

Companion Document for the Presentation:
**“Abdu-l-Baha’s Prophecy—American Indian Ways of Thinking
 & Being as a Form of Holistic Illumination”**

As a follow-up to my ABS recorded talk/presentation titled “Abdu-l-Baha’s Prophecy—American Indian Ways of Thinking & Being as a Form of Holistic Illumination,” I would like to humbly offer this supporting document which may be of assistance as we all embark upon a healing journey of self-transformation and societal transformation on our way toward creating a peaceful, healthy, just, and unified global civilization. The subject matter included in this document is related to the material that was covered during my 30 minute recorded presentation; however, as can be expected, this document which is made up of several sections with sub-headings is much more comprehensive and detailed than the talk (you may want to take a cursory look at all the sub-headings before you read this document in its entirety so that you can get an idea of its overall organization). Within this document, you will find transformative statements from American Indian individuals as well as very powerful statements from the “pupil of the eye” of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (I specifically selected statements from certain American Indian individuals and from Dr. King that are in accord with the Baha’i Writings and are completely relevant today but are seldom, if ever, quoted in mainstream publications due to the fact that they challenge the dominant Western sensibilities and worldview). Included here are also quotes from the Baha’i Writings that are truly revolutionary and are calling all peoples, particularly Western-minded people, to make paradigm shifts in the way that we all perceive reality itself. Moreover, this document provides a description of fascinating indigenous spiritual prophecies which, in my view, are fulfilled by the Revelation of Baha’u’llah. Transformation begins with the realization that it is time to leave behind unhealthy and destructive ways of thinking, acting, and being. Often change does not happen unless one is challenged to view reality from a different perspective—in this regard, this document may be of assistance to you.

As a preface, it must be emphasized that the discussion in this document should not be construed to mean that America and Western civilization are inherently evil or that other cultures (including indigenous ones) are somehow better. To the contrary, no culture currently exists that can serve as a healthy alternative to Western civilization. Our only hope lies in the creation of an entirely new cultural paradigm and divinely ordained world civilization. Ultimately, a key part of the solution to humanity’s problems (including the extremes of wealth and poverty, environmental destruction, racial prejudice and racism, women’s inequality, socioeconomic injustice, addictions, mental illness, and so forth) will require us to leave behind the prevailing mechanistic, despiritualized worldview and to adopt a new holistic view of reality that is able to balance and to bring together the material aspects of life with the spiritual aspects of life. A good starting point in this process is to first acknowledge that many aspects of the existing, dominant Western perspective are manifestly antithetical to many of the teachings and understandings of the world’s faiths and spiritual traditions, including the Baha’i Faith and traditional indigenous spiritual traditions. Notably, the Baha’i and the traditional indigenous

worldviews are based on oneness, holism, and integration (“both/and” thinking); whereas, the Cartesian-Newtonian Western paradigm can be characterized by its tendency to separate phenomena into mutually exclusive categories or dichotomies (“either/or” thinking) such as science versus religion, reason versus faith, matter versus spirit, and so forth.

It must be noted that, although Western culture, including its underlying Cartesian-Newtonian worldview, was first cultivated in Europe and America, it has now spread to many parts of the world due to European imperialistic colonization, Western-dominated globalized capitalism, immigration, global communication and transportation, the popularity of American mass culture throughout the world, and so forth. Thus, Western culture (along with its worldview) now represents an influential, powerful, and often alluring subculture within many cultures and nations throughout the world, including those that were once non-Western. Along these lines, to varying degrees, considerable numbers of present-day American Indian peoples of North, Central, and South America have now adopted or have been forced to adopt various aspects of Western culture.

We must keep in mind that the Blessed Beauty, Baha’u’llah, stated that the current world order is “lamentably defective” and that it would soon be rolled up and a New World Order would be laid out in its stead. Referring specifically to Western civilization (European/American culture), Baha’u’llah wrote, “Consider the peoples of the West. Witness how, in their pursuit of that which is vain and trivial, they have sacrificed, and are still sacrificing, countless lives for the sake of its establishment and promotion.” (*Gleanings*, p. 196).

Similar to Baha’u’llah’s above statement, Abdu’l-Baha wrote the following:

“The peoples of Europe have not advanced to the higher planes of moral civilization, as their opinions and behavior clearly demonstrate. ...Be just: can this nominal civilization [Western civilization], unsupported by a genuine civilization of character, bring about the peace and well-being of the people or win the good pleasure of God? Does it not, rather, connote the destruction of man’s estate and pull down the pillars of happiness and peace?” (Abdu’l Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pgs. 62)

Unfortunately, the Europeans who set up their colonies in the “New World” transplanted a worldview to the Americas that collided with the view of reality of many of the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America. Worldview includes the values, beliefs, assumptions and ideas through which one perceives reality. Worldview is connected to one’s perception regarding the goals, purpose, and meaning of life itself. As I explained in detail during my presentation (and as will be shown in this document), the European/White colonists had a more mechanistic, materialistic view of reality, and they interacted with Native peoples who had a more holistic, ecological, integrative, web-of-life worldview. Due to their different worldviews, the Europeans and the Native Americans were experiencing two different versions of reality itself. Thus, the goals, purpose, and meaning of life of these two groups were (and, in some cases, still are) very different.

The various Indian nations and tribes that existed in the Americas for thousands of years before the arrival of the Europeans were diverse and had many differences; however, many of the

indigenous peoples shared a fairly common holistic view of reality (this is similar to the way that the English, French, Spanish, Germans, and other Europeans have different languages and customs, but they share a common Western worldview). Holism or a holistic worldview entails an integration of the spiritual with the material, faith with human reason, the sacred with the secular, and intuition with logic, as well as an integration of mind, body, and spirit. The indigenous holistic, integrative, ecological, web-of-life worldview is in accord with the way the Baha'i teachings encourage people to view reality through the lens of oneness. Indeed, many of the ills of modern-day Western civilization are rooted in a despiritualized view of reality that is based on separation, categorization, and dichotomization rather than oneness.

As will be discussed in this document, the traditional Native holistic worldview including the spiritual ways of thinking, being, and knowing that arose from the Call of God in the ancient Americas (and in some cases, and to varying degrees, carried down through time by some Native peoples), if now guided by the teachings, principles, and administrative order of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, can help to rebalance the predominant materialistic worldview of present-day civilization and can help to illuminate the path towards oneness for all peoples as we work shoulder to shoulder to create a healthy, peaceful, unified, and just World Order. This calls to mind Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy: "Attach great importance to the indigenous population of America...should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world..." (Tablets of the Divine Plan).

Machine Man in a Despiritualized Mechanical Universe

In my ABS talk/presentation, I spent some time describing the development and the wide-ranging, historical and contemporary implications of the Cartesian-Newtonian worldview that lies at the foundation of Western Civilization. The Cartesian-Newtonian worldview gets its name from Rene Descartes and Isaac Newton, two early scientists of the 1600s who first argued that the universe is a machine made up of separate parts governed by deterministic mathematical laws of cause and effect. Descartes (1596-1650) also argued that the human body is a machine and that the body and the mind are two completely separate entities. He also believed that the universe is composed of matter and that matter is devoid of life, purpose, and spirituality. Descartes claimed that science is the only route to true and absolute knowledge (a split between science and religion).

Isaac Newton (1643-1727), an English mathematician and scientist, liked Descartes's mechanical view of the universe. Newton proceeded to invent differential calculus, and he used this new mathematical tool to create the laws (Newton's laws) that supposedly govern the universe. His laws allowed scientists to make accurate predictions regarding a variety of physical phenomena, and this lent tremendous credibility to the idea that we live in a mechanical universe governed by deterministic laws of cause and effect. This deterministic perspective strongly emphasized the use of quantitative data in order to predict, manipulate, and control physical phenomena. All of these developments fueled the Scientific Revolution which eventually led to the Industrial Revolution and to the ascendancy of the machine age.

The Cartesian-Newtonian perspective was first developed in the hard sciences such as physics and chemistry, but eventually this perspective was adopted in the “soft sciences” such as psychology, sociology, and economics. During the late 1600s and throughout the 1700s, the philosophers of the European Age of Enlightenment (also known as the Age of Reason) began to apply the understandings of the Cartesian-Newtonian worldview to human nature and to human society. The early social scientists claimed that they were creating a “social physics.”

