

## COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY on Franklin Lewis' "Translating the Hidden Words," *Bahá'í Studies Review* 8 (1998): 1-14.

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### Revision of the Guardian's translations

Revision of Shoghi Effendi's translations of Bahá'í scripture into English is possible since he did not claim infallibility in matters of translation. In the case of the *Hidden Words*, this is attested to by the fact that he revised his own translation several times throughout his life (so previous versions cannot be regarded as *infallible* renderings).<sup>1</sup> The humble tone of Shoghi Effendi's foreword to his 1931 translation of the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* is further proof that he did not consider himself the sole, infallible translator of Bahá'u'lláh's writings.<sup>2</sup>

Shoghi Effendi's fine linguistic talents and his competency as a translator are undoubted. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá's appointed successor and sole expounder of the Bahá'í writings, however, these English renderings possess an interpretative quality that sometimes steers away from literal translation.<sup>3</sup> The Guardian's concern for the flow of the English translation sometimes superseded the need to include every word in the original.<sup>4</sup> Malouf has shown, through her comparison of translations of the *Hidden Words* by Kheiralla, Fareed, Stannard, and Shoghi Effendi that several distinct renderings are often

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<sup>1</sup> Shoghi Effendi first published an English translation of the *Hidden Words* in 1923. He added a revised foreword in 1925. In 1929 a fresh translation, revised with the "assistance of some English friends", was published in London. This version was revised at least once more by the Guardian towards the end of his life and republished in 1954. Cf. *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin* [BSB] 5/1-2 (1991): 90, excerpt from a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, 14/8/1930.

<sup>2</sup> "This is one more attempt to introduce into the West, in language however *inadequate*, this book...The hope is that it may *assist* others in their efforts to approach what must always be regarded as the *unattainable* goal –a befitting rendering of Bahá'u'lláh's matchless utterance", *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1989), my italics.

<sup>3</sup> *BSB* 5/1-2 (1991): 89 excerpt from a letter of the Universal House of Justice (8/12/1964) "where a passage in Persian or Arabic could give rise to two different expressions in English he [the Guardian] would know which one to convey."

<sup>4</sup> For example the *Hidden Words*, Arabic no.1: "...ancient, imperishable and everlasting". The original has four adjectives: "*dá'iman báqiyan azalan qadíman*". See also the short obligatory prayer: "...to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth". The original Arabic has an additional phrase: "*wa a'fi wa iqtidáríka*" (to my weakness and Thy power). Presumably the Guardian felt the sense of this phrase was covered in the other two.

possible for any particular word or phrase.<sup>5</sup> The incorporation of these diverse readings and the original words in transliteration in footnotes could greatly assist those readers intent on a scholarly reading of the text.<sup>6</sup>

In his review, Lewis appears to advocate not only the possibility of revision of the Guardian's English translations, but also, perhaps, the "dumbing down" of these writings to a level readily understood by a typical American teenager.<sup>7</sup> I would suggest, however, that a higher priority might be to raise the reading sophistication of Bahá'ís, whilst improving the accessibility of existing translations with notes and glossaries.

I agree with Lewis that some revision of Shoghi Effendi's King James style, such as the replacement of the distracting archaisms "thou" and "ye",<sup>8</sup> is both feasible and appropriate at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But do we really want to imitate the plain, modern translations of the *Good News Bible* in English? Shoghi Effendi presumably opted for this archaic style, not because he wanted to make Bahá'í scripture difficult to read, but because he felt it best mirrored the aesthetic quality of the original. Aesthetic compatibility with the original would surely be an important consideration in selecting any English style for the translation of the writings.<sup>9</sup>

Lewis maintains that the "'average reader' in the 1990s...may well come from an unchurched background and may never have read the Bible devotionally...perhaps not at all",<sup>10</sup> as a justification for moving away from Shoghi Effendi's quasi-biblical English. This may be true in western Europe and North America, but in those regions where the majority of Bahá'ís from a Christian background reside (South America and Africa), the average literate believer's familiarity with the Bible is probably much greater.

