

Goodwill in World Affairs

World Goodwill
Newsletter

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Planning for a Transformative Future

The previous issue of *Goodwill in World Affairs* introduced the UN's September *Summit of the Future* and explored goodwill networks that are thinking through ideas and policies to plan for a better future.

This issue continues the theme with a discussion of the Ageless Wisdom idea that planning indicates the “emergence of the Will aspect” in human affairs.

Guest contributors add their own reflections. May East discusses regenerative design as a transformative approach to planning, especially as it applies to cities. Marco, an international civil servant, assesses the state of cooperation in international affairs, with insights on the importance of education in building a cooperative spirit between people and nations. In an interview, Daniel Perell reflects on the Summit process and its significance to human evolution.

The Summit of the Future begins on September 20 with two Action Days involving stakeholders representing all sectors of society, followed by a two day Summit when governments and Heads of State reflect on plans and adopt a Pact for the Future, accompanied by a Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations.

World Goodwill's [Cycle of Conferences](#) visualization initiative will focus on the Summit in September.

- Human Planning, Interdependence and the Summit of the Future
- Expanding Circles of Inclusion - an Interview with Daniel Perell
- Regeneration - a concept that has evolved over time - Dr May East
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Human Planning, Interdependence and the Summit of the Future

In a classic book on the Ageless Wisdom by Alice Bailey a series of hints was given to a group of students. They were advised to reflect on these hints, using them as a way of evoking the intuition and deepening their understanding of the shifting stream of direction in human affairs.

The Second Hint given to the students in the 1940s seems relevant now, as we approach the forthcoming **Summit of the Future** at the United Nations in September. The hint reads: “Human planning today is one of the first indications of the emergence of the Will aspect”. So, at this time of division and risk, what does the quality of planning tell us about the emerging Will?

The ‘Will aspect’ refers to the understanding, common to most spiritual traditions, that Life contains within itself a purposeful universal Presence which can be understood as a ‘stream of direction’ driving the great cyclic transformations recorded by historians. As thinkers respond to this stream of direction (positively, negatively, or anything in between) a flow of ideas pours through the collective mind, revealing fresh approaches to the needs, problems and opportunities of any age. Some of those ideas then begin to be worked out through plans and designs which are constantly adapted and refined and eventually lead to a new order.

Many thinkers would agree that an impulse towards synthesis has been driving evolutionary processes over the past 70 years or so, influencing thought and conditioning world affairs. Global planning, including the Summit, reflects that impulse. It also reflects a need to respond

to the growing intensity of problems caused by the divisions between nations and by excessive materialism. Crises are mounting. Governments, thinkers, and institutions are challenged to respond. The planning today is very different from the planning that led to the creation of the United Nations and was alive at the time Alice Bailey’s book was written. In place of the small group of Allied powers there are now 193 sovereign states involved in UN planning, alongside a collection of organized and powerful stakeholders, many of whom hardly existed in the 1940’s. Furthermore, there is an unprecedented concentration of wealth and power in global corporations each with their own agenda, military arsenals have a degree of sophistication undreamt of in the 1940’s, and planning must take account of the new social media.

Much of the planning and negotiations by governments (not just for the Summit but the related 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Secretary-General’s 2021 Report ‘**Our Common Agenda**’ commissioned by governments, and the entire vision for sustainable development that has dominated United Nations policies in recent decades) understandably reflects both ‘old’ and ‘new’ thinking. Plans tend to reflect the orientation and focus of technocrats, more interested in material implementation and measures of progress than in ensuring that the spirit of synthesis and wellbeing thrive in the new environment.

But to focus criticism on this material focus is to miss the fact that the plans are simply material responses to the impulse to synthesis. And it ignores the deeper focus on inclusive relationships that has a stronger presence in local, national and international planning than at any previous time. This can be seen in various UN

planning scenarios, including [UNESCO's Futures of Education](#) project and the [UN Food Systems Coordination Hub](#). And it can be seen in the efforts to plan a material world that ends serious poverty and hunger for all, respects the rights and dignity of all people (all genders, all racial and ethnic groups, all economic classes) and stops damaging and polluting the environment.

