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### **George Otis and his Fallacious Teachings**

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#### **Abstract:**

*Confronted with increased opposition, the producer of the two Transformations videos tries to conceal his grave theological errors but does not abandon them. In association with people like Peter Wagner, Chuck Pierce, Ted Haggard and Cindy Jacobs, George Otis of the Sentinel Group relentlessly pursues the grand cause of the post-denominational, Apostolic Reformation aimed at unifying and controlling the entire Christian Church. This is a misapprehended method to defeat Satan, promote revival, establish the kingdom of God and transform societies everywhere.*

The theology of Otis is expounded in various books, articles, lectures and public statements by him during the past 24 years. The following are the salient features of his fallacious teaching:

#### **Moral Government Theology**

During the early years of his ministry, George Otis strongly identified with Moral Government Theology (MGT) and also lectured on it. Although he changed the main emphasis of his ministry to spiritual mapping and spiritual warfare in 1990, he never publicly retracted his MGT convictions – thereby suggesting continued adherence to them.

From his later writings it is also evident that strong MGT influences still prevail in his thinking.

It might be helpful to identify some of the heresies of 20<sup>th</sup> century MGT to better understand the pronouncements of Otis on these issues. In his article, **The False God and Gospel of Moral Government Theology**, Beisner (1994:20 *et seq.*) says, among others, the following about this false doctrine:

"Contemporary moral government theology is principally the brainchild of the late Gordon C. Olson. During the 1930s and 1940s, Olson's studies led him to believe that God's foreknowledge is necessarily limited by human free will and that the classical doctrines of original sin, human depravity and moral inability, the Atonement, and justification were as wrong as the classical doctrine of absolute foreknowledge."

"...man is born **morally neutral** and is always capable of choosing whether to sin. Olson insists that 'holiness and sin are free voluntary acts of will or states of mind, and, although strongly influenced, are not caused by any internal force of nature, tendency or instinct... moral depravity... is always a voluntary development which results from the wrong choices of our wills'... that 'the universality of sin in the world is not to be accounted for, therefore, by some fixed causation in our personality inherited by birth'..."

"As Olson puts it, '**the will determines the nature or character, rather than the nature the will**' (emphasis added by author)."

"The implications of these ideas do not end here. They yield a whole new understanding of justification and salvation as well. Since Olson explicitly denies that man inherits sin or guilt from Adam (i.e., he denies the doctrine of original sin – the imputation of Adam's sin and guilt to his posterity), it should come as no surprise that he also denies the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers. He finds the cause of salvation not in Christ's atoning death but in the believer's self-reformation. [Olson says,] 'Romans 5:12-19 does not establish the dogma of the literal imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity, but merely affirms in a parallelism that just as Adam's sin was the occasion, not cause, of the voluntary disobedience of all men, so Christ is the occasion, not cause, of the salvation offered to all men... The active obedience or holiness of Christ', Olson says, 'is not legally imputed to the believer.' And if Christ's righteousness is not credited to the believer, neither is the believer's sin credited to Christ on the cross. For sin is not a principle; sins are isolated, individual acts only."

"[Olson says,] 'The Godhead is without personal vindictiveness. The problems of forgiveness are not personal but governmental. God does not require an exact payment for sin to satisfy **retributive** justice'..."

"By defining freedom as the 'power of contrary choice,' Olson is forced ultimately to deny nearly the whole defining body of Christian faith: original sin, unregenerate man's moral inability, the imputation of Christ's righteousness in justification (parallel to the imputation of Adam's sin in condemnation), the substitutionary and satisfactory atonement for sin in

Christ's death, and the moral and intellectual infinity, perfection, and immutability of God. And Olson reaches his conclusions not on the basis of Scripture but by inferences from philosophical assumptions."

### **The advancing of MGT by Otis**

The unbiblical tenets of Otis's version of Moral Government Theology were first expounded in his book, **The God They Never Knew** (1978). This book is out of print but I quote a few references made to it by Greg Robertson. In these passages Otis concedes that a sinful nature can develop in a person, but, according to him, it is caused by habitual sinning and is therefore not hereditary:

"A sinful nature is developed in our lives through habitual self-indulgence and subsequently begins to affect everything we do. Paul makes mention of this situation and the impossibility of fighting it in our own strength in the seventh chapter of Romans. Thus we concur that a law or sinful nature is present but we must also see that it originated by choice. A good example of this is a junkie bound by an addiction to heroin. He cannot help put (sic) crave drugs; but its origin was in his choices' (Otis 1978:76)."

"When Otis talks about the impossibility of fighting it in your own strength he is talking about advanced cases of moral depravity (used in the Moral Government sense), where the habits of sin are so developed that only in perceiving the character of God in the crucifixion of Christ, can a person receive the power to reform his moral life and thereby become acceptable to God (Otis 1978:105-131). This corresponds to Olson's idea of bondage that requires an ever increasing energy of will to counteract. Within this system it is maintained that repentance in the New Testament 'was never mentioned as an end in itself, but as a means to salvation'. It is also maintained that 'repentance is the condition of, or the prerequisite to, salvation'. The repentance spoken of here is not a repentance of turning from a state of unbelief to a state of faith, but a form of repentance that supersedes faith and makes faith subordinate to works" (Robertson 1982).

George Otis does not believe in the core message of Christianity, which is the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross to pay the wages for our sins, thereby making it possible for us to be saved from the wrath of God over the wicked. In lectures given in 1981 to YWAM in Tacoma, Washington, on Moral Government Theology, he made the following statements in this regard:

\* "God has put things inside of us. He's made us in many ways like Himself. His truth is deep within us and it will take our own basic understanding of what God is like and what His principles are like. And then we'll go into the Word of God and really search the scriptures, we're going to come up with concepts that are different than what are normally taught today in theological circles. According to this definition of forgiveness, that is the relaxation of a legitimate claim, then it would be impossible for God to have, as one hymn put it, 'paid the debt and forgave me all my sins'" (1981:lecture 3).

