



STATEMENT DC825

A REPLY TO CONSTANCE CUMBey'S CHARGES AGAINST WALTER MARTIN AND C R I

Since 1982 Constance Cumbey, author of *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow* and *A Planned Deception* (two books on the New Age movement), has frequently and publicly made serious charges against Christian Research Institute, and particularly its founder, Dr. Walter Martin. Mrs. Cumbey's criticisms have not always been dispassionate, either. Her words and tone of voice have often betrayed strong feelings of anger, resentment, and bitterness.

We have sought privately in the past to be personally reconciled to Mrs. Cumbey, but to no avail. It is not the purpose of this statement to promote an ongoing public "war" among fellow believers. Rather, for the sake of our good name as a Christian ministry, we wish to answer specific charges, some which we consider to be unfounded, others exaggerated.

It first needs to be acknowledged that, in a sense, CRI did "start the ball rolling" by making public criticisms of Mrs. Cumbey (while at the same time affirming that much of what she has to say is true and good). However, our criticisms have always been limited to her research methodology, conspiracy theory, and lack of theological qualifications, each of which, we believe, has been the cause of unnecessary disturbances within the Christian community. We have never questioned her sincerity, orthodoxy, or personal integrity. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for her treatment of us, as will shortly be evident.

In *A Planned Deception* Mrs. Cumbey made several allusions to Walter Martin and CRI, as well as a few specific references. On page 16 she quoted Walter Martin as follows: "The New Age movement got its start in 1978 and took its name from the name of a magazine, Dr. Walter Martin, Bible Answer Man program, Fall, 1983." She then went on to say: "Despite Dr. Martin's ill-advanced statement, the New Age movement certainly did not begin 'yesterday'."

This supposed quote from Dr. Martin, which Mrs. Cumbey has repeated over and over again as the most condemning evidence against him, provides a good example of why we have been critical of her methodology. She has not only taken Dr. Martin out of context, she has *misquoted* him. The actual statement, made on "The Bible Answer Man" program of December 3, 1983, was as follows:

The word "New Age movement," incidentally, is the title of a magazine. That's where the phrase was coined. It wasn't coined by Constance Cumbey. It was coined in a magazine entitled the *New Age*. And I think it was as far back as the mid-1970s that we were getting this.

The reader should note the following points: first, Walter Martin never said that the New Age movement (NAM) "got its start in 1978," nor did he imply that it began "yesterday." In fact, his point was the exact opposite: the name "new age movement" is not something Constance Cumbey just invented, as some Christians may think. It has actually been around for a while -- at least as far back as the mid-1970s.

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

Second, in spite of Mrs. Cumbey's repeated affirmations to the contrary, neither here nor anywhere else has Dr. Martin denied that the NAM has historical roots in Theosophy. He has always stressed the relationship of the NAM to 19th century occultism.

On the other hand, it is a well recognized fact among both New age and Christian observers of the movement's development that it did not reach its *present form* (with its combination of religious, human potential, and holistic health elements, and its social and political networking) until the mid to latter 1970s.

Furthermore, as it was developing in the 1970s it was identified by several names (e.g., "new consciousness movement"), and it was only in the latter 1970s to early 1980s that "New Age movement" took hold and became widely accepted as the name of the movement. And, while Dr. Martin's question that the phrase was "coined" by the *New Age Journal* could fairly be disputed, it can certainly be argued that that influential magazine's name strongly contributed to the popularizing the final acceptance of the term "New Age" as the movement's name.

On page 70 of *A Planned Deception* Mrs. Cumbey wrote:

Not all Christian cult authorities have agreed with my analysis. Dr. Walter Martin has said, "don't worry about it, it's only occultism." My reply is that occultism is what the Bible warned us of as eternal Mystery Babylon which had corrupted all nations. It is not 'mere idolatry.' This is what since time immemorial has brought God's wrath down upon its practitioners and a society professing God, but continuing to tolerate it." (sic) And God's wrath was not so much poured out upon the idolatrous heathen as it was his corrupt body who should have known better. No doubt, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos and the other prophets were faced with the spectre of false prophets of their day saying "it's only occultism, go back to sleep -- you're wrong, it's not in the church!"

Here Mrs. Cumbey again furnishes an example of why we criticize her methodology: no documentation is given for a quote which seems out of character with Walter Martin.