In general terms, governments have signed on to the transformative agenda without any strong sense of purpose (hence the gap between plans and national policies) – even if some of the diplomats charged with leading negotiations have played a strong visionary role. The result is that the idealistic statements agreed to in texts like the forthcoming Summit's Pact for the Future can easily appear, at least to a cynical public, to be hollow slogans without any strong sense of will and direction. After all, governments and their people continue, in the main, to respond to global challenges from the perspective of national self-centeredness. Large powerful corporations (not all but most) help to drive this separative self-centeredness, as do various organized political, religious and civil forces.

Yet it is important to affirm that an absence of vision within most governments does not reflect an overall lack of will in the planning process, and does not reflect the will of every government – see, for example, the Barbados prime minister, Mia Mottley's leadership of the [Bridgetown Initiative](#) for the reform of the global Financial Architecture with its plans to facilitate finance for countries most vulnerable to the changing climate. And beyond governments, many of the other stakeholders in the planning process are driven by a strong vision of universal consciousness, cooperation, and sense of the common good, as evidenced

in the last issue of this Newsletter.

The past lives in the present, and planning is all about lifting the present into or at least towards a possible better future reflecting incoming ideas. Change occurs through the cut and thrust of responses to ideas, visions and plans, and the crises in human affairs that these responses generate. Plans inspired by the new ideas and driven by mounting problems inevitably generate a natural resistance to change and a yearning for a mythical past, just as they attract an idealistic wish to fully embrace the envisioned future, attempting to leave the past behind without addressing the elemental forces (the habits, loyalties, and paradigms) that gave rise to that past. At the same time there are a core of 'planners' who are willing to engage with the reality of where our societies are now, and chart a way forward towards an envisioned future, leaving the "world of rhetoric" as Daniel Perell, a contributor to this Newsletter has [written](#), and entering the "field of endeavor."

The focus of attention on plans for the future carefully choreographed by the UN creates an opportunity to further define and refine the vision and, in the process, evoke a deepening level of will. Rather than a one-off event, the Summit is a process of lengthy consultations and negotiations. And although agreements and decisions are ultimately made by governments, stakeholders reflecting a diversity of voices of 'we the people' play a strong role. While, in the UN context, the term 'stakeholders' usually refers to civil society (organizations and movements) this has now been expanded to '[Major Groups and other Stakeholders](#)' (such as: Women; Children and Youth; Local Authorities; Farmers). The entire community of Major Groups organize themselves into thematic 'Clusters' like 'Energy', 'Sustainable Development Financing', 'Com-

mons Cluster’, ‘Unitive Cluster’. Many of these clusters have submitted their own draft texts for the Pact of the Future.

What this means is that human planning today is much more widespread than is often realized, involving vast constituencies of people from all nations, and at all levels of community: local, provincial, national, regional and global. Planning for cooperation and development has become a vital part of governance at all these levels, and clearly reflects a mobilization of organized goodwill and the will to deepen cooperation and sharing for the common good, alongside a more conservative will to slow down change, and an oppositional will resisting ideas of synthesis and interdependence.

As the current draft of the **Pact for the Future** (‘rev.2’ at the time of writing) recognizes, this is a critical time demanding transformation: “We are confronted by a growing range of catastrophic and existential risks. If we do not change course, we risk tipping irreversibly into a future of persistent crisis and breakdown.” The Pact offers a vision of “a global transformation” leading to “renewal and progress grounded in our common humanity.” It lays out “a path to a brighter future for all of humanity, including for the most vulnerable ... striving for a world that is safe, sustainable, peaceful, inclusive, just, equal, orderly, and resilient.” Even with all the different agendas of national states (still largely driven by national self-centeredness), and with the power of giant corporations, there is still current agreement, in the Pact at least, that it is the intention and aim of the international community to initiate a series of actions for all of humanity to move forward in five major areas: sustainable development and financing for development; international peace and security; science, technology, innovation

and digital cooperation; youth and future generations; and global governance. Planning and design for the future, as driven by the natural impulse to goodwill, and in response to the problems of the present, concentrates human creativity and intelligent, willful activity. The ferment of planning currently underway, and the strong energies of support and resistance this planning evokes, is a sign that a deep transformation of human relationships is underway.