# Discernment

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\* "Christ has not redeemed us by giving His life as a ransom for our sins in order that He might release us... For God never kept man captive in sin... The truth is Christ paid no man's debt" (1981:lecture 4).

\* "If we accept the premise that Jesus literally purchased, that He literally purchased our salvation with His blood... and He paid the Father... then this approach, first of all portrays God the Father as being vindictive and bloodthirsty and totally incompatible with biblical forgiveness. It also presents another grave difficulty. If Jesus literally paid for our sins with His blood, and a paid debt is no longer a debt, and He died for the sins of the whole world, then we can only come to one conclusion and the theological word for that is Universalism – which means that everybody will be saved" (1981:lecture 4).

With these statements, Otis refutes clear biblical pronouncements on the redeeming of sinners through the atoning death of Jesus. The Bible says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). "For you were bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). "...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

## **A new direction**

In the spring of 1990, a major "discovery" by Otis changed his entire spiritual vision and the priorities and activities of his ministry. He talked to a missionary in Morocco who laboured for seven years without success. Otis then realised that he had to probe the labyrinth of the kingdom of darkness to determine the cause of the strong spiritual oppression in certain areas (1997:50-52). This was the beginning of an extensive investigation in almost 50 countries, which culminated in his book **The Twilight Labyrinth** (1997).

Otis didn't abandon his previous theological orientation but became aware of the great importance of oppressive spiritual forces in the world that hinder the expansion of the kingdom of God. He viewed these demonic strongholds as major stumbling blocks that have to be removed before significant progress in evangelism could be made:

"In virtually every corner of the world there are certain neighborhoods , cities, cultures and nations that embrace more idolatry , manifest greater spiritual oppression and exhibit more resistance to Gospel light... Certain travelers have described instances in which the prevailing spiritual atmosphere changed one way or the other at the very instant they crossed a particular territorial threshold... This kind of anecdotal evidence gives weight to the proposition that spiritual darkness is palpable and geographically concentrated" (1997:52).

*"Why does spiritual darkness linger where it does? I was convinced that this profoundly simple inquiry possessed universal relevance. And while I recognized that it would*

consume my attention, I did not realize how radically that single question... would alter my own vision and career" (1997:52-53).

Since 1990, the idea was firmly entrenched in his mind that demonic strongholds are territorially-based and that evil spirits blind and deceive the communities in their areas of operation. Unless their power was broken, no success would be achieved with the preaching of the Gospel and the consequent spiritual and social transformation of societies. Otis called the process of gathering spiritual intelligence on demonic forces "spiritual mapping". The term was soon popularised and the process widely used as preparation for strategic spiritual warfare and the pulling down of the enemy's strongholds.

## **The leaven spreads**

In 1991, Otis published the book, **The Last of the Giants: Lifting the Veil on Islam and the End Time**. In it, he confirms some of his previous theological fallacies and further explains them while also promoting the idea of "spiritual mapping":

**No sinful nature.** The author continues to deny the notion of the sinful nature of man: "Because all human peoples belong to God initially by right of fatherhood, Satan has no automatic control over them. Unless individuals give themselves over to the rulership of Satan willingly, they will remain under the tender influence of the Holy Spirit" (1991:88). This is an outright denial of the depraved and sinful nature of man due to the fall. In our unregenerate state we are "without hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). David says: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5). But according to Otis we have no sinful nature and only sin by deliberate choice and afterwards by force of habit. Small wonder that he sees no need for Christ's atonement on the cross to forgive our sins and to make provision for a new nature to all lost sinners who turn to Him for salvation. All that is needed in the Otis paradigm is spiritual warfare to liberate societies from the oppressive influence of territorial spirits. They will then turn to God in great numbers. According to Otis, the inherent sinful nature of people doesn't need to be addressed because they do not have one! They were only deceived by an external spiritual force (a territorial demonic stronghold) to sin. Remove this stronghold, and society will be free to embrace Christianity!

**New revelations.** Otis clearly does not believe that the Bible contains the whole counsel of God. He regards the Church as God's primary instrument of revelation on earth today. He also says that Christians must lead the parade of history (1991:34). This teaching opens the way to the practising of further revelational gifts by prophets and apostles. Extra-Biblical revelations are, therefore, in order. This is an ideal opportunity for false prophets to flourish as it opens the way to deceiving the entire Christian Church by following the teachings and advice of specially anointed "prophets" of God.

**A new way of discerning spiritual enemies.** "This new way of seeing I have labelled *spiritual mapping*" (1991:85). Otis says that negative feelings are related directly to the presence and influence of unseen territorial spirits. He refers to Peter Wagner's theory

that Satan assigns high-ranking evil spirits to control nations, regions, cities and tribes to prevent God from being glorified in their territory. The ability to identify these satanic strongholds is described as spiritual mapping (1991:87; recognition for the above quotations from Otis 1991, and some of the comments, to Rev. Greg Robertson on <http://www.geocities.com/promo777/Otislevn.htm> ).

### **World-wide propagation of spiritual mapping**

The following major events during the past twelve years are the driving force behind the rapid spreading of spiritual mapping all over the world. Otis played a key role in the process:

- \* In 1989, John Dawson of the International Reconciliation Coalition published his pioneering book, **Taking Our Cities for God**. Unity is a key concept in the book. Dawson is a fervent advocate of racial, ethnic and cultural reconciliation.
- \* In 1990, George Otis coined the term "spiritual mapping". In 1991, he published his book **The Last of the Giants** in which he further expounds the concept.
- \* In 1993, Tom White's **Breaking Strongholds** was published, as well as a book by Hawthorne and Kendrick, **Prayer-walking: Praying On Site With Insight**. This exercise is offered as a prerequisite to radical city transformation.
- \* Also in 1993, the Sentinel Group of Otis conducted the first North American Consultation on spiritual mapping in Washington.
- \* In 1994, Otis accepted the role as coordinator of the Spiritual Mapping Division of the AD 2000 United Prayer Track. In the same year, spiritual mapping was presented at the first International Conference on Prayer and Spiritual Warfare in Anaheim, California.
- \* In 1995, George Otis introduced spiritual mapping to hundreds of delegates at a Prayer Track plenary session during the Global Congress of World Evangelism (GCOWE 95). In the same year, Disciple a Whole Nation (DAWN) began teaching spiritual mapping principles in CitiReach seminars. In Ted Haggard's book, **Primary Purpose**, published in 1995, it is said that the spiritual climate in your city can be changed to such an extent that it will be hard for people to go to hell from that city.
- \* Also in 1995, **Strongholds of the 10/40 Window** was published by the Sentinel Group to assist journeyers in their effort to pray on-site with insight.
- \* In 1997, Peter Wagner's **Breaking Strongholds in Your City** was published, and also **The Twilight Labyrinth** by George Otis. In the latter, insight into the spiritual darkness in cities is given, as well as methods to map and confront the powers of darkness.

- \* In 1998, the spiritual mapping repository at the Observatory opened at the World Prayer Centre in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Also in 1998, the Sentinel Group initiated the Ancient Pathways project in Lynnwood, Washington.
- \* In 1999, the "Transformations" video of Otis was first shown in the United States and then throughout the world. In it, a survey of four communities is presented as tangible proof of the success of united, intercessory prayer and strategic spiritual warfare.
- \* Also in 1999, Otis published his book **Informed Intercession** with a guide on how to transform your city or region for God. In the same year, Jack Denison's book **City Reaching** was published and strongly recommended by Otis. The idea of the city church is discussed in this book.
- \* From 1991 tot 1999, Dr. Wagner taught spiritual mapping as a critical element for effective missions in his MC551 course at Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission. Approximately 800-900 pastors, ministry leaders, and lay persons received the fundamentals of spiritual mapping through Fuller courses.
- \* In 2000, new spiritual warfare practices were introduced in association with spiritual mapping. The most significant of these, and also the most controversial, was the activation of the gift of prophecy and the role of prophets and apostles. Prophecy enables the church to see beyond data collections and demographics. Prophets hear the secrets of the Lord and declare His timing while apostles are sent out to mobilise the church.
- \* In 2001, the "Transformations 2" video was released by the Sentinel Group of Otis to give further credence to the strategies of spiritual mapping and spiritual warfare in breaking demonic strongholds and promoting revival, unity and socio-economic transformation in societies around the globe.

(The above list of events was derived from Trimble [1997:4-7] and further updated).

## **The collective destiny of groups**

According to the views of Otis, the spiritual destiny of entire groups (such as cities or nations) must be changed. In terms of this approach, the mission of the church relates to groups rather than to individuals. In his book, **Informed Intercession** (1999), communities are likened to rivers: "In a few instances, the lifeline of a town will present a direct trajectory to heaven or hell. More often, it will vacillate between these destinies like the loops of a lazy river... But whatever its route or pace might be, the community – every community – is flowing somewhere. And this flow is the effect of observable causes" (1999:143). Otis sees it as the task of the church to change the common destiny of communities as integrated groups.

Through a process of spiritual mapping, collective knowledge is gained about the religious and cultural geography of communities – also in a historical context:

"In Europe these realities include spiritual pacts forged by Celtic tribes that once roamed the vast distances between Spain and Scotland... In the Asian Himalayas, the Arabian Peninsula and the Andean Altiplano, common spiritual histories underlie bondages that extend across dozens of national and provincial borders" (1999:150-51).

Spiritual mapping also involves the identification of so-called "dark spiritual sites" with a view to eradicating them through spiritual warfare:

"It should come as no surprise that spiritual mapping also involves investigating locations that have... emerged as centers of idolatry and demonic attention. This firsthand observation allows you to acquire valuable insight into religious allegiances and possible sources of spiritual opposition. Armed with this intelligence you can proceed to strip the enemy of his cover" (1999:154-5).

The collective analyses of Otis reveals his strong inclination towards realising the ecumenical nature of Christianity through common actions by all denominations. The process of convergence must occur to the extent that unified city churches emerge. Only united actions by a corporate (city-wide or nation-wide) Christian church will ensure victory in the struggle against the powers of darkness (1999:241).

In **The Twilight Labyrinth** (1997) Otis refers to the collective spirit-possession of a whole community, and also to a process of "cultural exorcism" to free a cultural group from their common bondage (1997:274).

## **Condoning of his original doctrine**

Although Otis no longer openly propagates the basic tenets of his Moral Government Theology he still condones this fallacious doctrine. He discusses sin in people's lives without reference to an inherited sinful nature, and never emphasises the tremendous significance of the atoning work of Jesus on the cross. He conceals his true (apostate) convictions on these issues since he knows that the evangelicals will be offended by harshly unbiblical statements of this nature. He rather poses to be evangelical himself and emphasises the decisive role of strategic prayer to create the impression that he is a fundamental Christian. Yet he denies the foundation of Christianity by not basing his prayer guidelines on the victory gained by Jesus Christ on the cross. He only makes a general statement that God forgives people because He is loving and forgiving, and that He will break demonic strongholds if his people petition Him to do so. The knowledge of sin is also not related to the conviction of the Holy Spirit but to a complex process of spiritual mapping. In this way, the spiritual awakening and destiny of communities and nations is placed squarely in the hands of men.

In none of his books during the past decade did Otis withdraw the doctrinal principles which prompted the Moral Government lectures presented to YWAM students in Tacoma in 1981. No systematic evangelical teaching has since then emerged to replace his original fallacies. Should he have changed his position, the responsibility lies with him to make it known to the world in very clear terms.

### **Identifying and opposing the kingdom of darkness**

In **The Twilight Labyrinth** (1997), Otis extensively examines the kingdom of Satan and its complex manifestations of witchcraft, spirit-possession, idolatry and false religions. He makes a strong case for the pervasive supernatural dimension and its influence on reality. However, he neglects to make the vital distinction between mysticism (the occult realm of Satan) and supernatural actions related to God. If one fails to draw a clear line here you are unable to discern the appearance of Satan as an angel of light, as well as his false prophets who deceive people with their signs and wonders (Mt. 7:22-23; 24:4-5, 11, 24; 2 Cor. 11:3-4; 13-15).

