, and accepted immediately. About 1898 or 1899, when I was a traveling salesman, Mother mailed me a page from a newspaper containing a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and an article in which something was said to the effect that many regarded Him as a return of the Spirit. Having in mind Mother's various explorations I was not so deeply impressed, but wrote upon the margin, "Strange if true" and returned it to her. In 1901 and 1902, Mother and Father vis-