John Locke (1632-1704), an English philosopher who spearheaded the European Age of Enlightenment, claimed that just as there are mathematical laws (physical laws) which control and describe the mechanical universe, then there are also natural laws which control human relationships and human society. Along these lines, he promoted the belief in the economic “law of supply and demand.” Locke adopted the Cartesian view of the mechanical universe, and he asserted that society is a machine composed of separate individuals like the separate atoms of matter that make up the physical world. He further argued that the primary force in society is self-interest similar to the way that the primary force in the clockwork universe is gravity. Thus, Locke contended that human beings are primarily motivated by self-interest similar to the way that atoms are impelled by gravity and that governments should allow for the operation of this natural law and should not interfere in the affairs of individuals and free markets. He believed that the main purpose of government is to protect private property.

John Locke was influenced by Francis Bacon (1561-1626) who was the founder of the empirical method of science which led to the development of the scientific method. The empirical method is based on the theory that knowledge arises only from sensory experiences—knowledge can only be validated through physical experimental methods. It is relevant to note that Bacon wrote that nature should be “hounded in her wanderings,” “bound into service,” and made a “slave” while the goal of the scientist is to “torture nature’s secrets from her” (such statements stand in stark contrast to a traditional Native perspective which views the Mother Earth and the whole of nature like a temple where one can worship and feel the real presence of God). Locke concurred with Bacon’s empirical method, and he adopted this method into his own philosophy. Locke started the philosophical school of empiricism which claims that true knowledge is based only on human reason coupled with empirical evidence or the information one gets from experiences based on the physical senses as opposed to knowledge that is based on cultural customs, religious-spiritual traditions, divinely revealed scriptures, faith, intuition, or innate knowledge. Like Descartes, Locke believed that science is the only route to true and absolute knowledge.

Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine, as well as other American Founders were Deists who were influenced by Locke’s skepticism regarding religion and his challenge to religious sources of knowledge and authority such as the divine right of kings. Deists believed in one Creator of the universe, but they compared God to a mechanic who created the machine universe, including humankind, and then walked away and was no longer involved in the running of day-to-day human affairs. Deists generally rejected divine based revelation and were also generally skeptical of the supernatural aspects of the Bible including the divinity of Christ. Jesus Christ is not mentioned at all in any of the founding documents of this country including the constitution. The Declaration of Independence which was the document aimed at King George

to explain the cause for rebellion and revolutionary war does have the words “Nature’s God” and “Creator.” However, the actual Constitution of the United States, the actual supreme law of the land, including the Bill of Rights does not mention God. Indeed, the Deists scored a victory when they included the Establishment Clause along with the doctrine of the separation of church and state in the U.S. Constitution. In a way, this separation of the secular and the sacred may have been necessary for the Europeans because, for centuries they had had massive bloody wars over religion, but significantly, although Native peoples did have wars, they were not known to have wars over religion.

It should be noted that, during the European Age of Enlightenment (the Age of Reason) during the 1700s, intellectuals (steeped in the Cartesian-Newtonian perspectives of the early despiritualized social sciences and their atomized view of society) were involved in inventing the concept of “race”-- they started categorizing humankind into separate races and in formulating and promulgating the “scientific” basis for the theory that the different races of humankind are distinct species. For instance, Dr. Charles White, a well-respected English physician and surgeon promoted “scientific” arguments that claimed to explain the multiple origins of the human race. He claimed that Blacks represented an intermediate species between Whites and apes. Similarly, Lord Kames, a prominent Scottish scholar advanced the theory that Blacks were not of the same species as Whites. David Hume, a Scottish Enlightenment intellectual who promoted a materialistic philosophy that influenced Adam Smith and other intellectuals of his era, stated, “I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the Whites. There never was a civilized nation of any complexion than White...” (as cited by Richard Thomas, *Racial Unity*, p. 29). Significantly, even Voltaire, the famous French Enlightenment intellectual who rhapsodized about liberty and respect for all individuals, ironically contended that Indians and Blacks were separate species. Voltaire was a deist who was highly critical of religion. He admired John Locke and Issac Newton, and he had passionate views regarding freedom, the power of reason, the abolition of feudal privileges, and the separation of church and state. Voltaire’s ideas were highly influential among American colonial revolutionaries, but unfortunately, his racist views served to justify and perpetuate racially oppressive practices and policies in America and Europe. Thomas Jefferson admired the works of Voltaire, and like him, he also believed that non-Whites were inferior to Whites. Immanuel Kant, a German Enlightenment intellectual whose philosophical ideas and political theories influenced the American revolutionaries stated that the Indians “are incapable of governing themselves... [and are] destined for extermination” (as cited by Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers*, p. 127). Along these same lines, when George Washington unleashed warfare against the Ohio Indians, he condemned them as “having nothing human except the shape” (as cited by James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, p. 118). Regarding the role of Cartesian-Newtonian classical social science in the development of the formal ideology of racism, Baha’i scholar and historian Richard Thomas states, “Science was... enlisted in the debate over slavery and white supremacy, and the power of the ideas of white and black inferiority found ‘scientific’ support in the work of many renowned and respected scientists who pioneered in the fields of ethnography, anthropology, geography, and Egyptology...” (*Racial Unity*, p. 72).

The Cartesian-Newtonian worldview, as can be surmised from the paragraphs in this section, represents an exceedingly materialistic view of reality. It is materialistic in the sense that it emphasizes the truth of science, reason, logic, the natural, the material, and the secular while at the same time dismissing and even denigrating the truth of religion, faith, intuition, the supernatural, the spiritual, and the sacred. Ultimately, the predominant Cartesian-Newtonian perspective results in an unbalanced, incomplete vision of reality and a banal view of what it means to be truly human, a mechanistic view of human beings and the natural world that alienates people from their emotional, moral, and spiritual faculties. Indeed, a major thesis that runs within the 500 pages of my first book (*Faith, Physics, and Psychology* published by Baha'i Publishing) is that Western civilization is disordered and increasingly faltering because it is operating under the influence of an errant prevailing despiritualized worldview, and in actuality, many of the global problems and crises that humanity is currently experiencing (including environmental destruction, racism, socio-economic injustice, and so forth) should be seen as just symptoms of a still larger crisis—a crisis in worldview. As covered in extensive detail in *Faith, Physics, and Psychology*, it is truly fortunate that modern holistic pioneers within various fields of study such as physics, psychology, economics, medicine, education, and other areas as well as scholars within the Baha'i Faith are beginning to challenge the longstanding Cartesian-Newtonian model while at the same time promoting a new holistic integrative paradigm.

The Quantum Physics, Baha'i, and American Indian View of Oneness and Holism

As mentioned earlier, the Native peoples of the Americas shared a fairly common holistic view of reality. Holism or a holistic worldview entails bringing together spiritual, divinely revealed truths (truths that we get from the Messengers of God—all cultures throughout the planet have been visited by Messengers of God) and integrating these revealed truths with discovered truths (truths that we discover through the power of human reason, observation, and experimentation). Native people were deeply imbued with the understanding that human beings are, first and foremost, spiritual entities who are having a physical bodily experience (in other words, we are not, first and foremost, physical creatures who sometimes have spiritual experiences). For many traditional American Indian peoples, holism included the understanding that the Mother Earth and all of its creatures, including all plants, animals, and human beings, are joined together in what some indigenous people described as a web of life-- as divine creations of an all-powerful, all loving God, the Great Spirit or Great Mystery. This is why the idea of selling and buying parts of the sacred Mother Earth did not make sense to the Native peoples. The traditional indigenous peoples of the Americas can be regarded as some of the world's first holistic proponents which is why many modern holistic advocates appreciate the timeless wisdom of the indigenous spiritual teachings. Chief Luther Standing Bear (1868-1939), a Lakota visionary leader and author eloquently expresses the indigenous holistic perspective in the following quote:

“From Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit, there came a great unifying life force that flowed in and through all things—the flowers ...blowing winds, rocks, trees, birds, animals—and was the same force that had been breathed into the first man. Thus all things were kindred, and were brought together by the same Great Mystery. Kinship with all creatures of the earth, sky, and water was a real and active principle. ...All were of one blood, made by the same hand, and filled with the

essence of the Great Mystery.” (as cited by Kent Nerburn and Louise Mengelkoch, *Native American Wisdom*, pp. 43-44)

Many Native peoples had the understanding that God is in all things while at the same time He is also above and beyond all things. The following quote by Black Elk (1863-1950), an Oglala Lakota medicine man who witnessed the famous Battle of the Little Bighorn against the U.S. 7th Cavalry in 1876, shows the Native understanding that God is manifest in nature.