This inability of the author, despite his intensive investigation of the occult, has resulted in his blanket approval of the modern signs and wonders movement championed by the late John Wimber, the father of the Vineyard churches who became notorious for the Toronto phenomenon of absurd, extra-biblical manifestations. Another "father" of this movement is Peter Wagner who is paving the way for the post-denominational apostolic church that will be based on signs, wonders and extra-biblical revelations of God's will through prophets and apostles. Otis rejects the possible occult origin of these manifestations and defends John Wimber and Peter Wagner's strong commitment to the signs and wonders theology. In doing so, he denounces John McArthur for questioning signs, wonders and charismatic manifestations (1997:57). Examples are cited from the Bible to substantiate miracles (1997:60) but without reference to the "miracles" produced by the "angel of light" to deceive people.

In this book, Otis also reviews the fall of Adam and Eve, but stops short of stating that they actually became sinful and rebellious in the core of their nature, and that this attribute was inherited by the entire human race (1997:93-108). He says that they became conscious of themselves, and that pride and independence entered their hearts and inverted God's plan with humans. Rather than exercising dominion they were henceforth dominated by fear and death. Their incomplete knowledge made them easy targets for deception of Satan. They needed the wisdom of God to be restored spiritually: "So long as the human creature reached out to his heavenly Father for wisdom, it would be to him as **a tree of life**" (1997:103; emphasis mine). Note that the wisdom of God enlightens man to make the correct moral and spiritual choices that will lead to true life. Why are the other means of grace not mentioned?

In his description of spiritual protection, Otis emphasises the need for the attributes of humility, obedience, spiritual accountability, prayer, the taking of godly risks and the putting on of the spiritual armour (1997:243-257). Nowhere did he mention identification with the cross of Christ, and in only one paragraph under "spiritual armour" did he make a brief reference to the Lordship of Jesus. His entire presentation of spiritual attributes is technical and cold because it bypasses the core message of the Gospel. One is admonished to align yourself with certain biblical truths, but this advice is not explicitly related to a true commitment to the crucified and risen Lord Jesus, and to the need of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Otis offers six guidelines for using spiritual power (1997:257-9). Here, one could also expect clear statements about the power of the Gospel, but in vain. These guidelines are:

(1) **Expose yourself to real battlefields.** A valid statement is made that we should engage ourselves in real battles and not play academic war games.

(2) **Find a qualified mentor.** The only comment of Otis on this point is: "The best way to learn how to wield spiritual power effectively is to grab onto the coattails of someone who has gone to battle before." Nothing whatsoever is said about biblical preparations for the battle. Paul says: "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10). If this enduement with power is not secured, the power of the Holy Spirit is substituted with the leadership of an experienced human mentor!

(3) **Remain clean and humble.** The only New Testament verse which is quoted to explain these attributes is that God only hears those who do His will (Jn. 9:31). The impression is created that one can use your own will to take the right moral decisions in accordance with God's Word. The opportunity is not used to state emphatically that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7), and that Jesus "sanctify the people with His own blood" (Heb. 13:12).

(4) **Promote divine signs and wonders.** Otis says that the purpose of signs and wonders is to facilitate evangelism. However, it should be noted that divine signs and wonders were given for specific purposes and did not always commonly occur. Jesus said: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign" (Mt. 16:4). In the Bible, the signs and wonders movement of the end-time is specifically related to the actions of false prophets who are intent on deceiving people (Mt. 24:11, 24; 2 Thes. 2:9).

(5) **Release yourself to God's sovereignty.** This is a valid statement, which is further qualified by the Lordship of Jesus, but without any reference to the significance of the cross.

(6) **Develop a sense of expectation.** It is a lofty ideal to expect God to do great things for us through the power of the Holy Spirit. But what are the works on which we fix our minds? Otis says: "Although we may find it difficult to picture ourselves in the role of exorcist, seer or healer, this is how God has chosen to minister to our bound and broken world." Once again, a strong case is made out for signs and wonders – deliverance from demonic bondage, prophesying and divine healing. Is evangelism not primarily facilitated by Spirit-filled evangelists and pastors who minister the Word of God to the lost? Sinners must be challenged to turn to Christ with the confession of their sins. He will forgive them, set them free and give them a new life without the services of an exorcist, prophet or healer.

The central Gospel message of Jesus Christ does not feature in this book of Otis (1997). Its central theme is the oppressive influence of demonic strongholds from which people are to be delivered by the power of God, but that power is not adequately defined.

## **The Transformations video**

The same criticism of ignoring the Lord Jesus by not proclaiming His pre-eminence and the unique Gospel message is levelled against the Transformations video made by the Sentinel Group and presented by George Otis. Olympia Barscynzka makes the following, very relevant remarks about the video of Otis:

"Possibly the most startling thing about this video can be best stated in the question – 'Where is the Lord Jesus in it all?' Indeed, where was He? Constant reference was made to the principalities and powers, and strongholds of darkness, etc. Satan and his hordes were certainly given the limelight. The issue of sin was not mentioned at all. Obviously, sin was not considered the root of all the problems experienced by these communities. The emphasis instead was always on principalities and powers being the cause of the evil, and prayer, fasting and unity being the agent of salvation. This brings us to the whole modern teaching on spiritual warfare and territorial spirits, which Transformations promotes. New and extra-biblical revelations are the foundation to this. What is more, techniques and strategies need to be followed in order to see the desired result. The collective formula is known as strategic spiritual warfare."

A wrong concept of sin is proclaimed, and consequently also of the sinful nature of man. As a result, the deliverance of sin is differently viewed as something attained through confession to God and the opposing of the powers of Satan through spiritual warfare. The message of the cross does not feature in this doctrine.

