

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR...

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### Concerning Mr. Gibbons' review of *The Secret History of Chiropractic*

Dear John,

I want to thank Mr. Gibbons for the very favorable review of my book, *The Secret History of Chiropractic: D.D. Palmer's Spiritual Writings*, in the Summer 2006 issue.

It is a great honor to have such an esteemed chiropractic historian review my book. I respect Mr. Gibbons' contribution to the history of chiropractic, as his past articles continue to be a source of wonderful information and inspiration to me. I was, however, disappointed that his review focused so much on the "tabloid" nature of my title and so little on the actual content of the book. It was a very literal review of my book, especially stuck on my use of the word "secret" and I would like to take an opportunity to address a few of the points he brings up about my book.

First as to the title: I agree completely with his assessment that, "good scholarship does not need tabloid titles and declarations." If I were writing the book solely for the history scholars in the profession, I would have done it differently. Obviously that was not the primary audience that the book was directed at. The book was intended to bring to light many aspects of the history of chiropractic that most chiropractors do not know about. This is beginning to happen. Unfortunately, of the 600 or so copies that we have sold to chiropractors this year, I suspect that less than fifty are members of the AHC. Did the tabloid title attract them? I hope so. Do some of them have new insight and interest in the history of chiropractic? According to the many e-mails that I have received, absolutely! And, of the 500 or so chiropractors that I have been invited to speak to in the last year, the most common comment I hear is, "Why have I never heard this before?"

Gibbons makes it seem as though the book claims to be a revelation, or the first to disclose secret documents. It does not. He also asserts that the book suggests, "classroom and clinical professors in the colleges had somehow conspired to deny their students a 'secret truth.'" This also is not the case. In fact, in the first paragraph of the book I clearly state that, "The information described herein is widely known in pieces and places in the profession. Taken in toto, however, a wider and deeper drama unfolds, one that provides a new glimpse into chiropractic's roots."

Yes, the book is written as an accessible story rather than an elite scholarly monograph. Let's face it, scholarly monographs are not read by most chiropractors. Style aside, how-

ever, the book explores Lerner's account of the early secrets in detail. Lerner blatantly alleges that B.J. Palmer covered up the early history for fifty years! How many chiropractors know this? Not many. Mr. Gibbons also points out that Lerner's report has been referenced in several books and articles. This is true, but if you combine every known reference to Lerner, nowhere do you get a complete explanation of Lerner's report.

One of Gibbon's examples was Stuart Moore's book (1993). This is a case in point. While the book comes closest to describing some of Lerner's allegations, it misses many of the deeper questions at hand, such as Moore's comparison of the 'Harmonists' or D.D. Palmer's philosophical perspective to a pre-rational mode of thinking. This is a common confusion amongst historians, a confusion of pre-rational with post-rational thinking. It is this kind of overly rational historiography that inadvertently hides the secrets both in missing deeper truths and in not accurately depicting certain perspectives in the profession.

Lerner's report sits unpublished, in archives, and now posted on two websites. It is read by few. By popular account, hidden -- one of the definitions of "secret." Not maliciously, not intentionally, but certainly by conscious or unconscious or "disinterested" oversight. And the same goes for Gaucher's book, D.D.'s Traveling Library, the Johnson letter, and on and on. Each hidden in part because few chiropractors actively seek them out and because too few historians expose them to the profession in a way that just might get chiropractors excited about history.

The main focus of my book is to examine in a very critical way, not only the fact that most chiropractors are unaware of these documents, but that those who have written about them usually write from a very specific perspective, a very limited perspective, one that fails to account for the depth of Palmer's writings, his background, and his actions in their fullness.

The book does indeed offer at least one novel historical discovery, the fact that B.J. Palmer left out a crucial reference to Jim Atkinson in his re-edit of his father's books in 1921 and then covers it up years later. There is also the first critical analysis of the introduction of philosophy into the profession after the Morikubo trial, an analysis that goes against the current trends in the literature.

And this leads to my most important point that was left out of this very nice review, that it is the first book to apply Ken Wilber's Integral Methodological Pluralism to the history of chiropractic and to suggest a refocus of the way that we do historical writing in the profession. The book suggests

that we develop an Integral Historiography; one that can account for the many complexities involved not only in the facts and the historical personages, but the historians themselves, for it is they who inadvertently keep the secrets; not out of conspiracy but out of sheer lack of perspective.

Our challenge as chiropractic historians is to not only write scholarly material for the academics, but to also reach out to the culture that we serve -- the chiropractic profession. Making chiropractic history more accessible doesn't water down the tradition; it enlivens a profession on which this great history is built.

The historians in the profession have their own niche and their vast knowledge base is not part of the chiropractic culture; it is as if all the gems of chiropractic history are kept secluded in specific realms, partially hidden or dare I say kept "secret." By meeting people where they are and addressing the perspectives that they inhabit, we can bridge the gap between the historian and the practitioner.

In the meantime, I plan to continue to use this approach and write solid scholarly explorations into the history and philosophy of the profession for a popular audience. And who knows, maybe even someone's patients will find an interest.

With respect,  
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