“We regard all created beings as sacred. ... We should understand well that all things are the works of the Great Spirit. We should know that He is within all things ... even more important, we should understand that He is also above all these things and peoples.” (as cited by Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian*, p. 18)

Similarly, according to the Baha’i Writings, the attributes of God are revealed within every created thing. For instance, Baha’u’llah stated:

“Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God’s Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world.” (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, Lawh-i-Hikmat*)

For Native peoples, the physical world was just one aspect of reality. Through prayer, dreams, visions, and mystical intuition, some Native shaman or medicine people were able to leave behind the illusions and shadows of the material world and enter into the higher, truer spiritual realities where they had a direct experience of oneness with the universe and a communion with the “All that is,” God. This Native view is quite consistent with the Writings of Abdu’l-Baha in which he describes the physical universe as a “mirage,” or as “shadows,” “images,” and “pictures” that are just manifestations or projections of an unseen true reality-- the spiritual worlds of God. The Native and Baha’i views are in contrast to the Cartesian-Newtonian assumption that the physical world is the fundamental reality and that the world is primarily shaped by material factors.

Interestingly, consistent with Native and Baha’i understandings, many of the latest findings in quantum physics, are showing us that the physical world can no longer be considered the foundational or fundamental reality, and indeed, quantum research seems to suggest that nonphysical (which some would call spiritual) reality is the foundation of all physical reality (this is covered in detail in *Faith, Physics, and Psychology*). In a sense, behind the curtain that exists between the everyday, normal world and the hidden quantum world, there is only the potential for reality. When we pull back the quantum curtain, we do not find solid, physical, objective reality, but instead, the potential for reality. Along these lines, Werner Heisenberg, one of the founders of quantum physics, explained that, behind the quantum curtain, “atoms or the elementary particles themselves are not as real; they form a world of potentialities or possibilities rather than one of things or facts.” Similarly, Niels Bohr, another founder of quantum physics, stated, “Everything we call real is made of things that cannot be regarded as real.” Ultimately, the field of quantum physics has now delivered a major blow to the Cartesian-Newtonian perspective, especially the dogma of materialism.

Many physicists now support the view that quantum entities such as atoms, electrons, and other quantum entities do not even exist in physical reality and do not even have intrinsic, independently existing objective properties until someone observes or measures them. In other words, according to some physicists, we live in a reality that is somehow partially created by us as conscious observers. Thus, some of the findings of quantum physics seem to validate the Native and Baha'i view that mind (consciousness, thoughts, etc.) and matter are somehow interconnected and the idea that our mind, physical body, spirit, and matter are interrelated and interconnected. This is in contrast to Western science and medicine which treat these aspects of reality as completely separate entities. Related to this, Abdu'l-Baha stated, "All that we see around us is the work of mind" (Abdul-Baha in London, p. 95). It is fascinating that the Writings also suggest that some form of consciousness or mind is present in all things at different levels even in nonliving matter. Along these lines, Abdu'l-Baha further stated, "It is the mind in the herb and in the mineral that acts on the human body, and changes its condition" (Abdu'l-Baha in London, p. 95).

Related to this discussion, it is fascinating that David Bohm, the late, world renowned quantum physicist, asserted that the physical universe itself is like a giant holographic image—a projection from a non-manifest, higher reality or a deeper order of existence. A holographic projection is a kind of illusion; it is a three-dimensional image of an object and therefore looks convincingly real. Bohm's holographic theory is quite consistent with Native understandings and the Baha'i Writings which describe the physical universe as a "mirage," "illusion" or as "shadows," "images," and "pictures." A fascinating characteristic of things that are holographically organized is that the whole contains the parts while, at the same time, each individual part contains the whole. For instance, a plate of holographic film can be broken into many fragments, and each constituent fragment can still be used to project the entire hologram (although the image gets hazier as the fragments get smaller). In line with this holographic principle, Bohm believed that each part of the universe including the tiniest atom "contains" the whole universe within it. Similarly, Baha'u'llah stated, "Reflect upon the perfection of man's creation, and that all ...planes and states are folded up and hidden away within him. 'Dost thou reckon thyself only a puny form when within thee the universe is folded?'" Along the same lines as Baha'u'llah (and also consistent with physicist Bohm's holographic principle), Lakota medicine man Black Elk (1863-1950) stated, "Peace ...comes within the souls of men when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the Universe dwells Wakan-Tanka [the Great Spirit], and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us" (as cited by Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian*, p. 19).

The oneness of the universe, a concept that Native peoples often emphasized, is shown by the quantum physics concept known as nonlocality or quantum entanglement in which a pair of atoms or electrons can instantaneously interact and communicate with each other over vast distances (in principle, even if they are on opposite ends of the universe)- if one twitches the other one also twitches in response and this happens faster than can be accounted for by signals traveling at the speed of light. This is what Albert Einstein called "spooky action at a distance," and it serves to demonstrate the oneness of the universe. Thus, in contrast to the Cartesian-

Newtonian perspective that splinters reality into countless disconnected parts, quantum research increasingly has evidence to show that we live in an interconnected, interdependent cosmos—this is what American Indian spiritual mystics have been telling us for many centuries. Along these same lines, Abdu'l-Baha stated, “every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever.” (Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 157)

American Indian Socio-Economic-Political Relations and Institutions as a Reflection of Wholeness and Holism

It should be emphasized that many traditional Native peoples applied their holistic perspective and spiritual understandings to the creation and operation of their social-cultural structures, governmental institutions, and socio-economic affairs. Indigenous societies would emphasize the idea of thinking for yourself but then acting for others. Native individuals would see themselves as first and foremost belonging to a group that is directly connected to the natural world. Indigenous justice systems encouraged a return to wholeness, balance, and healing for the offender and the entire community. Within this framework, Native individuals would speak about their relationship and obligations to their society and to the earth rather than focusing on individual freedoms and rights. Of course, this does not mean that indigenous people were like automatons in a collective. To the contrary, one of the things that impressed and influenced many of the early founders of the United States such as Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson is the high degree of personal liberty and freedom that Indian peoples had. Indeed, Indian societies were generally not broken into socioeconomic classes based upon the ownership of property such as the divisions between the king, titled nobles, landed gentry, peasants, workingmen, other “commoners” and indentured servants as was common in European societies. Notably, Indian women generally were afforded more respect, equality, and democratic participation than European women who were still treated as property of men. In fact, some Indian societies were matrilineal. Thomas Paine, the famous American revolutionary, interacted with Native people as a negotiator on behalf of the revolutionary cause, and he was impressed with the just and egalitarian nature of Indian societies. In 1797, he stated,

“The fact is, that the condition of millions of every country in Europe, is far worse than if they ...had been born among the Indians of North America at the present day.” (as cited by Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers*, p. 126)

In general, many traditional Indian governments were based on group decision making councils in which common people could participate rather than on the edicts of kings and queens. Indeed, the Iroquois Indian people (whose name for themselves is the Haudenosaunee people) created what many scholars consider to be the world's first democratic federation of nations based on the teachings of a divine prophet, the Great Peacemaker, Deganawida, who taught the Haudenosaunee people the Great Law of Peace circa 1450 AD. Under the divine guidance of Deganawida, the Haudenosaunee created a constitution and a democratic federation of five Indian nations (later, a sixth Indian nation joined the federation known as the Iroquois League of

Six Nations). Importantly, Deganawida intended for the Great Law of Peace to be extended to all of mankind so that all people could come together in one peaceful, unified, just Commonwealth. Along these lines, he stated,

“The white roots of the Great Tree of Peace will continue to grow, advancing the Good Mind and Righteousness and Peace, moving into territories of people scattered far through the forest” (as cited by Gary Nash, *Red, White, and Black*, p. 19).

Deganawida’s Great Law of Peace is like a lengthy constitution which has been passed down through the generations. The following small excerpt from Deganawida’s Great Law of Peace expresses the elegance, sophistication, and holistic nature of the Haudenosaunee system of governance:

“I carry the Mind of the Master of Life, and my message will bring an end to the wars between east and west. The word that I bring is that all peoples shall love one another and live together in peace. This message has three parts: Righteousness and Health and Power- *Gaiihwiyo*, *Skenno*, *Gashedenza*. And each part has two branches.

Righteousness means justice practiced between men and between nations; it means also a desire to see justice prevail.

Health means soundness of mind and body; it also means peace, for that is what comes when minds are sane and bodies cared for.