Lewis also seems to exaggerate the link between medieval and Elizabethan English verse and the translation style of the Guardian. The suggestion that the prose of the King James Bible is as "opaque" to an audience of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as Chaucer or Shakespeare is for most contemporary Americans or Britons may be overstated.<sup>11</sup> King James English is far more accessible than Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (composed in Middle

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Diana Malouf, *Unveiling the Hidden Words* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1997) 67-90.

<sup>6</sup> The *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Haifa, 1992) is a rare example of a well-annotated Bahá'í text.

<sup>7</sup> Franklin Lewis, "Translating", 11. Cf. *BSB* 5/1-2 (1991): 95 excerpt from a letter of the Universal House of Justice (7/10/1973): "Many of the Tablets...are in exalted and highly poetic language in the original...and you will see...that when translating Bahá'u'lláh's writings into English, the beloved Guardian did not use present-day colloquial English but evolved a highly poetic and beautiful style, using a number of archaic expressions..."

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, "Translating", 11.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *BSB* 5/1-2 (1991): 92 from a letter of the Universal House of Justice dated 12/8/1973.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, "Translating", 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

English), and the latter is commonly studied with parallel modern translations and Shakespeare's plays, mostly in editions incorporating copious notes and glossaries.

Perhaps more importantly it might be argued that re-translation of the Guardian's translations is somewhat premature when many of the writings are not yet published in the original languages, let alone available in English.<sup>12</sup> And what about translations into other major world languages such as Chinese, French, Spanish and Russian? The Universal House of Justice's letter dated 30 June 1999 allows for increased circulation of provisional translations (in English), but new translations still require review in Haifa before they can be published as authorised Bahá'í scripture.

Revision of English translations other than those of the Guardian would appear to be a more pressing issue, particularly Marzieh Gail's translations of the *Seven Valleys* and (especially) the *Four Valleys*, and Laura Clifford Barney's translation of *Some Answered Questions*.<sup>13</sup>

One possible alternative is that more Bahá'ís learn to read Persian and Arabic, something encouraged by Bahá'u'lláh and recently reiterated by the Universal House of Justice.<sup>14</sup> This injunction is not simply confined to Bahá'ís of Iranian ancestry. Many prominent early western Bahá'ís studied Persian in order to improve their understanding of the writings.<sup>15</sup>

### **Possible amendments to existing editions**

Some of Lewis's objectives might be achieved by the addition of more extensive footnotes to existing editions, not only to list verses from the Bible or the Qur'án, but also to indicate identical or similar passages if they occur elsewhere in the writings. Texts could also be annotated with existing (often as yet unpublished) compilations prepared by the World Centre's research

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12 The Universal House of Justice warns against constantly altering English translations of the Bahá'í writings to suit changes in general writing styles. Cf. *BSB* 5/1-2 (1991): 95, from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice (3/2/1988): "Holy Scriptures have a profound meaning for their readers, and to change the familiar words too often can be gravely disturbing".

13 The Universal House of Justice is not opposed in principle to the revision of English translations *not* produced by the Guardian. Cf. *BSB* 5/1-2 (1991): 92, from a letter to an individual believer (8/12/1964): "In time, of course, old translations into English such as those of the Tablets and Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá will have to be revised, but we feel that this is not as urgent as many other tasks".

14 Bahá'u'lláh is keen that his followers learn Persian, cf. 'Ali-Akbar Furutan, *Lughat-i Fuá va Lughat-i Núrá* (Ontario: Persian Institute for Bahá'í Studies, 1992) 10: "the Beloved of the world speaks in the Persian language. It would be praiseworthy in His eyes if His loved ones also converse and write in this language". For the Universal House of Justice's encouragement of the Bahá'ís learning Persian, see their message addressed to the Iranian believers throughout the world, 154 BE.