ⁱ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, II, p. 359.



Expanding Circles of Inclusion

Interview with Daniel Perell

Daniel Perell is a representative of the Baha’i International Community at the United Nations and is Co-Chair of the Steering Committee of the [Coalition for the UN We Need](#). World Goodwill spoke with him in late July.

Many believe a Divine Plan is working out in human affairs. How do you understand this?

Analogies help to comprehend the way human history seems to be unfolding at the macro level and the analogy that I resonate with is that of the evolution or the advancements of a human being. You start out as a baby, and then you go to childhood and adolescence, and eventually to adulthood. Now we are essentially in humanity’s adolescence. We have the capacities to fulfill the potential to create just societies where peace prevails, and

everybody has the opportunity to be educated and contribute to the betterment of society. At some point in the future, we will do this. It doesn't mean there won't be illness or difficulties, yet we can, and we will create that world. But, right now, we're still at a state of imperfect maturity between childhood and adulthood.

Adolescence is an important time when we develop the skills that will later serve us.

Humanity's previous stages were very much defined by an 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy. So, if the 'us' was our tribe or our community or our city or our nation, we could develop in contrast to 'them', but now we're starting to confront the reality that there is no 'them', that we are all just 'us'. And this is actually a very difficult leap to make. We've been expanding our circles of inclusion over the course of time, but it's always been with 'them'. Now the question is how and when will we recognize that we're just 'us', and then develop institutions and structures that reflect that "usness" or oneness of humanity. That seems to be the cup of where we are.

Why is the Summit of the Future especially significant?

We are not sure what it will actually end up achieving, but at the level of concept, it's a super important moment to think about the future of humanity, to actually engage meaningfully in what we want to leave to coming generations. We tend to think of

10-15 years as long term, but here the future is open ended. The Summit represents an important opportunity to exercise the imagination. At the international or even local level we don't have sufficient opportunities to imagine in this way.

Negotiating the Pact for the Future reflects a tension between pragmatism, what is achievable at this moment with its numerous crises, and the vision of a better future. This is like climbing a mountain. Every so often, there is a chance to see the summit as you're going up. And you take that opportunity to say "yes, that's where I'm going, that's the goal". That moment of inspiration, excitement and energy, is important because it's a reminder of what you're trying to achieve. And then you go back to the path. You're never going to get to the summit by just gazing at it. But every time you get a chance to see it, to see the vision you're working towards, it inspires and restores that sense of hope and excitement. I think that's what the Summit of the Future represents.

In this process, what role is civil society playing?

At times, I think civil society needs to be and is a moral authority. We speak of what we think needs to be done, separate from the pressures of elections, moneyed interests, or short-term profits or gains. Yet much of civil society conceives of itself, and

the member states conceive of civil society as an accountability mechanism, “holding our feet to the fire and, keeping us accountable.” I think there's a degree to which that's useful. But if your only tool is a hammer, then everything's a nail. Maybe this idea of protest and advocacy only gets us so far, it's like building on a fractured foundation. In a protest-only mentality everything becomes black and white, with us or against us.

Yet this needs to be measured against the realities of the world we live in, with its unfair power dynamics. The rich member states get richer and poor member states further in debt because of assumptions upon which the whole system is built.

The Summit of the Future offers an opportunity to think about future relationships between civil society and governments in wider terms: partnering, constructive engagement, mutual reinforcement, using our different strategic positions to advance the same cause from different sides.

We've tried to create ways of working that allow member states and civil society and others to collaborate on issues of shared concern in a way that is non-hierarchical. It's not perfect because we are all embedded within certain power dynamics and inherited assumptions, but I think there is now more language around cooperation between the different stakeholders invested in this process.