Power means authority, the authority of law and custom, backed by such force as is necessary to make justice prevail; it also means religion, for justice enforced is the will of the Holder of the Heavens and has His sanction.

It will take the form of the Longhouse, in which there are many fires, one for each family, yet all live as one household under one Chief Mother. Hereabouts are Five Nations, each with its own Council Fire, yet they shall live together as one household in peace. ...They shall have one mind and live under one law. Thinking shall replace killing, and there shall be one Commonwealth.” (as cited by Christopher Buck, “Native Messengers of God in Canada?” *Baha’i Studies Review* 6, 1996)

It should be noted that a considerable number of scholars now agree that the American Founders of the United States, such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, adopted the Iroquois democratic federal model in order to unite the thirteen colonies under one federal central government (the Founders had no European models of this form of federal government). The United States is now composed of a federation of 50 states with governmental bodies at the city, county, state, and federal level. Unfortunately the Founders adopted only the outer workings or the shell of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) model because they left out (in Cartesian-Newtonian fashion) the understanding that a well-functioning government must be based on a material and spiritual foundation, and it must be able to merge spiritual teachings and principles together with material knowledge in order to develop and to maintain an equitable and just order. Regarding this, it should be pointed out that, as already mentioned earlier, the U.S. Constitution of the United States is essentially a completely secular document which makes no mention of God (it should be noted that the phrase “one nation under God” was not added to the Pledge of Allegiance until 1954; also the motto, “In God We Trust” was not added to a U.S. coin until

1864, almost 100 years after the Declaration of Independence, and this motto was not added to paper money until 1957). In contrast to the secular Constitution of the United States, the Haudenosaunee are very clear that their democratic federation and constitution was founded upon the divinely inspired teachings of a spiritual being or Messenger of the Great Spirit--Deganawida.

In their official website, today's Haudenosaunee refer to their federation as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy meaning People of the Long House. In an official statement, in contrast to the Cartesian-Newtonian perspective, the Haudenosaunee emphasize the holistic blending of law, values, society, and nature as a part of their constitution:

“Often described as the oldest, participatory democracy on Earth, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy’s constitution is believed to be a model for the American Constitution. What makes it stand out as unique to other systems around the world is its blending of law and values. For the Haudenosaunee, law, society and nature are equal partners and each plays an important role.” (<https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/who-we-are/>)

As already mentioned, the historic Iroquois League was eventually composed of six separate Indian nations (the Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora). Within the Iroquois League, each sovereign nation retained some power to regulate internal affairs but it yielded some of its sovereignty to one central government, which had the power to regulate affairs common to all. Each nation was divided into several regions, and each region was composed of several villages. Each village had its own elected local council. Each village also elected delegates that were sent to their regional council. Then, all the regional councils in turn elected delegates to send to one national council. Each of the six nations had its own national council that exercised jurisdiction over the internal affairs of only that one nation. Then, there was also one Grand Council that was made up of all the delegates of the six national councils. The Grand Council made laws and policies that applied to every village, region, and nation within the federation.

It’s interesting to note how closely the Iroquois system resembles the Baha’i Administrative structure made up of Local Spiritual Assemblies, Regional Councils, National Spiritual Assemblies, and then the Universal House of Justice. In fact, it should be pointed out that Abdu’l-Baha stated that a federal democratic system, if applied at the international level, will help to unite all the nations into one world federation in the future.

Materialism—“a Devouring Flame” and “the Chief Factor in Precipitating the Dire Ordeals and World-Shaking Crises”

The prevailing Western worldview which has now spread throughout the planet can be largely characterized by the term materialism. At its core, materialism is the belief that the physical world is true reality. Materialism is also the related belief that the physical aspects of one’s life (our bodies, clothing, cars, houses, etc.) are of primary importance. It makes logical sense that if one believes that the physical world is true reality and if one also believes that reality is primarily shaped by material factors, then one will place undue importance on the material aspects of one’s existence such as the pursuit of physical wealth, power, and status. Materialism is a way of life

that divorces spirituality from one's day to day existence (and from one's moment by moment decision-making processes). Materialism is not in accord with Baha'i and traditional Native understandings which emphasize the idea that both spiritual and material factors shape one's reality and also the idea that this physical world is just a manifestation of or a projection from a deeper, truer spiritual reality.

Materialism is primarily an ego based existence. We lose track of the understanding that we are first and foremost spiritual entities. We start identifying with our false self or the ego. When one lives an ego-based existence, one starts to believe that who I am is my physical body, my physical possessions, my career, my reputation (what others think of me), and my achievements, awards, and accomplishments. Consumerism, commercialism, and self-absorbed egotism are symptoms of the disease of materialism.

Materialism is ultimately the perception that we are separate from God and separate from each other rather than directly connected to God and connected to each other by invisible bonds of oneness and that we each carry the fullness of God within us. A materialistic mentality leaves us trapped in physical consciousness, and it denies the power of the spirit to transform our lives and our societies. A materialistic way of life does not involve a contemplation of the Will of God nor does it encourage us to beseech the assistance and guidance of the Holy Spirit in our day to day, moment by moment decisions. Materialism perceives the physical world and the spiritual world as two completely separate planes rather than as one interrelated, interconnected realm or cosmos.

In the *Citadel of Faith*, Shoghi Effendi strongly emphasizes the dangers of materialism:

“...pervading all departments of life -- an evil which the nation [the United States], and indeed all those within the capitalist system ...share with that state [the communist Soviet Union] and its satellites...-- is the crass materialism, which lays excessive and ever-increasing emphasis on material well-being, forgetful of those things of the spirit on which alone a sure and stable foundation can be laid for human society. It is this same cancerous materialism, born originally in Europe, carried to excess in the North American continent, contaminating the Asiatic peoples and nations, spreading its ominous tentacles to the borders of Africa, and now invading its very heart, which Bahá'u'lláh in unequivocal and emphatic language denounced in His Writings, comparing it to a devouring flame and regarding it as the chief factor in precipitating the dire ordeals and world-shaking crises that must necessarily involve the burning of cities and the spread of terror and consternation in the hearts of men. Indeed a foretaste of the devastation which this consuming fire will wreak upon the world, and with which it will lay waste the cities of the nations participating in this tragic world-engulfing contest, has been afforded by the last World War [WWII]...” (Shoghi Effendi, a letter to the American Baha'i Community dated July 28, 1954, published in the *Citadel of Faith*, pgs. 124-125)

In the following quote, Baha'u'llah uses the words “infernal engine” which, to me, represent a strong metaphorical allusion to the destructive mechanistic worldview that is embedded in Western civilization:

“In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil. Consider the civilization of the West, how it hath agitated and alarmed the peoples of the world. An infernal engine hath been devised, and hath proved so cruel a weapon of destruction that its like none hath ever witnessed or heard. The purging of such deeply-rooted and overwhelming corruptions cannot be effected unless the peoples of the world unite in pursuit of one common aim and embrace one universal faith.” (Baha’u’llah, *Tablets of Baha’u’llah*, p. 69)

Some have interpreted the above statement in a literal fashion to mean the invention of an actual physical weapon during Baha’u’llah’s time (for instance, the invention of the machine gun) while others have asserted that this statement is a prophecy regarding the future creation of atomic weapons. Both interpretations may be correct; however, even more importantly, the “infernal engine” may also be a more general, metaphorical allusion to the despiritualized mentality and unbalanced, immoderate mechanical worldview that would create such physical weapons and other “corruptions” to begin with.

Along the same lines as the quotes above, in a more recent statement, the *Century of Light*, a book commissioned by and written under the supervision of the Universal House of Justice, states,

“There has not been a society in the history of the world...that did not derive its thrust from some foundational interpretation of reality. Such a system of thought reigns today virtually unchallenged across the planet, under the nominal designation ‘Western civilization.’ Philosophically and politically, it presents itself as a kind of liberal relativism [no moral absolutes]; economically and socially, as capitalism — two value systems that have now so adjusted to each other and become so mutually reinforcing as to constitute virtually a single, comprehensive world-view.

