

**B.J. PALMER**  
*An Integral Biography*  
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**ABSTRACT** This article examines B.J. Palmer's life using the Integral model as developed by Ken Wilber. Integral Theory is used to analyze the increasing levels of complexity that develop through the behavioral, cultural, and social domains during the course of Palmer's life. The article's goal is twofold: 1) to describe B.J. Palmer's life through an integral lens, and 2) to map out some important aspects of integral biography, a new approach to biography. B.J. Palmer developed through five identifiable crucibles in his life, or pivotal moments that acted as catalysts for him to develop to entirely new levels of being and acting in the world. These crucibles were sometimes accompanied by epiphanies associated with an entirely new sense of who he was and what his life was about. This article traces Palmer's life along four main streams of his development: his cognition, his values, his ego or self, and his faith or spirituality. Based on his highest levels of development in later life, it is shown that B.J. Palmer was an early pioneer of integral consciousness and integral leadership.

**KEY WORDS:** biography; chiropractic; B.J. Palmer; human development; Integral model

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Joshua Bartlett "B.J." Palmer (1882-1961) was a 20<sup>th</sup>-century integral pioneer. He developed, in his own consciousness, a comprehensive way of thinking and being in the world, embodying a de-centered ego, an integration of body, mind, and spirit, a holistic or systems worldview, and a presence and vision that impacted many. To suggest Palmer reached integral consciousness towards the end of his life does not ignore his faults, interpersonal challenges, or suggest his development was complete—only that his final days were characterized by the integral perspective. The integral level of consciousness has been researched and written about extensively in terms of ongoing adult development across several lines, such as values development (Beck & Cowan, 1996; Graves 1974), ego/self development (Cook-Greuter, 1999; Loevinger, 1976), cognitive development (Aurobindo, 2005; Commons et al., 1984), spiritual/faith development (Fowler, 1995), and at least eight others (Wilber, 2000). This article argues that Palmer developed an integral perspective and can be understood as an early leader of the integral age (Gebser, 1949; Senzon, 2007; Wilber, 1997).

The most complete way to examine Palmer's life is to use Integral Theory and the Integral framework developed by philosopher Ken Wilber (1995). This Integral framework includes first-, second-, and third-person perspectives combining many elements of human insight and knowledge (Wilber, 2006; Esbjörn-Hargens, 2009). It has been applied to dozens of disciplines, including personal growth, politics, psychology, economics, subtle energies, ecology, and consciousness studies. This article applies Integral Theory to biography. Integral biography is a way to examine an individual's life while including the increasing levels of complexity that develop through cultural, social, subjective, and behavioral domains. Such an approach is perfectly suited for a luminary like Palmer.

As the president of the first chiropractic school from 1906 to 1961, author of over 30 books, developer of chiropractic, and founder of the first radio station west of the Mississippi River, Palmer was instrumental in

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the early growth of what is today the third largest health profession. The chiropractic profession grew from 50 doctors of chiropractic in 1904 to over 70,000 today. The depth and breadth of Palmer's legacy is difficult to ascertain. He was an inspiration to thousands of followers, and was sometimes a lightning rod for conflict and dissension. Other than chiropractors who follow the direct professional lineage initiated by Daniel David "D.D." Palmer, the first chiropractor and B.J.'s father, very few know of his work.

B.J. Palmer struggled to break new ground and establish a legacy for chiropractic and the principles it rests upon (i.e., that there is an innate intelligence organizing the body, and it is superior to the the conscious thinking mind) (D.D. Palmer, 1910; B.J. Palmer, 1949). Chiropractic for Palmer was an injunction for man to be aligned with the flow of this inner intelligence and ideally with the infinite wisdom infusing all matter. This could be achieved through the injunction of the chiropractic adjustment (D.D. Palmer, 1910; B.J. Palmer, 1958; Senzon, 2007). In his push to advance this unique form of perennial wisdom, Palmer became an author, teacher, businessman, traveler, and for many, the carrier of a sacred torch (Keating, 1997; Maynard, 1959/1982; Senzon, 2004). Inspired by his early experiences, Palmer went on to live an extraordinary life, punctuated by peak states, crises, and fresh insights into the depths of what it is to be human.