The excessive claims about city transformations made in this video has been thoroughly discredited by the true facts of the prevailing situation in these cities. See the article "Otis, Wagner and the Transformations Revival" in [http://www.bibleguide.com/books\\_eng.htm](http://www.bibleguide.com/books_eng.htm)

## **The road to community transformation**

Otis (1999:59-73; 243-4) developed a Community Transformation Assessment Scale that describes three phases of development. The following is an abridged version of them:

### **Stage 1. Spiritual Beachhead (SBH)**

During this stage, preliminary spiritual mapping is conducted to provide details on prevailing bondages within the community. Reconciliation occurs among various churches, leading to the organising of united prayer meetings. Spiritual leaders publicly renew their commitment to the community or land. Strategic neighbourhood prayer-walking takes place. Hostility still prevails in society, which may lead to attacks on intercessors and their teams. Otis says that the majority of communities remain in stage 1.

### **Stage 2. Spiritual Breakthrough (SBK)**

The prayer burden lifts. Divine revelations and instruction occur through prophets, and Christians take bold action in the light thereof. Reconciliation also takes place between the church and the community. The Christian community rallies through intense spiritual warfare. Power-encounters with demonic forces occur. Large-scale conversions take place, converts are trained to become disciples, and churches grow.

### **Stage 3. Spiritual Transformation (STR)**

Converted political and spiritual leaders formally renounce historic ties to the spirit world. Socio-political renewal sweeps the community. Community transformation and divine miracles are acknowledged by secular news media. The community begins to export spiritual light to other places. Believers maintain their victory through devotion to fellowship, prayer, and God's Word.

**Comments:** The Otis plan for community transformation is yet another version of kingdom theology. It is ecumenical and communal, while also defining itself geographically:

- \* The Transformations plan conforms to **kingdom theology** in that it aims to establish spiritual dominion over the powers of darkness, and also religious and secular dominion in society. It demonstrates its high-level access to the power of God through signs, wonders and divine revelations by prophets. As such it manifestly realises the kingdom of God on earth.
- \* The Transformations plan is **ecumenical** in its insistence on united prayer and worship meetings in cities or towns. The corporate body of Christ can wield much power. Its functioning in unity is a precondition for revival and transformation in society. The dogmatic differences between denominations are ignored in the interest of unity. The ultimate aim is to merge all denominations into a city church under the leadership of high-ranking apostles and prophets.
- \* The Transformations plan is **communal** in the sense that it involves the entire society. Its whole action of deliverance from common demonic bondage is society-based rather than individually-based. It is committed to uniting all sectors of society through a process of reconciliation. The church people, business people, civil servants and political leaders must all become one people with common objectives and a common destiny. The leaders of society will all be Christians, and very soon all evil and anti-social forces will vanish.
- \* The Transformations plan is **geographically-based**. It may be an urban or rural area where a particular community or cultural group resides, or even the territory of a whole nation. Demonic strongholds will be pulled down by strategic spiritual warfare, thereby liberating the entire society from spiritual oppression. Even the pacts that their ancestors concluded with evil spirits will be cancelled while cleansing the land. All inhabitants will then be free to serve the Lord.

## **Community or individual transformation?**

The Otis plan for community transformation differs substantially from the biblical plan. Although the disciples of Jesus were sent to all nations, they were warned that not all people would receive and accept their message. Those who accept the Gospel of salvation would become strangers and pilgrims on earth as the kingdom of God is not of this world (1 Pet. 2:11; Jn. 18:36). Their calling is to be the salt of a morally corrupt earth and the light of a spiritually dark world (Mt. 5:13-14). They will not take society over by implementing transformation plans, but they will instead be rejected, hated and persecuted (Jn. 15:18-20).

When Paul surveyed the idols in Athens he didn't attack their territorial or community strongholds (Acts 17:16). He pleaded with individuals to repent and turn from their wicked ways: "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts. 17:30).

The God of this world blinds the minds of (individual) people by deceiving them to worship false gods (2 Cor. 4:4). Even if a whole society adheres to a false religion that has become internalised and culturally accepted, it still offers no proof of the existence of a territorial spirit. People are individually deceived and controlled by the devil.

Should a Buddhist family leave their former Buddhist society to settle in a non-Buddhist country, they will remain Buddhists until otherwise convinced. In their society of origin, it will be of no avail to wage strategic spiritual warfare against so-called territorially-based demonic strongholds. The strongholds of evil are in the hearts and minds of the people. Changes will only occur when the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed to people. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (Jn. 8:32). Converts can then form a congregation and commit themselves to more active evangelisation. Even then, those who are truly saved will be relatively few. Jesus said: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Lk. 13:24).

John says that "the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1 Jn. 5:19). He and his demons are the principalities, powers and rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph. 6:12). Jesus also referred to the devil as "the ruler of this world" (Jn. 14:30). Satan doesn't only influence certain demarcated areas or territories, but all people on earth. Strongholds are established in the hearts and minds of those who are deceived by him. Satan and his hordes will be removed from the scene when the King comes back (Rev. 20:1-3). Only then will the devil be stripped of his power and influence, and be incarcerated in a place from which he cannot deceive the nations.

Those who think that they can bind the devil now in entire territories by pulling down his strongholds, are presumptuous and deceive themselves. Only people can be delivered from the bondage of the devil now – not all the inhabitants of a particular territory, unless they all sincerely repent at the same time. Even then, the devil and his evil spirits will still be around in that territory to try and deceive the Christians living there. That is why

Christians everywhere must put on the whole armour of God that they may be able to withstand the devil (Eph. 6:13).

We are still in the territory of the enemy and have to be alert and vigilant. We are not reigning as kings (or little gods) now in some spiritually liberated area where the power of Satan has been broken. We will remain soldiers for Christ in an evil world until the King comes back!