15 For example, John E. Esslemont's knowledge of Persian meant he was able to assist others in the translation of Bahá'u'lláh's writings into Esperanto and English.

department (the *Hidden Words* is a good case in point).<sup>16</sup> Footnotes could also be added to indicate where phrases or words in the original have been omitted from the translation (cf. note 4). This would provide the reader with a more complete text. More comprehensive indexes of Bahá'í scripture, just now beginning to appear, are vital to increasing the accessibility of Bahá'í translations.<sup>17</sup> Closely linked to indexes are glossaries, which the Guardian recognised as instrumental to aiding the western reader's understanding of otherwise obscure Persian and Arabic terms (cf. *Kitáb-i-Íqán*). Glossaries of rare or archaic words in English, if added to Bahá'í texts, could be very effective in making Bahá'u'lláh's writings more accessible to younger readers. Moreover, recent translations of scripture from the Bahá'í world centre seem more accessible than before, such as the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (in both English translation and Arabic text with Persian notes).

### Arabic to Persian translation

Questions of the accessibility of Bahá'í scripture are, however, not solely confined to English translations. The Guardian prohibited the translation of Arabic writings into Persian, providing an interesting parallel for native Persian-speakers with western Bahá'ís.<sup>18</sup> Bahá'u'lláh himself translated parts of or entire tablets from Arabic into Persian,<sup>19</sup> and Persian to Arabic translation has been permitted with major works such as the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, published in Arabic at the request of the Guardian.<sup>20</sup> Persian translations of

<sup>16</sup> One edition of the *Seven Valleys* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1992) does include notes, prepared by Michael Sours, but many are too vague to be of any use (e.g. p. 69, notes 20, 23 and 24).

<sup>17</sup> The first edition of the *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1976) was not printed with an index.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Dawn of a New Day: Messages to India 1923-57* (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970) 85 "Regarding his instruction to the NSA of Iran to the effect that Bahá'u'lláh's writings in Arabic should not be translated into Persian, this applies to the translation of the revealed words into Persian only. Your Assembly, therefore, may proceed with its plan for the rendering of the Tablet of Ahmad, the three daily obligatory prayers and other Tablets, into Urdu". Shoghi Effendi also discouraged the printing of vowels (*i'ráb*) in some Arabic texts, cf. *ibid.*, 93-95. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also advised caution in regard to Arabic to Persian translation, cf. *Má'ida-yi Ásamání* part II (New Delhi, 1984) 53-4 on the translation of the Aqdas. Persian paraphrasing of Arabic writings is, however, occasionally permitted: cf. *arat-i Bahá'u'lláh: Bahá'í International Community Bahá'u'lláh statement*, Persian translation (Oakham: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1992). The disclaimer on p.9 of the statement explains that, since the translation of Arabic writings into Persian is "unseemly" (*mamdú va malúb níst*), approximate Persian summaries of the original quotations have been provided instead, presumably to aid the general reader's comprehension.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Adib Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, vol.1 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1976) 122-125 on Bahá'u'lláh's own translation of *Law-i urúfát-i 'Állín*. Áhira frequently translated the Báb's Arabic tablets into Persian, cf. Martha Root, *Tahirih the Pure* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1981) 65 for the effect of her translation of the Báb's writings in Kirmanshah.

<sup>20</sup> This casts doubt on the myth common among many Iranian Bahá'ís that it is either impossible or improper to translate between the two major languages of the Bahá'í

Arabic writings, if they do exist at all, however, are not readily available, let alone published. Persian-speaking Bahá'ís are therefore required to learn Arabic to read the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, say their obligatory prayers or recite special prayers for the fast and other holy days. Establishing Arabic as a liturgical language among Persian-speaking Bahá'ís is not dissimilar to the insistence on the part of most Muslims that all believers read the Qur'án in Arabic, even if their first (or only) language is different.<sup>21</sup>