Although it is doubtful that Dr. Martin said these exact words, as with the previous quote it is likely that *something* was said, which Mrs. Cumbey misheard and misunderstood. It is likely that the original statement was made to calm the hysteria that Cumbey was creating with her claim that, in all probability, the Antichrist would appear in a matter of weeks or months.

Dr. Martin offers this reply:

If I made the statement, it was in this context: The New Age movement is not some new phenomenon never encountered or fought by the church. It is 'only' occultism dressed up in new vocabulary and style. Don't worry that the church can't answer it or prevail against it: we've been combating the same ideas and spiritual powers since the Fall. It is ridiculous for Mrs. Cumbey to ascribe complacency to me when I have dedicated my life (over many more years than Mrs. Cumbey) to waking people up to such dangers, and to preaching salvation to those who are lost. I heard that Mrs. Cumbey said my books had helped her in the past. Did she think then that I was telling everyone to go to sleep?

It should be noted here that whereas Mrs. Cumbey takes great offense when other believers simply criticize her ideas, she apparently has no qualms about saying the most offensive things imaginable about those same believers, such as her likening of us to the "false prophets" of biblical days.

Mrs. Cumbey again fails to *hear* properly on page 30. Referring to the publication of TRANET, an "alternative technologies" network with New Age elements, she writes:

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

Its editors must have either been alarmed or amused at some of their reader response to a recent survey. Evidently, some of their subscribers either read *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow* or very similar material. They perhaps did not comprehend their own unwitting participation. Perhaps believing Walter Martin's assertions that the New Agers were not politically networked, these subscribers wrote TRANET and asked it to please "be wary of the New Age Spiritual Movement"!

But Walter Martin and CRI (Cumbe usually attributes Walter Martin *anything* said or done by CRI) have always agreed that New Agers are "politically networked." (See, e.g., "Tracking the Aquarian Cons piracy, Part Two," in *Christian Research Journal*, Winter/Spring 1986. Or, for an earlier example, see our statement on "The New Age Movement" published in 1982.) What we *have* denied is something entirely different from being "networked" (which, as Cumbe had consistently failed to understand, implies loose structure, decentralization, and great diversity). That is, we've denied that the NAM is a monolithic structure wherein everyone is following one detailed "Plan" (derived from Alice Bailey and H. G. Wells) "to the letter" (as Cumbe put it). Many New Agers *are* organized for political purposes; they are just not as organized as Cumbe says.

Yet another reference to Walter Martin in *A Planned Deception* (p. 53) reads as follows:

Many of the readers of this book no doubt watched the 'roasting' I endured on the John Ankerberg program. There two Walter Martin associates Gretchen Passantino and Chet Lackey heaped both ridicule and abuse upon me.

This quote is significant because it is so typical. Mrs. Cumbe seems to think that almost all of the opposition she has encountered in the evangelical world has been spearheaded by Walter Martin. For further examples: she has blamed him for the antagonism she experienced at a "conference on the cults" in El Toro, California in 1983. And, during a May 24, 1987 radio interview on Portland, Oregon's KPDQ, she said:

Walter Martin and a number of others got together and organized a conference in Denver in 1985. I was the only person in the country who was not invited. They hired security guards to keep me away.

In truth, although he has been openly critical of some of her views, Walter Martin has never organized opposition to Mrs. Cumbe. Perhaps influenced by the likes of one B. J. Sawyer, a man who supplies her with research while at the same time sowing discord between her and other believers,* Mrs. Cumbe has developed a warped view of Dr. Martin in relationship to herself.

*For example, Sawyer claims he was asked to leave the former church of CRI researcher Elliot Miller because of his relationship to Constance Cumbe, when, in fact, his being asked to leave had nothing whatsoever to do with Cumbe, as the pastors of the church are willing to confirm.

Dr. Martin had nothing to do with Gretchen Passantino and Chet Lackey's appearance on the John Ankerberg Show. Although Mrs. Passantino had previously been associated with CRI, she was not at the time. Chet Lackey *never* had anything to do with CRI.

Although CRI hosted the cults conference in El Toro (different countercult ministries hosted these conferences each year in the early '80s), we had nothing to do with its format, which was decided by a steering committee on which none of us sat, including Dr. Martin. The evening Cumbe spoke at that event was a sad night for Christianity, to be sure. Unchristian attitudes were exhibited both by some who disagreed with Cumbe and by some who agreed with her. We are sorry about that. But it is factually incorrect to hold Walter Martin responsible for it.