"Appreciation of the benefits — in terms of the personal freedom, social prosperity and scientific progress enjoyed by a significant minority of the Earth's people — cannot withhold a thinking person from recognizing that the system is morally and intellectually bankrupt. It... is impotent to deal with the needs of a world never imagined by the eighteenth century prophets [European philosophers, scientists, and intellectuals of the 18th century European Age of Enlightenment] who conceived most of its component elements. ...Tragically, what Baha'is see in present-day society is unbridled exploitation of the masses of humanity by greed that excuses itself as the operation of 'impersonal market forces' [free-market capitalism]. ...What they find themselves struggling against daily is the pressure of a dogmatic materialism, claiming to be the voice of 'science,' that seeks systematically to exclude from intellectual life all impulses arising from the spiritual level of human consciousness.” (Commissioned and written under the supervision of the Universal House of Justice, *Century of Light*, p. 135-136).

Capitalism: a Cartesian-Newtonian anti-Social Science

Adam Smith (1723-1790), an English economist and the main architect of capitalism published a book, the *Wealth of Nations*, which is considered the text that signaled the birth of capitalism. Smith was highly influenced by John Locke’s Cartesian-Newtonian claim that human society is a machine composed of separate individuals. Smith adopted Locke’s idea that self-interest is the

primary force that motivates the actions of individuals similar to the way that gravity is the force that governs the movement of the separate parts of the mechanical universe. Based on this Lockean perspective, Smith argued that individuals should have unrestricted freedom to pursue their own self-interest and to compete for their own wealth. Government should not interfere in economic activity other than to maintain security and to protect private property (this is known as *laissez-faire*). In this way, he argued that if individuals are left free to compete for their own wealth, then they will be guided as if by an “invisible hand” to enrich the entire society. However, the historical record shows that Smith’s promotion of unrestricted, unregulated economic activity, unmitigated self-interest, and extreme individualism eventually led to the exploitation of countless workers, the extremes of wealth and poverty, as well as massive environmental degradation.

Capitalism, in many respects, is antithetical to the Baha’i and Native American perspectives which is why I spend an entire chapter in my second book, *America’s Sacred Calling*, critiquing this system. Not much will be stated here regarding communism other than to say that capitalism and communism are both faulty Cartesian-Newtonian economic systems created by European Westerners. Communism, a Godless failed system, was largely created by Karl Marx (1818-1883), a German, staunchly materialistic, atheistic philosopher and economist who was opposed to any form of religious or spiritual practice, and who believed in the Enlightenment ideas of natural law and rationalism and was obsessive about using the term “scientific” to describe his critical approach. It is important to note that the Baha’i Faith equally rejects capitalism and communism as “two antagonistic schools of thought which, however divergent in their ideologies, are to be commonly condemned by the upholders of the standard of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh for their materialistic philosophies and their neglect of those spiritual values and eternal verities on which alone a stable and flourishing civilization can be ultimately established” (Shoghi Effendi, a letter to the American Baha’i Community dated July 28, 1954, published in the *Citadel of Faith*, pgs. 125)

Capitalism promotes self-interest rather than self-sacrifice (preferring one’s brother), profit motivation rather than a service orientation, individualism rather than community building, competition rather than cooperation, and the concentration of wealth rather than the just distribution of wealth and resources. Capitalism also promotes the multiplication and fulfillment of insatiable desires rather than contentment and moderation, and it further leads to the single-minded pursuit of physical wealth, power, and status often at the expense of spiritual and moral development. Under capitalism, land (including the overall environment) and labor are not treated as sacred entities but as nothing more than commodities to be bought and sold while the idea of government non-interference often results in a lack of prudent legal safeguards to protect workers and the environment.

In a letter dated March 1, 2017, the Universal House of Justice explains that we need to cultivate more holistic economic relations that foster a concern for the wellbeing of the whole of humanity and the natural environment (this is in accord with the traditional Native view of egalitarian and just socio-economic human relations that include protection of the Mother Earth and all its creatures). That letter also offers a strong admonition regarding the dangers of the prevailing

wayward economic affairs that currently exist that are based on self-interest, unrestrained competition, and individualistic acquisition and consumption. The Universal House of Justice states,

“The welfare of any segment of humanity is inextricably bound up with the welfare of the whole. Humanity’s collective life suffers when any one group thinks of its own well-being in isolation from that of its neighbours or pursues economic gain without regard for how the natural environment, which provides sustenance for all, is affected. ...time and again, avarice and self-interest prevail at the expense of the common good. Unconscionable quantities of wealth are being amassed, and the instability this creates is made worse by how income and opportunity are spread so unevenly both between nations and within nations. ...even if current approaches to economic life satisfied humanity’s stage of adolescence, they are certainly inadequate for its dawning age of maturity. There is no justification for continuing to perpetuate structures, rules, and systems that manifestly fail to serve the interests of all peoples. ...The teachings of the Faith leave no room for doubt: there is an inherent moral dimension to the generation, distribution, and utilization of wealth and resources. ...The vision of Bahá’u’lláh challenges many of the assumptions that are allowed to shape contemporary discourse—for instance, that self-interest, far from needing to be restrained, drives prosperity, and that progress depends upon its expression through relentless competition. To view the worth of an individual chiefly in terms of how much one can accumulate and how many goods one can consume relative to others is wholly alien to Bahá’í thought.”

Within a capitalist framework, the primary goal of society is the production and pursuit of material wealth—not the development of psychological, emotional, moral, and spiritual health. Thus, societies can find themselves to be materially and technologically rich but spiritually, psychologically, and morally impoverished as evidenced, for example, by the high suicide, homicide, and incarceration rates and the escalating rates of depression, anxiety disorders, miscellaneous addictions, mental illness, drug use (illegal and prescribed drugs), and broken families among the population.

Specifically, in the United States, most distressing is the loss of potential among young people. America has one of the highest teenage suicide and homicide rates in the world. Between 1950 and 1983, the teenage suicide rate more than quadrupled in the United States, and then, between 1985 and 2000, U.S. teenage suicides increased by another 25 percent. Most recently, a September 11, 2020 *USA Today* article reported that, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control, the suicide rate for young American people aged 10 to 24 increased nearly 60% between 2007 and 2018. Moreover, according to a Columbia University and CUNY study appearing in the journal, *Psychological Medicine*, “The prevalence of depression increased significantly in the USA from 2005 to 2015. The rate of increase in depression among youth was significantly more rapid relative to older groups” (Volume 48, Issue 8, June 2018, p. 1308). Furthermore, psychologist Michael Gurian, author of the book, *The Good Son*, states that “In the U.S., more boys and young men are incarcerated in juvenile detention, prison, and psychiatric hospitals than in any other nation on earth” (p. 4-5). Indeed, an April 2008 New York Times article reports that “the United States leads the world in producing prisoners.” The article explains that America has

more people in prison than any nation on earth and this is true even if we account for differences in population (per capita). Juliet Schor, a researcher in the areas of economics and family studies explains that, in addition to suicide and depression, studies are showing that today's youth are suffering from high rates of anxiety disorders, drug use, obesity, attention deficit disorder, and other socio-emotional problems. She states (2004), "Evidence of distress among children has been mounting. ... Today's average (i.e., normal) young person between the ages of nine and seventeen scores as high on anxiety scales as children who were admitted to clinics for psychiatric disorders in 1957" (*Born to Buy*, p. 13). All of this is to say that, although the United States, as a whole, is regarded as a technological and economic powerhouse (as measured by GDP), in many ways, it is finding itself to be spiritually and psychologically poor. The society and its people are experiencing a poverty of the soul on a mass level.

One of the fundamental principles of the Baha'i Faith is the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty. Tragically, it is clear that our current economic system is taking us in the wrong direction. For instance, a December 6, 2017 article appearing in *The Washington Post*, titled, "The Richest 1 Percent Now Owns More of the Country's Wealth Than at Any Time in the Past 50 Years," states that the "wealthiest 1 percent of American households own 40 percent of the country's wealth..." Importantly, in recent years, researchers have increasingly voiced concern not only about the radically unequal distribution of wealth in general, but also about the racial wealth gap that exists in the United States between Whites and non-Whites. For instance, a September 28, 2017 article appearing in *The Washington Post* has the following revealing title: "White Families Have Nearly 10 Times the Net Worth of Black Families. And the Gap is Growing." It is quite evident that race and socio-economic class in America are linked together. Along these lines, A *Fortune* magazine, Sept. 19, 2017 article titled "Blacks and Latinos will be Broke in a Few Decades" states,

"Even those Black and Latino families who've achieved the traditional markers of middle class life—a good-paying job [income] and a college degree—still lag far behind their white counterparts in terms of wealth [assets minus liabilities/debt]. Black and Latino families with a member holding a four-year degree own just a fifth of the wealth of equivalent White families. In fact, they own less wealth than a White family whose head has just a high school diploma. ... The enduring legacy of slavery and the Jim Crow [segregation, discrimination] era contribute to this growing divide. For instance, just 2% of the heavily subsidized mortgages made available by the Federal Housing Administration in the 30 years following the Great Depression went to non-white households. Homes are the biggest asset most middle-class families own, so this sort of federally sanctioned discrimination created a huge, intergenerational disadvantage for the Black and Latino families left out."