Shoghi Effendi repeatedly urged the Iranian Bahá'ís to learn Arabic and to teach it to their children from an early age, primarily because the majority of the Bahá'í writings were revealed in that language.<sup>22</sup> The Guardian also believed that widespread competency in Arabic among the Bahá'ís in Iran would be beneficial to the community as a whole, presumably in terms of deepening knowledge and faith.<sup>23</sup> Shoghi Effendi's commitment to Arabic was no doubt largely based upon numerous pro-Arabic comments made by Bahá'u'lláh himself. Whilst Bahá'u'lláh felt Persian to be “sweeter” (*alá*) than Arabic, he believed Arabic to be the “better” or “more excellent” (*asan*) language.<sup>24</sup> Bahá'u'lláh went so far as to say that all should learn to speak Arabic because it is the “most comprehensive” (*absa*) of the world's languages, and that although in this day the Tongue of God (*Lisán'ulláh*) has spoken in both Persian and Arabic, Persian has always been and – like all other languages – will ever be limited (*madúid*) and – by implication – inferior, to Arabic.<sup>25</sup>

These recommendations of literacy in Arabic, however, may be less relevant to other Persian-speaking countries, such as Afghanistan and Tajikistan, where the local forms of Persian (Dari and Tajik) are less Arabicised than Iranian Farsi.<sup>26</sup> Lewis objects to the use of King James Bible-style translations at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the reader “may very well come from an unchurched background and may never have read the Bible devotionally... perhaps not at all,”<sup>27</sup> how much more so in former Soviet Tajikistan where anti-religious communism held sway for fifty years?

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revelation. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's talks are also translated into Arabic: *Selections from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Table Talks*, undated Brussels edition from an earlier Egyptian translation.

21 Cf. Lewis, “Translating”, 11: “Many Muslims similarly insist that all believers read the text of the Koran in Arabic, even if the believer in question speaks Indonesian or Bengali and understands no Arabic”.

22 Cf. Furutan, *Lughat-i Fuá va Lughat-i Núrú* 24-5.

23 *Ibid.*, 25 “its results in the community would be most useful” (my own translation).

24 *Ibid.*, 10.

25 *Ibid.*, 22.

26 My personal experience in Northern Afghanistan (1995 and 1996) suggested that even university-educated believers have difficulty reading the Persian writings of Bahá'u'lláh, and are confused by the lack of translations from Arabic.

27 Lewis, “Translating”, 11.

Most young Tajiks have probably never read the Qur'án, and I suspect that most Bahá'ís there opt to read Bahá'u'lláh's Arabic writings in Russian translation.

I would suggest that, if Arabic to Persian translation is not appropriate for devotional use for the time being, then perhaps a provisional rendering could be printed alongside the original as parallel text.<sup>28</sup> Bahá'u'lláh's Persian is pitted with Arabic phrases, so footnotes with Persian translations – however approximate – would dramatically enhance the accessibility of the writings.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Qur'ans reproduced with parallel text in Persian were not uncommon in Afávid and Qájár Iran.

<sup>29</sup> The complexity of Bahá'u'lláh's writings spawned the growth of Bahá'í lexicons such as *Shish Hizár Lughat*.

COMMENTARY on Bryan Graham's "The Bahá'í Faith and Economics," *Bahá'í Studies Review* 7 (1997): 15-38.

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Bryan Graham has written an insightful and thought-provoking paper, reflecting a good deal of independent intellectual activity. The paper critically – but constructively – reviews nine articles written by Bahá'í economists, focusing particularly on the themes that are common to all the articles, namely the spiritual and ethical dimensions of work, distributive justice, industrial relations, and issues of cooperation and competition. Graham's main critique of the extant Bahá'í scholarship in economics is that much of it fails to utilise existing social science literature and that none of the articles reviewed make anything but passing use of the mainstream economics literature. Moreover, he is rightly disquieted by the tendency in existing Bahá'í scholarship to adopt a triumphalist world view and to be dismissive of the economics literature, perhaps in the belief that everything is in the writings. Without wishing to "suppress the magnitude of the world view articulated by Bahá'u'lláh" and recognising that there are some serious problems with modern day economics, Graham nevertheless suggests that the relationship between Bahá'ís and the economics discipline should be one of dialogue and that Bahá'ís have just as much to learn from other (non-Bahá'í) sources of knowledge as they have to give. These suggestions seem reasonable and constructive, especially in the light of the statement of Shoghi Effendi that Bahá'u'lláh did not bring a complete system of economics to the world but that Bahá'ís have at their disposal the spiritual framework that should inform any economic system.