### The Otis theology tested against Scripture

The following comparison may be helpful to indicate the extensive range of theological errors emerging from the writings and videos of George Otis:

#### The basic human problem

The most serious human problems are a lack of self-awareness and a lack of God-consciousness instead of God-consciousness, pride, lack of knowledge, fear, and a lack of faith. The sinner is spiritually dead and needs to be born again (1997:93-108).	All the descendants of Adam have a sinful nature, which manifests as moral and spiritual depravity and an incessant inclination toward sin. The sinner is spiritually dead and needs to be born again (Rom. 5:12; Jn. 3:3).
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#### Strongholds of evil

Demonic strongholds are established primarily over communities, cities and nations. The strongholds are society-based and demonic in charge blind entire societies so they should not see the divine truth (1997:52-3; 274).	The devil blinds the minds of individuals and establishes strongholds of sin and idolatry in their hearts and minds. The strongholds are individually-based. Deception by evil spirits prevents them from seeing the truth of God's revelation (2 Cor. 4:4).
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#### The origin of sin

People sin because they are subjected to the influence of particular demonic strongholds in the area where they live, and also because of the particular sins that they commit are often concluded with the devil by their fathers. They are sinners by habit rather than by nature, and need to be taught to overcome and destroy the bad habits and influences (1991:88).	People sin because they inherited a sinful nature from Adam (Rom. 5:17). The particular sins that they commit are often due to the various lies and forms of idolatry that have become internalised and passed on in their societies and families – but these are not the root cause of sin, which is a spiritual problem in each one's life.
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#### The knowledge of sin

<p>An intensive study must be conducted: The biblical definition and examples of evil ideologies and demonic strongholds must be studied and accepted. The Holy Spirit will control people. This investigation is called <i>spiritual mapping</i>. In the process, the presence of a mentor is needed to determine the cause of all the problems (1991:85-87; 259).</p>	<p>: The biblical definition and examples of evil ideologies and demonic strongholds must be studied and accepted. The Holy Spirit will control people. This investigation is called <i>spiritual mapping</i>. In the process, the presence of a mentor is needed to determine the cause of all the problems (1991:85-87; 259).</p>
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**Redemption from sin**

<p>He is very vague on the nature of redemption. To him it amounts to the breaking of satanic strongholds, the exorcising of demons from individuals, the rejection and confession of occult knowledge and practices, and the acceptance of God's forgiveness and vine knowledge and principles. The atoning death of Jesus on the cross is not particularly mentioned as God can forgive without reference to the cross (1978:76;</p>	<p>: The atoning death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead are pivotal to the Biblical doctrine of salvation. "In His blood, redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). We are regenerated by the Holy Spirit who also imparts to us a new heart. The forgiveness of God is specifically through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross for all who believe (1 Cor. 1:18-21).</p>
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**Distinction between divine and evil supernatural manifestations**

<p>He is unable to discern the falseness of modern signs and wonders movements and accompanying extra-biblical revelations. He condones it as part of a great work of the last days. All his knowledge of occult fails him on this point (1997:57).</p>	<p>: We are commanded to test the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1-3). Their works must be tested against the Word of God. Peter says that these false prophets will even deny the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 2:1-2).</p>
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**The marginalising of Jesus Christ**

<p>It is very conspicuous that he repeatedly marginalises Jesus by referring to "God" in general. The spiritual gifts of believers are not explicitly related to Christ in us." Why is he shying away from Christ? In his list of spiritual aides for discernment he only briefly refers to the Holy Spirit.</p>	<p>: Jesus Christ and His work on the cross are the central message of the Good News. There is no true knowledge of God without Him; there is no salvation and forgiveness of sin without Him; there is no victory over Satan and his hordes without Him. There is no justification and sanctification without Him.</p>
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us, probably to appease those who see him for his Moral Governmentology, but still no mention is made of the power of the blood (1997:243)	nitment to the cause of evangelism ut Him. "For in Him dwells all the full Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). "The hony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy 19:10).
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**No clear doctrine on sanctification**

Despite his strong emphasis on prayer and spiritual warfare, he offers no line on sanctification and the need to with the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy there can be no regeneration, no discern deception by false prophets, and r to be victorious against the wiles of ne. In circumstances like these, spir ing and spiritual warfare are futile ises that will make no real difference	: The Bible clearly commands us to b with the Holy Spirit. "Be filled with th " (Eph. 5:18). "For this is the will of sanctification... he who rejects this do beject man, but God, who has also giv Holy Spirit" (1 Thes. 4:3, 8). The Spirit us with power from on high to serv ord Jesus without wavering. He remind us the things to come (Jn. 16:13)
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**Extra-Biblical revelations**

God will raise up prophets and apostle reveal His secrets to them. In terms of revelations they will guide His Church take the lead in establishing His kingdom. Their leadership <i>must</i> be followed spising is seen as rejecting God's will (7:259).	: The whole counsel of God is revealed (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). who seeks extra-biblical revelation gh dreams, visions, voices or tongues the possibility to be deceived. The nation thus obtained cannot be verified of its origin and authenticity.
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**Ecumenical unification of churches**

Ecumenical meetings of all Christian churches is a precondition for the mobilisation of spiritual strength and the reclaiming of regions for God. Without unity there is no victory in the struggle against evil (1:241).	: The true Church of Christ is already ally united. It does not need ecumenic to demonstrate its unity. Ecumenic is invariably sacrifice doctrinal principles therefore compromisers who are r gly united.
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**Prayer-walking**

<p>This is the practise of on-site, street intercession. Prayers offered by participants are in response to immediate observations and researched targets (9:254)</p>	<p>: Prayer-walking is unnecessary. We for people from our homes. When in our neighbourhood, we must witness to people the Gospel with them (Acts 1:8).</p>
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**Position during intercessory prayers**