In short, the prevailing economic system, instead of creating conditions that help to heal the historic racial wounds that have continued to exist in America, is exacerbating racial disparities. Such race and class divisions hamper our ability to create a just, peaceful, loving society based on oneness.

The predominant Cartesian Newtonian capitalistic model, almost by definition, does not accept that "there is an inherent moral dimension to the generation, distribution, and utilization of

wealth and resources” (as stated by the Universal House of Justice above). As such, the capitalist system accepts the destabilizing, iniquitous distribution of wealth as the natural operation of market forces. In contrast, a French Jesuit missionary who interacted with indigenous societies in 1657 made the following statement regarding the egalitarian Indian socioeconomic conditions that he witnessed:

“No hospitals [poor-houses] are needed among them... because there are neither mendicants nor paupers as long as there are any rich people among them. Their kindness, humanity, and courtesy not only makes them liberal with what they have, but causes them to possess hardly anything except in common. A whole village must be without corn, before any individual can be obliged to endure privation.” (as cited by Gary Nash, *Red, White and Black*, p. 20)

It is fascinating to note that Abdu'l-Baha declared that in the future, “When the laws He [Baha'u'llah] has instituted are carried out, there will be no millionaires possible in the community and likewise no extremely poor” (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 217). Related to this, a few words must be stated about powerful corporations because they have historically played a major role in the maldistribution and monopolization of wealth and resources. Today, in the era of global capitalism, multinational corporations are a threat to democracy due to their capacity to manipulate governments via legal and illegal methods. Practically speaking, corporations are beyond the control of any one government and are manifestations of a Cartesian-Newtonian mentality that is typically devoid of moral and ethical considerations and routinely places the maximization of profits ahead of other objectives such as environmental protection, the well-being of workers, and the advancement of democratic and social justice goals. Perhaps, for such reasons and others, Abdu'l-Baha avowed that, in the future, no corporations like the kind we have today will be allowed to exist. He stated, “No more trusts [corporations] will remain in the future. The question of the trusts will be wiped away entirely.... In reality, so far, great injustice has befallen the common people. Laws must be made because it is impossible for the laborers to be satisfied with the present system” (*Foundations of World Unity*, p. 43).

The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Address to the UN-- “a Call for a Consciousness of the Sacred Web of Life in the Universe”

In 1977, the Iroquois League of Six Nations (also known as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy) presented three papers in Geneva, Switzerland, to the nongovernmental organizations affiliated with the United Nations (for more information regarding the Haudenosaunee democratic federation refer to the earlier section with the sub-heading “American Indian Socio-Economic-Political Relations and Institutions as a Reflection of Wholeness and Holism.” In these documents, the Haudenosaunee authors raised “a call for a consciousness of the Sacred Web of Life in the Universe.” The following passage exemplifies the similarity between traditional American Indian understandings and Baha'i understandings regarding the need to transform our civilization and to move it away from Western, Cartesian-Newtonian ways of thinking and being which are devoid of spiritual principles:

“Today the species of Man is facing a question of the very survival of the species. The way of life known as Western Civilization is on a death path on which their own culture has no viable answers. When faced with the reality of their own destructiveness, they can only go forward into areas of more efficient destruction. The appearance of Plutonium [nuclear technology] on this planet is the clearest of signals that our species is in trouble. It is a signal which most Westerners have chosen to ignore.

The air is foul, the waters poisoned, the trees dying, the animals are disappearing. We think even the systems of weather are changing. Our ancient teaching warned us that if Man interfered with the Natural Laws, these things would come to be. When the last of the Natural Way of Life [traditional Native way of life] is gone, all hope for human survival will be gone with it. And our Way of Life is fast disappearing, a victim of the destructive processes.

The other position papers of the Haudenosaunee have outlined our analysis of economic and legal oppression. But our essential message to the world is a basic call to consciousness. The destruction of the Native cultures and people is the same process which has destroyed and is destroying life on this planet. The technologies and social systems which have destroyed the animal and plant life are also destroying the Native people. And that process is Western Civilization. ...

The processes of colonialism and imperialism which have affected the Haudenosaunee are but a microcosm of the processes affecting the world. The system of reservations employed against our people is a microcosm of the system of exploitation used against the whole world. ...

It is necessary, at this time, that we begin a process of critical analysis of the West's historical processes, to seek out the actual nature of the roots of the exploitative and oppressive conditions which are forced upon humanity. ...

We must all consciously and continuously challenge every model, every program, and every process that the West tries to force upon us. Paulo Friere wrote, in his book, the ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed,’ that it is the nature of the oppressed to imitate the oppressor, and by such actions try to gain relief from the oppressive condition. We must learn to resist that response to oppression.

We feel that the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere can continue to contribute to the survival potential of the human species.

The traditional Native peoples hold the key to the reversal of the processes in Western Civilization which hold the promise of unimaginable future suffering and destruction. Spiritualism is the highest form of political consciousness. And we, the native peoples of the Western Hemisphere, are among the world's surviving proprietors of that kind of consciousness. We are here to impart that message.” (Akwasasne Notes, *A Basic Call to Consciousness*, pp. 77-78)

Dr. King’s “Pupil of the Eye” Transformational Speech: “The Three Evils of Society”

Along the same lines as the warnings given by the Haudenosaunee elders in their “Call for a Consciousness of the Sacred Web of Life in the Universe” (presented to the UN), Dr. Martin

Luther King Jr. delivered a transformative speech in 1967 which contains many warnings regarding the misdirection of our prevailing Western cultural worldview. Dr. King titled his speech “The Three Evils of Society,” and it is a stunningly eloquent, urgent, prophetic message delivered to all people regarding the need to create a new spiritual, social, political, and economic order based on essentially a holistic (material plus spiritual and moral) foundation including the values of love, compassion, justice, moderation, and oneness. In today’s mainstream publications and media outlets, we often hear Dr. King’s comforting metaphorical messages such as those contained in his beautiful “I Have a Dream” speech: “I have a dream that one day little Black boys and girls will be holding hands with little White boys and girls.” However, we seldom, if ever, hear of Dr. King’s “The Three Evils of Society” speech, likely because it calls for a major, revolutionary restructuring of the prevailing socio-economic-political Western order. In other words, in “The Three Evils of Society” speech, Dr. King was no longer content in just calling for a comforting, poetic metaphorical coming together of the races, but rather he was calling for the actual establishment of a new, truly just, peaceful, unified global order that can actually support and nurture the real coming together of the races in loving oneness.

In his Three Evils speech, Dr. King calls out for a “true revolution of values [that] will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies.” The following is an excerpt from Dr. King’s speech:

“I suspect that we are now experiencing the coming to the surface of a triple prong sickness that has been lurking within our body politic from its very beginning. That is the sickness of racism, excessive materialism and militarism. ... Racism can well be, that corrosive evil that will bring down the curtain on Western Civilization. ...If America does not respond creatively to the challenge to banish racism, some future historian will have to say, that a great civilization died because it lacked the soul and commitment to make justice a reality for all men. ...”

“The second aspect of our afflicted society is extreme materialism. ... you call your thousand material devices labor saving machinery, yet you are forever busy. ... Whatever you have you want more and where ever you are you want to go somewhere else. ... This does not mean that we must turn back the clock of scientific progress. ... But our moral lag must be redeemed; when scientific power outruns moral power, we end up with guided missiles and misguided men.”

“It is this moral lag in our thing-oriented society that blinds us to the human reality around us and encourages us in the greed and exploitation which creates the specter of poverty in the midst of wealth. Again we have deluded ourselves into believing the myth that Capitalism grew and prospered out of the protestant ethic of hard work and sacrifice; the fact is that Capitalism was built on the exploitation and suffering of black slaves and continues to thrive on the exploitation of the poor – both black and white, both here and abroad. ... The time has come for America to face the inevitable choice between materialism and humanism. We must devote at least as much to our children’s education and the health of the poor as we do to the care of our automobiles and the building of beautiful, impressive hotels.”