Graham advances several ideas correlating Bahá'í teachings with tenets of economics, correlations which have not, to my knowledge, been made previously. For instance, he points out that the sanction, in the Bahá'í system, that "wages should be unequal ... and (people) should receive wages that correspond to their varying capacities and resources",<sup>30</sup> maintains the wage-productivity link which is considered economically efficient in a well-functioning labour market. He cites the well known principle of welfare economics that taxation reduces efficiency because of dead-weight welfare losses, and then notes that the Bahá'í emphasis on voluntary giving does not entail such welfare losses. He notes that a complementarity exists between the notion of equity/distributive justice – promoted by the Faith – and other social and economic goals, citing recent empirical evidence from cross-country studies showing that countries with a higher degree of equality are more likely

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<sup>30</sup> Shoghi Effendi, as cited on page 157 in S. Mohtadi, "Economic Justice in a New World Order", in *Towards the Most Great Justice: Elements of Justice in the New World Order* (ed., C. Lerche) (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996).

to develop stable democracies and to experience higher economic growth.<sup>31</sup> Most interesting and useful to me is Graham's discourse on economic competition, the market system, capitalism, and the Bahá'í teachings in this area. He is critical of the existing analysis of this area by Bahá'í scholars which unanimously berates competition, and he calls for a more qualified and nuanced analysis, one which recognises the usefulness of constructive competition and the disadvantages of certain types of cooperative collusion, such as those in Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries and the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Community. Graham draws a distinction between capitalism (which, strictly speaking, is merely the use of the market system as the allocative mechanism in the economy) and what he calls consumerism. He argues that while capitalism has historically had a tendency to give rise to consumerism, this is not the inevitable outcome of capitalism. These thoughts should certainly advance the dialogue among Bahá'í economists about the place of the market system and capitalism in an ideal Bahá'í economy.

The paper goes on to suggest areas of research for Bahá'í economists, identifying two as particularly important – the economics of gender and the economics of crime, morality, and peace. While Graham's suggested list of topics for future research by Bahá'í economists was probably not intended to be exhaustive, it is, nevertheless, limited. The objective of this commentary is partly to add to the list of research areas that will be fruitful for Bahá'í economists to pursue, and to suggest a framework for such research.

### **A suggested list of topics for research by Bahá'í economists**

Our understanding of the Bahá'í teachings on economics is at a rudimentary level. While the Guardian's view 50 years ago that it was premature to formulate a Bahá'í theory of economics remains true today, it is clear that serious scholarship is needed to advance our understanding of and articulate better the nature of the spiritual solutions to the economic problems enshrined in the Bahá'í teachings.

One direction in which research could be pursued is as follows: Bahá'í teachings lay profound emphasis on a range of personal qualities and attributes (based on spiritual principles) that individuals and society should endeavour to imbibe, such as education – particularly women's education, equality of the races and nations, honesty, removal of prejudices, and well-being and prosperity (both spiritual and material). They also emphasise the

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<sup>31</sup> While Graham is cautious to point out that this empirical literature is crude, it would have been more informative to state that one of the major problems with the cross-country empirical growth literature is the possibility of joint determination or reverse causality, *i.e.* the possibility that democracy/higher growth cause (or permit) more equitable income distributions, rather than the other way round. Another important problem is lack of robustness of the findings to the inclusion of other factors that might explain growth.

desirability of diversity, and the need for a world government, *inter alia*. One strand of the Bahá'í economics research agenda could usefully pose the question: to what extent is there an economic case for these prescriptions?

The two canonical yardsticks used in welfare economics to judge the merit of proposed policies or prescriptions have been those of economic efficiency and equity. In the parlance of welfare economics then, can the above advocacies (for the removal of racial prejudice, education of women, honesty and lack of corruption, diversity, equality and lack of discrimination, a world government, etc.) be justified on the criteria of economic efficiency or equity?