Regeneration - a concept that has evolved over time

Dr May East

May East is an international urbanist, regenerative practitioner and author providing policy guidance to local and regional governments, the private sector and inter-governmental agencies. www.mayeast.co.uk

For over a century, ‘regeneration’ within planning theory and practice has shaped and shifted urban environments, responding to changes in living conditions guided by the economic and political forces of the day. Earlier regeneration projects tended to focus on reversing urban decline and decay by improving the physical structure of areas, whereas later programmes have attempted to stimulate new social and economic activities to enhance cities’ liveability and image.

At the threshold of the 21st century, an inspiring cadre of regenerative theorists and practitioners are attempting to re-position ‘regeneration’ as a knowledge-based paradigm, grounded in the science of living systems, and on an awareness that every life form is unique and nested within other, larger living systems.ⁱⁱⁱ

Advocates of regenerative design and development argue that in an unpredictable world, we can help the places where we live and work to thrive, going well beyond merely sustaining a precarious balance between the larger community of life and human essential needs and comforts.ⁱⁱⁱ

In practice, the concept of regenerative urban development aims to ensure that cities not only become zero-waste and low carbon-emitting but go beyond that by enhancing the relationship between an urbanising humanity and ecosystems which sustain lifestyles.^{iv} Crucial to this approach are systems thinking, respect for place, and stakeholder engagement.

Power has always been a central element in planning theory. But what sort of power do regenerative designers seek to wield? Our generation must navigate towards a paradigmatic shift from power over to power with, manifested as an “active intelligent purpose”^v regeneratively applied. In this context, design is no longer the prerogative of a dominant class focused on postwar reconstruction or creating master plans that apply zoning and regulatory approaches aimed at improving real estate market values while ignoring the uniqueness of place.

At its core, contemporary ‘design’ is understood as an envisioning process conducted as a social practice – as proposed by author Sylvia Margolin and design historian Victor Margolin – implying that urban form is conceived, discussed

and planned before it is developed.^{vi} In this context, design is associated with the collective capacity to unleash the potential of each unique place and community (rather than identifying problems to solve), bringing its essence out into the world and exploring how built and ecological systems can co-evolve.^{vii}

Regenesis co-founder Pamela Mang affirms that working regeneratively flips the critical question from what we need to do to who we need to become; and what new capabilities we need to reach for.^{viii} For this to happen, we must develop our capacity to observe ourselves ‘designing’ while practicing reflexivity and reflecting on the quality of our thinking and state of being. This helps us move beyond our traditional ways of making sense of the world towards building a soulful political will and the systemic thinking capabilities required to create new ways of living in harmony with human and more-than-human life.

While letting go of trying to control an environment, regenerative designers also become more open to manifesting serendipity. Historically, the term serendipity, coined by English novelist Horace Walpole, has described the accidental discovery of something valuable. This phenomenon tends to create unexpected progressive results from a combination of effort, luck, alertness, and flexibility, often while looking for one thing and finding another.^{ix} Here again the potential of accidental discoveries is heightened by the attitude of those engaging intentionally in the



process of design with what Merton and Barber describe as ‘the observer brings to the datum rather than the datum to itself’.^x

In my recent book *What if Women Designed the City?*^{xi} I argue that the regenerative development and design approach aiming to design human systems that co-evolve with natural systems, will remain inconclusive if not engaged with the political work of incorporating women’s needs and perspectives in a way that generates mutual benefits and greater gendered expression of urban life.

I propose letting go of old maps to reach new territories and introduce the concept of mapping the ‘presency’ of women. This concept adopts and combines the notion of ‘presence’ as a mindful way of paying attention to life, moment by moment, with ‘agency’, understood as critical awareness of the context and capacity to act. It reinforces the importance of a prepared mind as a condition to trigger a serendipitous experience, suggesting that creating something valuable from the unexpected is not a matter of luck, but instead a question of intentional enactment.

This new map we can create together is one of co-evolving mutualism rooted in a desire for inclusivity, an embodiment of care, and an acknowledgment of complexity. Co-evolving mutualism here means engaging with and listening to all who have a stake in the system, in reflective and generative dialogue which encourages learning together.

I advocate for intentionally widening the urban planning expert-led horizons and seeking out people who have different (even opposing) perspectives from our own, identifying bewildering and bewitching lines of work for co-evolving cities that work much better for children, older people, all levels of ableness and gender identities, as well as other forms of life. Living successfully in a world of complex urban systems means working towards the good and liveability of the whole, as well as for all those who make up that whole.

