

Words of Wisdom: Wilmette Institute faculty notes

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Note by Robert Stockman:

One of the tablets we are focusing on is the Asl-i-Kullu'l-Khayr or "Words of Wisdom" as it is usually translated into English. What would be a more literal translation? I ask this of those who know Arabic and Persian.

The tablet is relatively short; it may be found in *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh,* pages 155-157. It is one of the most favorite tablets to read at Feasts and holy days because of its beautiful, short aphorisms. What is the essence of wisdom? love? religion? detachment? The tablet describes each of these and more. "The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His glory" is one of the quotations the Guardian chose to adorn one of the doors of the House of Worship in Wilmette.

There is nothing at all about this tablet in Taherzadeh's four volumes. I believe it is completely undated; no one is sure when it was revealed. It is generally thought to be an Akká period tablet, but I recently heard a talk where the speaker suggested the Words of Wisdom may actually be a Baghdad-period revelation! This is the conclusion one would draw from its style, which is closer to the Hidden Words and the Seven and Four Valleys than anything else. But, of course, Bahá'u'lláh can re-use a style any time in His revelation, and indeed he often returns to themes that were prominent in the earliest period of His ministry. Hence the use of the tablet's style to date it is a shaky method, unless there is corroborating evidence.

I have also never seen any information about the recipient of the tablet. The lack of information about the tablet compounds the mystery that surrounds it.

Note by Iraj Ayman:

Here is the translation of the title "Asl-i-Kul'l Khayr":
asl is translated by Shoghi Effendi in the Gleanings as "the essence" or "the very root and essence"; kul means "all"; khayr means "good"; hence Shoghi Effendi has translated kul'l khayr as "all good."

Therefore the translation of the title of this Tablet is the essence of all good. However, the Guardian has translated that Tablet and named it "Words of Wisdom" which better presents the content of that Tablet. He enclosed that translation with His letter of May 6, 1023 to the National Spiritual Assembly in North America. This is what He has written in that letter:

"P.S. I enclose a copy of my translation of Bahá'u'lláh's Words of Wisdom,
which you will feel at liberty to circulate amongst the friends."

(Shoghi Effendi: Bahá'í Administration, Page: 49)

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