An important aspect of integral biography is to acknowledge the influence social and cultural forces have in shaping a subject's life. There is little room in this article to describe the social and cultural history leading up to Palmer's insights and development. Some of this history has been written elsewhere (e.g., Gaucher-Pelsherbe, 1993; Moore, 1993; Peterson & Wiese, 1995; Wardwell, 1992). An integral perspective on this historical and cultural legacy has also been undertaken (Senzon, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2007). Explicit links have been made to the origins of Palmer's ideas and worldview in a lineage stretching to antiquity and culminating in the metaphysical movements of 19<sup>th</sup>-century America (Albanese, 2007; Moore, 1993). Palmer and his father attempted to provide an injunction linking the One and the Many (Senzon, 2007), healing the fracture of the modern world between art, science, and spirituality (Senzon, 2005, 2007; Wilber, 1998). Palmer's insights hardly stand alone, yet his particular style, worldview, and life circumstances offer a significant contribution to the furthering of integral approaches to health and healing.<sup>1</sup>

## Literature Review

There is not much literature on integral biography. The closest peer-reviewed article to the topic is on integral leadership (Pauchant, 2005). Thierry Pauchant has proposed an ambitious project to write 100 "leadographies" of integral leaders from Plato to Lincoln to Eleanor Roosevelt and Ghandi, using Integral Theory as a lens for each biography (Volkman, 2004). The goal would then be to compare the lives of each leader and tease out the common threads. It is a brilliant approach to examine many individuals through all domains of their development. In this way, it proposes to test the veracity of Integral Theory in real lives played out through time, and how real people developed to become integral leaders. In order to scientifically determine the integral level of leaders requires specific criteria, methodology, research design, and research strategies (Pauchant, 2005; Volkman, 2004).

Pauchant offers three retrospective criteria to examine multiple lines of development and determine whether a leader was integral: 1) the leader must have had a significant impact on a community or organization, 2) there must be a general consensus amongst a diverse population that the leader was well respected, and 3) the leader must have been viewed by others as "postconventional," with a de-centered ego. A fourth objective criterion is to analyze the individual's life and development through the lens of Integral Theory. Retrospective analysis is suggested for two reasons: 1) it takes decades for the integral level to unfold for an individual,

and 2) research indicates only about 1% to 2% of the population is at the integral level (Pauchant, 2005). It is proposed that the leader must meet the first three criteria in order to rule out individuals who were not integral leaders. Data sources to verify these criteria include obituaries, biographies, autobiographies, letters, interviews, and other documents from the individual's life. Pauchant (2004a) states, "Integral leaders are described by words and expressions such as 'saint,' 'elevated soul,' 'spiritual,' 'enlightened,' 'kindred spirit,' possessing a 'sacred wisdom,' being 'spiritually virtuous,' 'divinely inspired,' 'being selfless,' etc." Other indicators of the leader's integral nature include the capacity to take multiple perspectives in an embodied way. This capacity expresses itself, for example, through openness to new possibilities as opposed to rigid adherence to values, beliefs, and dogma.

Pauchant also proposes several methods to do such an integral biography. Various methodologies should include interpretive biography (to capture the subjective, personal, and behavioral aspects of the individual), institutional analysis (to study how the leader led an organization differently from typical leaders), and historical inquiry (to place the leader in a social and cultural context). A story or vignette along with a good quote and photograph may be sufficient to capture each stage of development within the context of the life story (photos and sample quotes from Palmer's life are reproduced in Appendix A). And, unlike the classic biography focused on a hero or heroine, the leader should be placed in a life; the social and cultural forces shaping and being shaped by the individual are very important. Pauchant even goes so far as to suggest the biography should begin with an emphasis on objective actions and interactions with others and then focus on the personal and interpersonal aspects of the subject's life.

An emphasis should be placed on the leader's growth and development, often marked by epiphanies and crucibles. Pauchant's emphasis on "crucibles of leadership" and epiphanies is even more important for a brief biographical study such as this one. Crucibles are defined as moments in the individual's life that act as a turning point, usually marked by crisis, forced reflection, loss, or mentors (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Epiphanies are new moments of insight, which sometimes accompany a new level of consciousness. Denzin (1994) writes epiphanies "radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their life projects. In epiphanies, personal character is manifested and made apparent" (p. 510). Following Pauchant's lead, I will focus on such moments in Palmer's life.

Pauchant suggests that developmental survey instruments are not the best way to measure the level (also referred to by Wilber as altitude) of integral leaders. This is, in part, because such instruments focus on one line of development only, such as ego, morals, or cognition (Pauchant, 2005; Wilber, 2006). This is supported by the recent work of Zachary Stein. Based on empirical research rooted in the ideas of Jürgen Habermas, Stein (2008) suggests developmental survey instruments reconstruct a deeper intuitive knowledge that all humans naturally have. That is, humans intuitively know what altitude others are at. This intuition gets better with age and experience, knowledge of the developmental literature, and in the case of myself, Palmer's own works. Therefore, intuition of altitude is a valuable addition to Pauchant's approach because it supports his third criterion that the individual be viewed as postconventional.