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

Mrs. Cumbey was also wrong about the Denver conference. Like El Tory, Dr. Martin was a speaker there, but also like El Toro, he was not involved with the conference's planning and organization (which, unlike El Tory, *was* handled well). It's true that Mrs. Cumbey was not invited to speak (which is no more strange than Walter Martin's not being invited to speak at certain end-time prophecy conferences where Cumbey is a featured attraction). However, she was more than welcome to attend. The claim that there were security guards hired to keep her out is both false (this writer was there) and preposterous.

Mrs. Cumbey has frequently accused Dr. Martin of having denied the NAM's existence, of having consciously attempted to cover it up, and of actively trying to suppress her work for many years. The truth is that Dr. Martin and CRI have never denied the NAM's existence (CRI researcher Elliot Miller has been lecturing on the NAM and writing on related subjects for CRI since 1976, five years before Cumbey discovered it herself). We have only denied the existence of Cumbey's monolithic New Age conspiracy, while at the same time stressing that the NAM *is* real, and a major threat. (See, e.g., our "Summary Critique" of Cumbey's books in *Christian Research Journal*, Summer 1987.) The idea that Dr. Martin has attempted to cover the NAM up is purely the work of Cumbey's imagination -- an overreaction to our criticisms of her conspiracy theory.

It is also untrue that Dr. Martin has actively tried to suppress her work, unless one considers it "active suppression" for him to express some criticisms and cautions when asked about her work on the "Bible Answer Man."

Mrs. Cumbey has made a major issue out of Dr. Martin's belief that hypnosis, biofeedback, and acupuncture can be legitimate therapies, if separated from an occult-mystical context. She is certainly entitled to disagree vocally with Dr. Martin about these practices. Even some of the research staff at CRI differ with him on some of these points. But, from the way Mrs. Cumbey cites these views as incriminating evidence, one would gather that these are major criteria for determining what is and is not New Age.

It needs to be pointed out that not everything that is occultic is specifically identified in the Bible. Thus we must make determinations about various practices based on whatever evidence is available to us. It should be obvious that not all such determinations will be as easy and clear-cut as some. Thus, there will be certain practices which other believers will hold that they are not *necessarily* so, at least not in all their forms. The fact is that, regardless of their position on these subjects, most Christian authorities on the NAM and the occult agree that hypnosis, acupuncture, and biofeedback are all in a "gray area" wherein there is room for legitimate debate.

John Weldon, perhaps the most qualified living Christian authority on the occult, acknowledges in his *Psychic Forces and Occult Shock* (a book which Mrs. Cumbey highly recommended) that both acupuncture and biofeedback may be acceptable therapies for certain problems, though he advises caution and supplies several guidelines (see pp. 193-97, 221-26).

It would seem then that Mrs. Cumbey is taking a rather simplistic approach to these issues, acting as though things should be black and white to everyone, when in reality many biblical grounded, discerning minds would say that they are not so. What's worse is that she then takes the position that those who disagree with her on these subjects are unorthodox, maybe even having ties to the New Age.

In closing, we would like to contrast our relationship with Constance Cumbey with our relationship with Dave Hunt. We have been just as vocally critical of Hunt's views on the NAM as we have of Cumbey's. And Dave Hunt has also been critical of Dr.

Martin's stand on hypnosis and other issues. But in spite of this mutual criticism there has also been mutual respect for the fact that each has made contributions to Christ's cause. Each has assumed the other's basic integrity. Hunt has been a guest on "The Bible Answer Man" more than once, and he and Dr. Martin have agreed to "disagree agreeably," while recognizing there is much more they do agree on, particularly the Lordship of Christ!

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

On the other hand, Mrs. Cumbeys heated and bitter denunciations of Walter Martin and CRI in public forums has surely been detrimental to the cause of Christ. The casual listener (Christian or non-Christian) would tend to be appalled at such animosity coming out of the mouth of a representative of Christ. And, it's not even directed at the enemies of the gospel, but at someone involved in the same kind of Christian work! Ultimately, it is the credibility of Constance Cumbeys that suffers most.

It is our hope that Mrs. Cumbeys will learn from Dave Hunt's example and accept that Christians can differ with her particular interpretation of the NAM without being on the NAM's side, that differences between believers can be discussed in a loving and respectful manner, and that personal grievances should be dealt with privately, not vented publicly in a non-sided Christian "war."

Prepared by Elliot Miller, January 1988