While there is no intention of “weighing the book of God by the standards current among men,” it is of interest to collate and examine existing research by economists that has a bearing on the ethical exhortations in Bahá'í teachings. For example, do corruption and bribery in societal institutions or racial discrimination in the labour market have negative efficiency effects, *i.e.* do they lower productivity and aggregate output, or have adverse welfare effects? If economic well-being – in terms of efficiency and equity, economic growth and welfare – is better when individuals/institutions behave in accordance with these ethical principles, then this suggests at least one reason why there is a “spiritual solution to the economic problem” and why Bahá'u'lláh enunciated these spiritual principles. The research topics listed below are tentative and non-exhaustive suggestions for a research agenda for Bahá'í economists.

- 1) **Corruption** and bribery in business – its impact on productivity and national output/income. Here a rent-seeking approach is likely to be appropriate, drawing on the seminal theoretical contributions of Krueger, Bhagwati, and Schleifer and Vishny.<sup>32</sup> Rent-seeking and corruption divert productive resources towards unproductive use and thereby shift the production possibility curve inwards. It would be fruitful to collate the findings of the existing applied studies that examine this issue and estimate the growth and welfare costs of corruption.<sup>33</sup> Other aspects of this topic are to do with transparency and accountability in government; here a principal-agent framework and a political economy framework both would be relevant.

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<sup>32</sup> A. Krueger, “The Political Economy of the Rent-Seeking Society”, *American Economic Review* 64/3 (1974): 291-303; J. Bhagwati, “Directly Unproductive, Profit-seeking (DUP) Activities”, *Journal of Political Economy* 90/5 (1982): 988-1002; A. Schleifer and R. Vishny, “Corruption”, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 108/3 (1993): 599-617.

<sup>33</sup> An empirical paper by P. Mauro, “Corruption and Growth”, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 110/3 (1995): 681-712, finds that corruption lowers investment and thereby significantly lowers economic growth. Krueger provides estimates the extent of India's GDP that is made up of rents.

- 2) **Labour market discrimination:** The impact of racial (or gender, ethnicity, or language based) discrimination on productivity, firm profits, and national output. Discrimination can arise from several possible sources, such as inferior access to productivity-augmenting opportunities such as schooling; less access to favourable jobs; or, given equal schooling and employment in a particular job, receiving lower wages than members of the advantaged group. A taste for discrimination among employers can result in higher wages for members of advantaged groups and higher prices for services rendered by the advantaged group. If employers have a taste for discrimination, this results in an opportunity cost in terms of forgone productive efficiency. One 1980 US study concludes that if racial discrimination were eliminated, the gross national product would have been 4.4% higher in the US in 1970. Research would review the literature on the welfare costs of discrimination and relate it to Bahá'í teachings on equality of opportunity and removal of all forms of prejudices.
- 3) **International government:** Just as the existence of market failures – such as externalities,<sup>34</sup> economies of scale, missing markets, and public goods (which have non-excludability and non-rivalness characteristics<sup>35</sup>) – justifies the existence of a national government, so the existence of global market failures justifies the existence of an international government. International market failures occur due to the existence of

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34 A (negative) externality occurs when an action by one agent imposes costs on another agent without compensating the latter. For example, a factory dumping effluent upstream imposes costs on farmers who use river water downstream, since farmers have to incur costs in treating the water before using it for irrigation. Without regulations (such as taxing the polluting factory to pay for cleaning the water) the farmers have no way of extracting compensation from the factory. Government clearly has a role in discouraging activities that produce negative externalities. An example of a beneficial externality is education of women which has well-known social benefits, *i.e.* benefits that accrue to society and not just to the educated woman. Another example of a beneficial externality is where R&D undertaken by one firm benefits all the firms in that industry but the innovating firm is unable to charge the other firms for the benefits they derive from the knowledge created by it. Where beneficial externalities exist, there is typically underinvestment in the activity if it is left to the market. Government intervention has a useful role in subsidising and facilitating activities which produce positive externalities.