ⁱ Ungard-Benne, B. C. & Mang, P. (2015). Working Regeneratively Across Scales— Insights from Nature Applied to the Built Environment. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 109, pp. 42-52.

ⁱⁱ Mang, P. & Haggard, B. (2016). *Regenerative Development & Design: A Framework for Evolving Sustainability*. Wiley.

ⁱⁱⁱ Regenesys Group (2017).

^{iv} Girardet, H., Schurig, S, Leidreiter, A. & Woo, F. (2013). *Towards the Regenerative City*. The World Future Council. Climate and Energy Commission Council.

^v Bailey, A. (1960). *The Rays and the Initiations*. p. 48 Lucis Publishing Company.

^{vi} Margolin, V. & Margolin, S. (2002). A “Social Model” of Design: Issues of Practice and Research. *Design Issues*, MIT Press, 18: 4. pp 24-30.

^{vii} Mang, P. & Haggard, B. (2016).

^{viii} Mang, P. (2023) Foreword One in *East, M. What if Women Designed the City?* pp I-III. Triarchy Press.

^{ix} Merton, R. K. & Barber, E. (2004). *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity*. Princeton University Press.

^x Merton, R. K. & Barber, E. (2004).

^{xi} East, M. (2024). *What if Women Designed the City?* Triarchy Press.



Global cooperation – are we on track?

Marco - an international civil servant

Context

International cooperation started becoming a key vehicle for planning and action from humanitarian relief to development in the mid-19th century with the creation of the first international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Telecommunication Union.

The two World Wars marked significant phases in this development. At the end of World War I, the League of Nations began the transition from a peace paradigm based on security, which had been in place for millennia, to one that also embraced development. This transition was completed with the creation in 1945 of the United Nations, whose Charter enshrines the principle of international cooperation for development.

Many things have changed since then; countries have instituted national agencies for international cooperation; civil society organizations

engaged across the spectrum from relief to development have grown enormously; and there has been a similar growth in the private sector through the establishment of philanthropic institutions and corporate social responsibility.

Arguably, we have started another significant transition: from international cooperation between countries, to multi-stakeholder global cooperation.

Almost 80 years have passed since the adoption of the UN Charter. From the point of view of a human life this is a long time, but from the perspective of humankind and planetary development it is not so long. Global cooperation today faces some major challenges, so it is important to ask: How is it faring?

Challenges

We have entered an era of increasing consumerism, encompassing not only material goods but also ideas, which are seemingly deemed to become obsolete very fast without serious reflection. The search for “new ideas” tends to place the emphasis more on the “new” than on the “ideas”. It is as if we have forgotten that ideas and innovation are incrementally built and refined over decades, if not generations, or centuries or even millennia. Attention span is decreasing, accelerated by social media. Younger generations attribute responsibility to older generations, without necessarily questioning whether the older generations spoiled a perfect world or inherited a world that was far from perfect, and thus inadvertently ignoring the people working hard for the common good in all generations. Conscious intergenerational coop-

eration is fundamental.

Education is arguably the bedrock of the development of individuals, communities and societies. Therefore, in the efforts to advance global cooperation, it is important to look at contemporary educational models to see whether they are fit for purpose, preparing and helping individuals and communities develop cooperative action for the definition and pursuit of the common good. While we are pursuing cooperation, at least ideally and in aspirational terms, current educational models seem to push for hard competition at an increasingly young age. Moreover, young pupils, barely teenagers, are expected to focus only on certain subjects to the detriment of others. At the same time there is the odd expectation that future professionals will be able to see connections across sciences and practices and thus breakdown the so-called silos. The individual and individuality are excessively placed at the center of educational models and practice to the detriment of really comprehending the centrality of the other and the collective.