“So we are here because we believe, we hope, we pray that something new might emerge ... a new man, new structures and new institutions and a new life for mankind. I am convinced that this new life will not emerge until our nation undergoes a radical revolution of values. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are incapable of being conquered. A civilization can flounder as readily in the face of moral bankruptcy as it can through financial bankruptcy. A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. ... True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar, it understands that an edifice which produces beggars, needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth, with righteous indignation it will look at thousands of working people displaced from their jobs, with reduced incomes as a result of automation while the profits of the employers remain intact and say, this is not just. It will look across the ocean and see individual Capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia and Africa only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries and say, this is not just. It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of Latin America and say, this is not just. A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war, this way of settling differences is not just. ... A nation that continues, year after year, to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.” (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “The Three Evils of Society,” delivered to the National Conference on New Politics in 1967)

It is quite apparent that in his powerful message, Dr. King is fulfilling the role of the “pupil of the eye,”—a phrase in the Baha’i Writings that refers to the special station of African Americans who have not allowed oppressive circumstances to tarnish the power of the holy spirit that moves very strongly within them and allows them to see truth in the darkness. From a biological standpoint, the physical pupil is essential for light to enter the eye. Without the pupil, the person is blind. Using this analogy, humanity is in desperate need of light, and African Americans who are spiritually empowered (akin to the pupil) can provide the light to humanity. Along these lines, Abdu’l-Baha stated,

“Bahá’u’lláh once compared the coloured people to the black pupil of the eye surrounded by the white. In this black pupil you see the reflection of that which is before it, and through it the light of the Spirit shines forth.” (*Abdu’l-Baha in London*, p. 68)

The Baha’i Writings suggest that the African American and American Indian peoples will play special roles in helping to bring about the oneness of humanity and the redemption of the United States as it fulfills its ultimate destiny as the nation that “will lead all nations spiritually.”

Abdu’l-Baha provided both a directive and a prophecy regarding the indigenous, Indian peoples of America. The Master stated, “Attach great importance to the indigenous population of America...should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world...” In a separate letter, Abdu’l-Baha further stated, “Undoubtedly in those regions [the Americas] the Call of God must have been raised in ancient times...” (Tablet to Amir Khan, authorized translation-- See "Extract from a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá-- Additional Tablets, Extracts and Talks)

To be clear Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy applies not only to the Native peoples of Northern America but also the Indian peoples of Mexico, and within the countries of Central and South America.

For instance, in a communication to the National Spiritual Assemblies of countries in South America, the Guardian stated,

“In the Tablets of the Divine Plan, the Master pays the utmost attention to this most important matter. He states that if the Power of the Holy Spirit today properly enters into the minds and hearts of the natives of the great American continents that they will become great standard bearers of the Faith, similar to the Nomads (Arabians) who become the most cultured and enlightened people under the Muhammadan civilization.” (From letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, August 22, 1957; in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 523)

Indigenous Prophetic Visions of the Coming of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah

Interestingly, although the Native peoples of the distant past were not aware of the Baha'i Faith (and many Native peoples are still unaware of the Baha'i Revelation), the holistic, integrative, ecological, web-of-life worldview that was common among many of the indigenous peoples of the Americas is in stunning accord with the Baha'i overarching principle of the oneness of humanity and the need to create a spiritually enlightened, unified, peaceful, and just world civilization. Along these lines, it is fascinating to note that Black Elk (1863-1950), an Oglala Lakota medicine man, had a shamanic prophetic vision in which he saw the coming together of all nations as one nation under the protection of “one mighty flowering tree.” In my view, and the view of other Native Baha'is, the “mighty flowering tree” is a reference to the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, the Messenger of God for this Day. Black Elk stated the following regarding his vision:

“Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being.

And I saw the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father, and I saw that it was holy.” (as cited in Susan Stark Christianson, “Black Elk Was Right,” <https://www.context.org/iclib/ic40/blackelk/>)

Later, as a very old man, he mentioned that his prophecy had not yet come to pass, and that in fact, his people and other peoples had lost their way and were no longer in connection to the spiritual teachings, so he prayed to Grandfather God that all people would return to the “Sacred Hoop” of spiritual oneness and to the “shielding tree.” He stated the following:

“Here at the center of the world where you took me when I was young and taught me: here, old I stand, and the tree is withered, Grandfather, my Grandfather!

Again, perhaps for the last time on this Earth, I recall the great vision you sent me. It may be that some root of the Sacred Tree still lives. Nourish it then, that it may leaf and bloom and fill with singing birds! Hear me, that they may once again go back to the Sacred Hoop, and the Good Red Road, the shielding tree.

In sorrow, I am sending a feeble voice, O six powers of the world. Hear me in my sorrow, for I may never call again. O make my people live.” (as cited in Susan Stark Christianson, “Black Elk Was Right,” <https://www.context.org/iclib/ic40/blackelk/>)

As alluded to in Black Elk’s vision of “sorrow” above, many Indian peoples today are facing dark times including terrible poverty and a myriad of other problems such as substance abuse, unemployment, teenage suicide, and domestic violence. It most definitely does not help that many Native peoples have been acculturated into or have been forced into adopting a Western, Cartesian-Newtonian despiritualized, materialistic worldview. Some Native advocates, as a means of spiritual, psychological, and moral healing, are calling for the need of indigenous peoples to decolonize their minds and to reconnect with the spiritual traditions and holistic view of reality of their ancestors. In their search for reconnection with the “Sacred Hoop,” I would like to humbly offer that Native peoples have nothing to lose and much to gain from investigating and then sharing in the blessings of the teachings of Baha’u’llah, the Prophet-founder of the Baha’i Faith, who has come to unite all peoples in a planetary oneness. Importantly, as described earlier, many of the teachings, principles, and understandings (based on oneness) of the Baha’i Faith are quite compatible with the spiritual traditions and the web-of-life, “Sacred Hoop,” indigenous holistic perspective. As will be further explained below, the coming of Baha’u’llah, in my view, is a fulfillment of indigenous spiritual prophecies and expectations and should not be construed as a replacement of Native spiritual traditions.

Similar to Black Elk’s vision, Chief Joseph (1840-1904), a Nez Perce Indian leader and visionary, made a prophetic statement in which he prays that “all people may be one people” and that there may be “one government for all.” In my view, and the view of other Native Baha’is, this is a reference to the coming of the Revelation of Baha’u’llah which calls for the universal recognition of the oneness of humanity and the creation of a divinely ordained World Order and World Commonwealth. It is relevant to note that Chief Joseph made the following statement of love and peace even after having witnessed many of his people hunted down (in a 1,000 mile trek) and slaughtered by American army troops:

“When the white men were few and we were strong we could have killed them off, but the Nez Perce wishes to live at peace....

Let me be a free man... free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to talk, think and act for myself—and I will obey every law or submit to the penalty.

Whenever the white man treats the Indian as they treat each other then we shall have no more wars. We shall be all alike—brothers of one father and mother, with one sky above us and one country around us and one government for all. Then the Great Spirit Chief who rules above will smile upon this land and send rain to wash out the bloody spots made by brothers' hands upon the face of the earth. For this time the Indian race is waiting and praying. I hope no more groans

of wounded men and women will ever go to the ear of the Great Spirit Chief above, and that all people may be one people.” (From Chester Anders Fee, *Chief Joseph: The Biography of a Great Indian*, New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1936, pp. 281-83.)

Interestingly, some Mayan Indian elders believe that we are presently witnessing the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy. Based on their ancient astronomical calendar, some Mayan elders believe that we are currently experiencing the end of the current world and the appearance of a new “fifth sun” that will herald the “World of Consciousness” (F. David Peat, *Blackfoot Physics*, p. 125). This renewal of the earth’s spiritual cycles entails much suffering akin to the way that the birth of a baby involves labor pains, but the shift in cycles will result in necessary positive transformation and a call for all peoples to come together in a great circle of healing.

Similar to the Mayan prophecy regarding the shift in the planet’s spiritual cycles, in recent years, many well-respected traditional elders of the Hopi Indian nation have begun to assert that, according to their sacred teachings, the globe is currently at a turning point between the beginning of the Fifth Cycle of the world and the closing of its Fourth Cycle. The elders point out that important “end times” prophecies have now been fulfilled regarding the ongoing shift in cycles. They explain that the transition from one cycle to the next entails much peril to the planet and to humanity, but they maintain that, according to Hopi traditional spiritual teachings, hope lies in the “return” of an “older brother,” a divinely inspired messenger who will come from the East with a “tablet” of spiritual instructions (Thomas E. Mails and Dan Evehema, *Hotevilla*, pp. 49-53). The following quote is a warning by a Hopi elder, Dan Katchongva, regarding a Hopi spiritual prophecy of the end times when people will be lost in darkness until a divinely inspired messenger comes to bring people back to the good ways.