35 The non-excludability characteristic of a good means that it is not possible to provide the good only to those who pay for it or to exclude non-payers from deriving benefit from the good. Non-rivalness of a good means that consumption of that good by some people does not reduce the amount available for others to consume. National defence force, street-lighting, and laws and regulations are good examples of non-excludable and non-rival goods. Provision of such goods gives rise to free-rider problems, implying that the private sector would be unable to supply such goods.

shared global public goods (such as the need for clean air/water, international policing of drug-trafficking, prevention of the international spread of disease etc.), the existence of global externalities (such as pollution produced by one country imposing health-costs in another country), or due to missing international markets.<sup>36</sup> The research would aim to identify global market failures and build an *economic* case for a world government. While in Adam Smith's day, common examples of public goods were defence, law and order, lighthouses etc., nowadays, public goods include income redistribution, economic stabilisation, safer streets, peace, and the standardisation of weights and measures to reduce transactions costs. Clearly international peace, global standardisation of weights and measures, and international income redistribution are some examples of *global* public goods, *inter alia*. There are now many relevant papers in this area.<sup>37</sup> International economic policy coordination would be a useful area for study, and much work exists on the European Union but less about other regional groupings. Research might also include pan African solutions to war, abuse of human rights etc.

- 4) **Sustainable consumption:** To be sustainable, consumption patterns must be such as to permit present and future generations to meet their material needs without irreversible damage to the environment. This goal can only be realised if values change, placing stewardship, fairness, and justice at the heart of the agenda for development. The research would draw upon sources such as the United Nations Development Programme's 1998 Human Development Report that focuses on the consumption patterns of the rich and it would aim to build a coherent picture of the interactions among the economic, technological, cultural, media-related, and

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<sup>36</sup> Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs provides a useful example of an international public good (*The Economist*, August 1999) when he refers to externalities in research and development (R&D) and missing global market in malaria as important international market failures. The development of an effective malaria vaccine is a global public good, given that no individual developing country has the means or the incentive to produce it: means because it costs hundreds of millions of dollars to produce it, and incentive because of the externalities involved – knowledge spillovers mean that no private company or individual country investing in R&D for such a vaccine would ever be able to recoup the cost of the investment because of copycats/hijackers who would ignore the niceties of intellectual property rights or patents and plausibly argue that the poor deserve to have the vaccine at low prices.

<sup>37</sup> A few examples are: J. Stiglitz, "International Financial Institutions and the Provision of International Public Goods", *EIB-Papers* 3/2 (1998): 117-32; I. Kaul, I. Grunberg, and M. Stern (eds) *Global Public Goods: International Cooperation in the Twenty First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the UNDP, 1999); P. Streeten, "Global institutions for an Interdependent World", *World Development* 17/9 (1989): 1349-59; C. Kindleberger, "International Public Goods without International Government", chapter 9 in *International Economic Order: Essays on Financial Crisis and International Public Goods* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988).

institutional mechanisms that shape consumption. An inter-disciplinary approach is likely to be more fruitful than a purely economic one.

- 5) **Market system:** Do the Bahá'í teachings broadly endorse a free market system with a social safety-net? It seems at present that there is no consensus among Bahá'í economists about this issue. Graham states that “there is an anti-economics and anti-capitalism attitude” in all the articles on economics by Bahá'í authors that he reviewed and he calls these attitudes unconstructive. As mentioned earlier, he appeals for a distinction to be made between capitalism and consumerism (the latter being incompatible with Bahá'í teachings), and asks for recognition of the achievements of capitalism, such as massive poverty reduction over time in countries that espoused capitalism. This view appears to be in tension with, for example, what *The Prosperity of Humankind* document states – namely that “the classical economic models of impersonal markets in which human beings act as autonomous makers of self-regarding choices will not serve the needs of a world motivated by ideals of unity and justice.”<sup>38</sup> Research could usefully focus on the question: is there something fundamentally incompatible between Bahá'í teachings and the market mechanism? Or, should we believe, as Graham argues, that there is nothing wrong with the market as an allocating mechanism if there is a moral backbone in society to constructively guide it and set its parameters. The view that markets need not be eschewed but need to be guided would appear to be supported by Shoghi Effendi's statement that in an ideal world society, “markets will be coordinated and developed.”<sup>39</sup> It is also important to recognise that the early tendency, among neo-classical economists, to preach the free-market gospel – which simplistically favoured unhindered operation of markets and decried government intervention – has been replaced by more recent consensus that market failures are pervasive and that the government has a constructive role in providing/creating missing markets and guiding market behaviour by creating responsible regulations and laws to compensate for the effects of market failure.<sup>40</sup> This whole area is an important (if potentially contentious) subject to address in developing a deeper understanding of the Bahá'í approach to economics.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> (New York: Bahá'í International Community, 1995) section V, 16.