<p>In spiritual mapping lessons, the following is said about intercessory prayer: "Intercession also involves the act of standing between the object of prayer and the spirit of the Holy Spirit... In the case of the devil, it is to deliver us from his attacks." This is a dangerous position to be in who is praying. People who regard themselves as specially anointed persons have authority over the forces of darkness. They try apply strategies of this nature. They usually do not realise the risks that they are in confronting evil from this position (9:252).</p>	<p>: During intercessory prayers, our boldness should be applied in another way. We have "boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way that He consecrated for us, through the flesh..." (Heb. 10:19-20). We must draw near to Him with a true heart in full confidence of faith. We take our refuge in the grace of Christ and trust Him to protect us from the devil and his wiles. Jesus, as the Father's Son, will stand between us and the forces of evil to dispel them from us. He will rebuke the devil and set us free from his attacks (9:252).</p>
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**Communal strategies**

<p>He promotes communal strategies for the evangelization of big societies such as the metropolises of an entire city. He views them as a relatively small percentage of the society, like a river. They have a common good ground. The truly saved ones are a minority group compared to the masses who tread the broad way to destruction (Matt 7:13). Societies at large will therefore be dominated by evil and become even more so in the future. Christ never commanded us to go into the city to pull out the weeds. Evil strongholds have been pulled out through prayer and spiritual warfare. Finally every person turns to the Lord and is saved. This is the (self-imposed) vision of the church who regard themselves as the faithful remnant (1999:15; 140-143).</p>	<p>: We were sent out by Christ to seek out the lost. As in the parable of the sower, a relatively small percentage of the seed will grow on good ground. The truly saved ones are a minority group compared to the masses who tread the broad way to destruction (Matt 7:13). Societies at large will therefore be dominated by evil and become even more so in the future. Christ never commanded us to go into the city to pull out the weeds. Evil strongholds have been pulled out through prayer and spiritual warfare. Finally every person turns to the Lord and is saved. This is the (self-imposed) vision of the church who regard themselves as the faithful remnant (1999:15; 140-143).</p>
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**The coming of the kingdom**

<p>The Otis theology constitutes yet another variation of kingdom-now theology – also referred to as dominion theology and constructionism. The kingdom of God must first manifest now (before the coming of the King) or that to happen, the kingdom of Satan will be stripped of its power and stronghold (1:154-5). Great revivals will then follow, accompanied by signs and wonders, and cities will be radically transformed to function as truly Christian communities. Groups of God will appear on the scene to lead the transformation process to its goal of peace and unity. They will practise the dominion of Adam and prepare the world for the coming of the King. No mention is made of the coming great tribulation</p>	<p>According to Biblical eschatology, the world is heading for the hour of distress during the coming Day of the Lord. Christians and false prophets will prepare for the appearing of the universal prophet and the Antichrist. Their core will be according to the working of Satan, signs, and lying wonders (2 Thes 2:14-17). The Bible says that in the last days tribulations will come (2 Tim. 3:1). It will be a period of great apostasy when many will be deceived. Sin and wickedness will proliferate and the love of many Christians will grow cold. This situation will only change with the coming of the King, when all people will serve Him and rejoice in His dominion of righteousness (Rev. 11:15)</p>
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**Concluding remarks**

The theology of Otis is widely accepted and welcomed in kingdom-now circles, rendering him a very popular spiritual leader among like-minded people. However, there is also growing antagonism against him, his books and Transformations videos since his extravagant claims about total transformation that occurred in a number of cities are not substantiated by the true facts. It becomes increasingly evident that people such as Otis deceive evangelical Christians into believing false doctrines, exaggerated statements and a completely misapprehended conclusion about revivals in various parts of the world (1999:15-50). His unbiblical methods simply do not work and can only lead to the undermining and even destroying of people’s faith. It also reflects badly on missionaries who are working under difficult circumstances in hostile, heathen communities, as they are evidently not able to pull down the enemy strongholds.

Many people tried the methods of spiritual mapping and strategic spiritual warfare, but without any notable success. A Christian from a town in the Western Cape, South Africa, noted the following incidents: "A certain brother came very sincerely in the name of the Lord Jesus to bind the devil and stop his destructive work in our town. Shortly afterwards this brother left the town, but he also left behind the devil – as loose as ever! Other brothers followed his example and again attempted to bind Satan and pull down his strongholds, but without success."

The same can be said about scores of similar efforts by groups of people who attempted to oust the devil and his territorial spirits from countries such as Russia, Turkey and China, or from cities such as Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, New York, Washington, London and Cape Town. Prayer-walks without witnessing to the lost are rife, and missionaries who do

not participate in the ill-conceived methods, stand to lose their credibility and financial support among kingdom-now believers who have an overwhelming propensity for sensational and dramatic events.

Otis, together with Wagner and others, have the doubtful honour to lead the way in this man-made "revival" and community transformation of the last days. The one who is least concerned about this movement is the devil himself, because he is attacked and countered in ways which do not affect his position and influence at all. His biggest ally in the battle is the sinful nature of people, which is left virtually untouched in this campaign against evil.

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## Evangelicals and Pagans Together

*By Pastor Bill Randles*

As evangelicals, we've come a long way in a short time. It was less than ten years ago that the raging debate in the evangelical world was over the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" accord. Is Roman Catholicism "Christian"? Should evangelical leaders such as J.I. Packer, Chuck Colson and others validate the Roman church? As the ecumenical Promise Keepers movement exhorted us, why can't we just "break down the walls" and all just get along as "brothers"?

We evangelicals are far past that stage of the debate. What about the Reformation? "Those people were just hung up on doctrine." Purgatory? Oh well, "none of us has it all exactly right." The Infallible Pope? No problem, he's now considered a tremendous "voice for peace and morality."

Welcome to the new politically correct evangelicalism of the 21st century!!! No wonder few evangelicals even raise an eyebrow when widely acclaimed leaders such as T.D. Jakes (whom *Time* magazine considers the next Billy Graham), Charles Colson, Max Lucado, Jerry Jenkins, Bruce Wilkinson (*Prayer of Jabez*), and former spiritual adviser to President Clinton, Bill Hybels, cooperate with the Dalai Lama, Starhawk the witch, and New Age author Neale Donald Walsch on a book of essays entitled *From the Ashes: A Spiritual Response to the Attack on America*. Oh, by the way, this list of contributors also includes Billy Graham!