“So today we [traditional Hopi elders] are still standing firmly on the Great Spirit’s instructions. We will continue to look and pray toward the East for his [older brother’s] prompt return. ... The people [of the world during the end time] will corrupt the good ways of life. ... Most of us will be lost in all the confusion. ... An awareness that something extraordinary is happening will develop in most of the people, for even their leaders will be confused into polluting themselves. ... It will be difficult to decide whom to follow.” (as cited by Thomas E. Mails and Dan Evehema, *Hotevilla*, pgs. 53)

In my view, the “older brother’s return” from the East with a “tablet” of spiritual instructions is a reference to the coming of the teachings of Baha’u’llah to the Hopi people and to all other people in order to have all of humanity return to the Good Red Road.

The Hopi elders emphasize the importance of remaining faithful to “the Sacred Covenant” with “Maasaw,” who is regarded as the Guardian Spirit or overseer for the Creator. They also assert that “the Sacred Covenant” is “global in scale,” and that the Hopi share this sacred “responsibility with certain of the ancient peoples in other lands.” The elders warn that most of the “aboriginal loyalists to the Covenant [throughout the world] ... are becoming extinct” and that even large numbers of Hopi people have now adopted the thinking of the “Bahanna” (White people). In a communique, a group of Hopi elders point out the importance of worldview: “Our worldview has become so recklessly mixed with alien thinking from outside our culture that soon

we won't even know who we are." The elders highlight the importance of remaining faithful to Hopi spiritual traditions and ceremonies and of living simple peaceful lives in anticipation of the "return" of the "older brother" from the East. (Thomas E. Mails and Dan Evehema, *Hotevilla*, pp. 15, 18)

As noted above, both the Mayan and Hopi elders explain that we are currently experiencing a shift in the earth's spiritual cycles and that the shift between cycles entails much confusion, pain, and suffering; however, the ultimate result will be a much needed transformation and the coming together of people in peace, healing, and oneness. The Hopi and Mayan spiritual prophecies are consistent with other Native prophecies which I mentioned earlier—namely, Black Elk's prophetic vision of "one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father" and Deganawida's (circa 1450, Iroquois Prophet) vision regarding the "white roots of the Great Tree of Peace [that] will continue to grow, advancing the Good Mind and Righteousness and Peace, moving into territories of people scattered far..."

In my view, the indigenous prophecies mentioned above are anticipating the coming of the divinely inspired Revelation of Baha'u'llah. Similar to the indigenous elders' understandings that the earth is currently experiencing the renewal of spiritual cycles, according to the Baha'i Writings, humanity is moving from the Cycle of Prophecy to the Cycle of Fulfillment and collective humanity is transitioning from the stage of adolescence to the stage of maturity. It is significant to note that, similar to the tree metaphors described in the above indigenous prophecies, the Baha'i Writings refer to Baha'u'llah as the "Sadratu'l-Muntahá" (Divine Lote Tree), the "Sacred Lote Tree," and the "Tree of Holiness." Moreover, in the Súriy-i-Ghusn (Tablet of the Branch) Baha'u'llah continues the tree metaphor as He appoints Abdu'l-Baha as the unerring Interpreter of His Word and the Center of His Covenant-- the "Branch" that is to "encompass the whole of creation":

"There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá [Divine Lote Tree] this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness [Abdu'l-Baha]; well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow. Verily the Limb of the Law of God hath sprung forth from this Root which God hath firmly implanted in the Ground of His Will, and Whose Branch [Abdu'l-Baha] hath been so uplifted as to encompass the whole of creation."

The quote above, in my view, is the fulfillment of Black Elk's vision in which he first views that "the tree is withered" (possibly the dying of religion and the persecution of Baha'u'llah and the Baha'i Faith), and then he pleads with Grandfather God to nourish the "root" so that the "shielding tree" can spring back to life as a protection and refuge for the people. In his vision, Black Elk prayed the following:

"It may be that some root of the Sacred Tree still lives. Nourish it then, that it may leaf and bloom and fill with singing birds! Hear me, that they [all people] may once again go back to the Sacred Hoop, and the Good Red Road, the shielding tree."

Reminiscent of Black Elk's quote above, the Baha'i Writings refer to Abdu'l-Baha as the "Most Mighty Branch sprung from the Ancient Root." Meanwhile, Abdu'l-Baha, in his Will and

Testament, continues the tree metaphor when he appoints Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah:

“...it is incumbent upon the Aghsan (Branches), the Afnan (Twigs) of the Sacred Lote-Tree... to turn unto Shoghi Effendi-- the youthful branch branched from the two hallowed and sacred Lote-Trees [the Bab and Baha'u'llah] and the fruit grown from the union of the two offshoots of the Tree of Holiness,-- as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the guardian of the Cause of God...” (Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'i World Faith*, p. 442)

In short, it seems to me that Black Elk's vision of the “Sacred Tree” that “may leaf and bloom and fill with singing birds” and “the shielding tree” is a prophetic vision of the establishment of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah which Abdu'l-Baha described as “the pivot of the oneness of mankind” which will guard “the impregnable fort of the Cause of God” and is intended “to set aside disputes from the world” (Abdu'l-Baha, *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 359). Related to this, some Hopi elders, as mentioned earlier, emphasize that they must remain faithful to “the Sacred Covenant” with “Maasaw” (the Guardian Spirit of the Creator), and they also maintain that “the Sacred Covenant” is “global in scale,” and that the Hopi share this sacred “responsibility with certain of the ancient peoples in other lands” (Thomas E. Mails and Dan Evehema, *Hotevilla*, pp. 15, 18). I would assert that the Hopi elders' reference to “the Sacred Covenant” is prophetically related to the Covenant of Baha'u'llah. Moreover, I would assert that the Iroquois Prophet Deganawida's vision regarding the “white roots of the Great Tree of Peace [that] will continue to grow, advancing the Good Mind and Righteousness and Peace, moving into territories of people scattered far...” is prophetically related to the promise (contained in the Baha'i Writings) of the establishment of the Most Great Peace as people throughout the world lovingly embrace the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

Indeed, I would like to humbly suggest that, if today's Native peoples reconnect with the holistic worldview of their ancestors, they may be able to readily see the similarities and connections between their holistic teachings and the Revelation of Baha'u'llah. Some people of Native ancestry have already recognized these similarities and connections and have declared their belief in Baha'u'llah as the Promised One Who will bring about the oneness of humanity and the creation of a peaceful, unified, and just World Order. As such, the Baha'i Revelation fulfills not only indigenous prophecies but also the prophecies of faiths and spiritual traditions throughout the world. Perhaps this is what Black Elk beheld in his vision when he stated, “And I saw the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father, and I saw that it was holy.” Similarly, it may also be what Chief Joseph envisioned when he stated, “We shall be all alike—brothers of one father and mother, with one sky above us and one country around us and one government for all. Then the Great Spirit Chief who rules above will smile upon this land and send rain to wash out the bloody spots made by brothers' hands upon the face of the earth. For this time the Indian race is waiting and praying. I hope no more groans of wounded men and women will ever go to the ear of the Great Spirit Chief above, and that all people may be one people.”

A fresh infusion of people who have a more holistic ethos (especially Native peoples who are struggling to maintain or to reconnect with the holistic, integrative, ecological, web-of-life worldview of their ancestors) can help all Baha'is and spiritual seekers to more properly understand the true spirit of the revolutionary holistic teachings of oneness that are contained in the Baha'i Writings. Perhaps this is a part of the ancestral legacy that some American Indian Baha'is can share with other fellow spiritual seekers (of whatever background), and this can contribute to the growth and development of the Baha'i Faith—the efflorescence of the “mighty flowering tree,” and the growth and spreading of the “white roots of the Great Tree of Peace.”

It is my hope that my presentation shows that American Indian spiritual ways of thinking and being that arose from the Call of God in the ancient Americas (and in some cases, and to varying degrees, carried down through time by some Native peoples), if now guided by the teachings, principles, and administrative order of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, can act as a lamp of enlightenment to illuminate the path towards oneness for all peoples and to advance the creation of a healthy, peaceful, unified, and just World Order.

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