<sup>39</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 202-203.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, the *World Development Report* of 1997 by the World Bank which focuses on the role of the state. Also see the keynote address, at the 1997 Annual Conference on Development Economics at the World Bank, by Joseph Stiglitz, then chief economist at the World Bank.

<sup>41</sup> Relevant to this area is research work on regulating markets (in a transparent way – for

- 6) **Intellectual property rights:** the ethics of patenting the genetic codes of foodstuffs etc. by multinational companies. What are the implications of knowledge-related patents for technology transfer between countries and for economic growth?
- 7) **Economic growth:** A good number of recent empirical studies on economic growth find that ethnic diversity is inimical to economic growth. The recent crop of Barro-style cross-country growth regressions shows this.<sup>42</sup> This finding suggests that there is no economic basis for valuing racial and ethnic diversity and indeed that diversity is significantly harmful to growth. More generally it is often heard that Africa's disastrous development record is due in substantial part to conflict caused by ethnic divisions. These findings appear incompatible with the Bahá'í view (which celebrates diversity) and they suggest the need for further research, more careful examination of the evidence, and for testing whether the currently fashionable interpretation might be spurious.
- 8) **Other topics:** (a) the welfare implications of regional and international migration and relating these to the Bahá'í advocacy that in a united world, there must be free movement of people (in economic jargon, a globally integrated labour market rather than a segmented one); (b) trust and social capital are new and exciting fields of research in economics and emerging empirical research shows that social capital (which is a community property involving mutual trust among people, civic engagement, membership of associations, and high reliability and reciprocity in social networks etc.) is advantageous to business enterprises and beneficial for economic growth.<sup>43</sup> This resonates well

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instance through open auctions rather than through quotas which are subject to rent-seeking activities) and work on introducing competition and market-like mechanisms in public agencies and in privatised public utilities such as telecoms, electricity, rail, and power.

42 When measures of ethnic fractionalization are included as explanatory variables in growth regressions, they appear with significant negative signs, suggesting that greater ethnic diversity is likely to depress economic growth over time. For example in Easterly and Levine's (1997) study, ethnic diversity was detrimental to the achievement of growth and also of other desirable traits such as high education, political stability, low fiscal deficits and sufficient infrastructure, all factors which are associated with economic growth (W. Easterly and R. Levine, "Africa's Growth Tragedy: Policies and Ethnic Divisions", *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112 [1997]: 1203-50).

43 For example, see J. Temple and P. Johnson, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 113/3 (1998): 965-90 who find that indexes of social development constructed in the early 1960s have considerable predictive power in explaining growth. The authors conclude that their results indicate the importance of "social capability" for economic growth.

with Bahá'í emphasis on trustworthiness and supports the notion that there is a good economic case for the prescription of this virtue; (c) the development of indices of well-being that recognise that human well-being does not depend on income and wealth alone or even only on somewhat wider achievements in education and health, but also on spiritual well-being. This is likely to be a challenging task and is part of a longer-term Bahá'í economic research agenda.

These suggestions for future research aside, Graham has provided much food for thought in his persuasive and cogent paper and his contribution will advance constructive dialogue among Bahá'í economists.