

# **Bonesetting, Chiropractic and Cultism by Samuel Homola, DC**

A GUEST REVIEW BY JOSEPH C. KEATING, JR., PH.D. ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,  
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Unfortunately unknown to most chiropractors, and unavailable at many if not most chiropractic college libraries, *Bonesetting, Chiropractic and Cultism* is must reading for chiropractic historians. Written in the period between B.J. Palmer's death and the formation of the American Chiropractic Association, this volume provides a very critical and well-researched inspection of chiropractic at that moment in history by a 1956 graduate of the Lincoln College of Chiropractic.

Homola begins by briefly tracing the roots of generic manipulation, including Chinese, Babylonian, Greek and Egyptian practitioners, through the bonesetting families of Europe and the development of osteopathy in America. The author makes his own views of spinal manipulation/adjustment very clear early on: such methods have significant clinical value when skillfully applied for certain specific musculoskeletal conditions. When practiced indiscriminately as a cure for all or most human afflictions, joint manipulation has been practiced dogmatically, and has frequently been associated with cultism. This, he suggests, has unfortunately been the story of chiropractic. Much of the rest of the book is devoted to documenting cultism, inferior standards of education, practice, theory and research, and the politics of chiropractic.

*Bonesetting* reviews the legal status of chiropractic and the role of the colleges in defining the scope of practice. The inadequacies of chiropractic education in the decade before the Council on Chiropractic Education was federally recognized are laid bare; here is a true "chiropractic Flexner" at work. Homola notes the many legal dilemmas that arise from the lack of consensus among DCs and widely divergent state licensing laws. He makes a strong pitch to define chiropractic as a medical specialty which focuses on conservative care of musculoskeletal conditions.

Homola describes the chiropractic "technique wars" as they were in 1963, including the "Palmer method," Logan Basic, SOT, the "Spears Painless" technique, the "Parker" and "Meric" systems, and Concept Therapy. The author hammers at the unjustified and often conflicting claims that are made for the diversity of clinical strategies by chiropractors. The nature and rhetoric of the decades old feud among straights and mixers is reviewed, and Homola seems to despair that either camp can ever free itself of dogmatic claims sufficiently to develop a serious scientific basis for manipulation. Instead, he predicts, "medically-trained technicians, working under the prescription of medical practitioners, will automatically move in and provide this service as manipulation becomes better established as a science." Ironically, his sentiments echo those of the NCA Chairman of the Board (C.O. Watkins, D.C.) some twenty years before: "If we will not develop a scientific organization to test our own methods, organized medicine will usurp our privilege. When it discovers a method of value, medical science will adopt it and incorporate it into scientific medical practice."

Although chiropractors may take exception to Dr. Homola's over-estimation of the scientific status of medicine, the historical value of his review of the state of chiropractic in 1963 is unmistakable. The good doctor has since authored and co-authored a number of widely read books on diet, exercise and nutrition, and continues in private practice (limited to "neuromusculoskeletal" disorders) in northern Florida. Perhaps the profession will finally seek out this seer before his most dire predictions come to pass.

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