Who are we "in bed" with? Neale Donald Walsch, who according to Warren Smith's new book, *Reinventing Jesus Christ*, was "a disillusioned and distraught former radio talk show host... and longtime metaphysical seeker," who sat down one night and wrote an angry letter to God. Amazingly, immediately an inner voice claiming to be "God" began responding. Walsch began writing down these conversations, and out of that came his bestselling *Conversations with God* series. It becomes embarrassingly obvious that Walsch, far from having any conversation with the infinite, personal, Holy God of the Bible, instead has been having conversations with demons (see 1 Timothy 4:1-3). Some of the gems Walsch's "God" has imparted are as follows:

...Hitler didn't hurt anyone. In a sense, he didn't inflict suffering, he ended it.<sup>1</sup>

Many have been Christed, not just Jesus of Nazareth. You can be Christed, too.<sup>2</sup>

You are already a God. You simply do not know it.<sup>3</sup>

In truth, there is no such thing as a "sinner," for no one can be sinned against – least of all Me.<sup>4</sup>

This is a mere sampling of Walch's tired re-hash of new thought, new age, "new gospel" gobbledygook, that is about as "new" as the serpent's lie in the garden! "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The only thing "new" about any of this "new gospel" is that respected evangelical leaders such as Billy Graham, Chuck Colson and Bill Hybels are openly lending credibility to the demonic doctrines by their co-operation in the project. In the book *From the Ashes*, Walsch literally calls upon all ministers to "change the land" by preaching his "new gospel":

We must change ourselves. We must change the beliefs upon which our behaviours are based. We must create a different reality, build a new society...we must do so with new spiritual truths. We must preach a new gospel, it's healing message summarised in two sentences: We are all one. Ours is not a better way, ours is merely another way. This 15 minute message, delivered from every lecturn and pulpit, from every rostrum and platform, could change everything overnight. I challenge every priest and every minister, every rabbi and every religious cleric to preach this....<sup>5</sup>

Obviously, the same spirit guide who taught Walsch this "new gospel" of the divinity and oneness of all men, inspired the *Course in Miracles*. And predictably, Hugh and Gayle Prather, fellow contributors *From the Ashes* are advocates of the Course, which teaches:

The recognition of God is the recognition of yourself.<sup>6</sup>

One of the natural outcomes of this self deification of man, as taught by Walsch, *A Course in Miracles*, and the New Age movement, is the utter scorn and contempt for the Cross of Jesus Christ. The message of the cross runs contrary to the message which deifies men, for it says "you aren't a God, you are a man, a sinner and your deepest need is to be reconciled to God." On the contrary, *A Course in Miracles* asserts;

The journey to the cross should be the last "useless journey."<sup>7</sup>

Do not make the pathetic error of "clinging to the old rugged cross."<sup>8</sup>

Walsch, inspired by the same spirit, takes a different, less direct approach, rather than openly pouring scorn on the cross. His "God" leads him to simply redefine the atonement, thus the need for the cross is invalidated.

You must realize that 'atonement' is *just that* – it is 'at-one-ment.' It is the awareness that you and all others are One. It is the understanding that you are One with everything – including Me.<sup>9</sup>

As Warren Smith points out in *Reinventing Jesus Christ*, Walsch, along with Marianne Williamson (promoter of *A Course in Miracles*), and other New Age leaders are promoting their "new gospel" through the Global Renaissance Alliance that they have formed. Significantly, the 9/11 atrocity has become a springboard for their message of world transformation through pantheism. And these self proclaimed "spiritual activists" are

being taken seriously by many who are quite influential in media and even in international government.

This all brings us back to square one. Ten years ago (roughly) we at least had a debate in evangelicalism, about leaders endorsing the Roman church as a true expression of spirituality. Look at where we are at now! Billy Graham, T.D. Jakes, Chuck Colson, Max Lucado, Bruce Wilkinson, Bill Hybels and Jerry Jenkins can indirectly endorse the "ministry" of a man who claims the need for a "new gospel" through self deification and few even notice or care. I don't even need to go into the teachings of the Dalai Lama, a man who allows himself to be worshipped as a god, contributor John Shelby Spong, a pro homosexual Episcopal Bishop who attacks the fundamental doctrines of Christ, or the witch Starhawk.

Apostasy is incremental. As they say about the dangers of sexual promiscuity, "when you get in bed with someone, you are getting in bed with everyone they have been in bed with." Spiritual adultery is just like that. "What fellowship has light with darkness, Christ with Belial, the Temple of God with idols? What fellowship does Billy Graham have with the Dalai Lama? The *From the Ashes* book represents a mixture, a politically correct, synergistic blending of New Age, Tibetan Buddhism, and shockingly, the evangelical world.

The world loves this kind of spirituality but God hates it. Jehoshaphat, a genuinely godly king of Judah, attempted a "good" thing -- all in the name of unity, of course. This "good" thing was joining forces with the apostate King Ahab in a war against the Syrians. After barely escaping with his life, and that by the mercy of God, Jehoshaphat was confronted by Jehu the prophet with a message that perhaps applies to our leaders in this day:

"Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?" (2 Chron. 19:2)

Endnotes:

1. Neale Donald Walsch, *Conversations with God: an uncommon dialogue, Book 2*, (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Pub. Co., Inc., 1997), p. 56.
2. Ibid, p. 22.
3. Neale Donald Walsch, *Conversations with God: an uncommon dialogue, Book 3*, (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Pub. Co., Inc., 1996), p. 202.
4. Ibid, p. 87.
5. *From the Ashes*
6. Foundation for Inner Peace, *A Course in Miracles, Text*, (Glen Ellen, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1992), p. 147.

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7. Foundation for Inner Peace, *A Course in Miracles, Text*, (Glen Ellen, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1992), p. 52.

8. Ibid.

9. Neale Donald Walsch, *Friendship with God: an uncommon dialogue* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1999), p. 92.