Furthermore, studies point to increasing trends over the past 50 years in narcissism not only in individuals, but also, worryingly, in cultures. This seems, in part at least to be due to current educational practices (formal, informal and parental), the internet and social media, and celebrity myths. Narcissism encompasses a strong sense of entitlement over others and anything, very limited capacity to properly assess reality and risk including one's own capacities, emphasis on appearance over substance, proneness to conflict and an ultimate lack of capacity to genu-

inely cooperate in good faith. Some of the effects may be witnessed and experienced for instance in the wanton destruction and exploitation of the environment and biodiversity, which poses an existential and suicidal threat to humanity. More worryingly, the percolating of narcissistic values and practices from individual characteristics to defining elements of our cultures across the world has the consequence that, individuals who may not be narcissistic adopt narcissistic values and practices to feel part of the community and society. If these trends continue, the negative consequences will be very serious for life on earth and the evolution of humankind.

In essence, there seems to be a dichotomy between idealistic aspirations to cooperate for the common good and mainstream cultural values and practices. It's as if we would like to go one way but we keep turning in the opposite direction.

Opportunities

So, what can we do to redress this?

Certainly, the answer cannot come from an individual or a small group. Yet, luckily, we have some good pointers. An indication is given in the United Nations Charter, in particular Article 1, Paragraph 4, which sets the objective for a United Nations which represents "We the Peoples" "to be the center for harmonizing the actions of nations for the attainment of..." the maintenance of peace and security; the development of friendly relations amongst nations; and the achievement of "international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging

respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”

Noteworthy, in the cited Article, is the word “harmonizing”. The Article does not speak of “harmony” but of a dynamic situation and the exercise of some form of power and goodwill that has the capacity to “harmonize” actions. Also, it does not utilize verbs such as homogenize and uniformize, thus indicating the intention of leveraging diversity and all the different capacities and skills which are badly needed when facing challenges of significant magnitude, like the ones that we witness nowadays. We need all hands on deck.

Planning is certainly a key requirement and instrument to actualize any harmonizing action. The scale of global planning that we see nowadays is unprecedented in history. In other words, something special is happening under our eyes. True, resources are not matching the planning yet, but this is not a reason to stop planning; rather, it emphasizes the necessity to continue influencing existing financing and economic models and instruments to bring resources to bear on the common good that is being increasingly articulated and made explicit through collective planning efforts.

Yet, while these efforts are being conceived and set in motion, it appears that a key priority for goodwill people is also a reinvigorated focus on education (formal, informal and parental). Curricula are needed to: foster and evoke a better understanding of what it takes to harmonize things within ourselves first and then in our communities; develop a growing ability to cooperate; reposit

tion the individual from being at the center to being a servant of the wider natural systems and their cycles, adjusting development planning accordingly; foster the use of individual and collective thought and will and heart in service of the common good; nurture and encourage creativity; help navigate our individual and collective consciousness, developing its potentials, and placing the self in a right and commensurate perspective and relation with other parts of the consciousness and the collective, while supporting a scientific application of meditation; and understand and utilize duality and multipolarity. Luckily, all the knowledge and foundational ideas necessary to this purpose are already available; they just need our stronger determination, attention and application.

In other words, there is an urgent need for an education that prepares individuals to be part of collectives, and collectives to be part of wider collectives and natural kingdoms, in synch with the unfolding planetary cycle. Such an education would plant the seeds for a new culture and thus a new civilization.

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Helping to build right human relations

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The Great Invocation

**From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
Let Light descend on Earth.**

**From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.
May Christ* return to Earth.**

**From the centre where the Will of God is known
Let purpose guide the little wills of men –
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.**

**From the centre which we call the race of men
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.**

**Let Light and Love and Power
restore the Plan on Earth.**

Adapted Version

**From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into human minds.
Let Light descend on Earth.**

**From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into human hearts.
May the Coming One* return to Earth.**

**From the centre where the Will of God is known
Let purpose guide all little human wills –
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.**

**From the centre which we call the human race
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.**

**Let Light and Love and Power
restore the Plan on Earth.**

*Many religions believe in a World Teacher Who is to come in the future (hence 'Coming One'), knowing Him under such names as the Lord Maitreya, the Imam Mahdi, the Kalki avatar etc. These terms are sometimes used in versions of the Great Invocation for people of specific faiths.