The literature on B.J. Palmer is significant; his autobiographical writings are many. An entire discipline exists around chiropractic history, including a journal, an organization, and an annual academic conference. A conference is hosted by the Association for Chiropractic History, and is held in a different chiropractic school each year. Although there have been many popular articles, peer-reviewed articles, and book sections or chapters about B.J. Palmer (e.g., Gaucher-Pelsherbe, 1993; Gibbons, 1987, 1994; Lerner, 1952; Moore, 1993; Peterson & Wiese, 1995; Quigley, 1989), there are only a few books about him: an explicit biography (Keat-

ing, 1997) and other “family” biographies and treatises (Dye, 1939; Maynard, 1959/1982; D. Palmer, 1967; Panza, 1982; Senzon, 2004). Very little of the research to date takes a deep look at Palmer in accordance with the levels of consciousness he developed through (Senzon, 2001, 2004). This is one reason why an integral biography is vital, as too much gets lost with cross-level criticism and a lack of depth.<sup>2</sup>

The main difference between integral biography and Pauchant’s “leadographies” is the focus of the study. The Integral framework can be applied to any person’s life, resulting in an integral biography. A leadography is about an integral leader. Since the life of Palmer fits so closely to the concept of an integral leader, Pauchant’s roadmap is ideal for this article. The case can be made that Palmer was an integral leader in his later years as he matured into the integral level of consciousness. By that point however, it was probably too late to extend his impact beyond his most loyal followers. From age 68 until his death at age 79, he wrote 16 books totaling 7,990 pages (Palmer, 1949, 1950a, 1950b, 1951a, 1951b, 1951c, 1952, 1953, 1955a, 1955b, 1957a, 1957b, 1958, 1961, 1966a, 1966b). William Heath Quigley, Palmer’s nephew, wrote how Palmer hoped the books would be his greatest legacy (Quigley, 1989).

## Methods

I begin by determining whether Palmer meets Pauchant’s three criteria. I then move into a discussion of Integral Theory, using it to explore the person Palmer became, his insights and personal experiences, and the ingredients that may have helped him to get there. Rather than a 150-page “leadography,” as suggested by Pauchant, this article will highlight five crucibles of Palmer’s development, marking transitions between levels of consciousness with an emphasis on his circumstance, epiphanies, and new worldviews.

### *Assessing Palmer’s Level and Legacy*

Pauchant’s first three criteria are important to consider in determining whether Palmer was integral or not. Did Palmer have a significant impact on a community or organization? Yes. Was he highly regarded by a diverse population? Yes. Was he considered to be postconventional with a de-centered ego? Based on the memories of Palmer by his former students and faculty, and an objective assessment of a sample of his writings by ego development researcher Susanne Cook-Greuter, both described below, I conclude that Palmer also meets this third criterion.

In 1990, a special tribute to Palmer appeared in the magazine *Today’s Chiropractic*. Several of Palmer’s former students and faculty were asked to reminisce about him. A summary of the quotes are as follows: being with B.J. refreshed one; his presence gave people fortitude that would last decades; his charisma and mostly his eyes were magnetic; he looked into your soul; his presence was hypnotic; he was powerful; he was “a rainmaker” (Crowder, 1990); he was gentle and filled with love; and his mission to heal a sick world was gigantic and compelling (Allen, 1990; Barge, 1990; Peet, 1990; Rutherford, 1990; Williams, 1990). Finally, his biographer Joe Maynard (1990) states:

Many men and women experienced personal development after having come in contact with B.J. Palmer, because he had the innate ability to bring forth the innate creative substance that is buried deep in every individual, allowing this creativity to surface and be experienced in one’s living.

Another more objective assessment of Palmer’s later writings was examined for this article by Susanne Cook-Greuter. Cook-Greuter is a leader in the field of adult development with a focus on postconventional stages

of awareness. She determines an individual's level of ego or self-development based on linguistic analysis using a Sentence Completion Test (SCT) (Cook-Greuter, 1999). I asked her to analyze a famous passage of Palmer's, in which he describes one of his greatest epiphanies, and thereafter referred to himself as "We," rather than "I." The passage and this epiphany are discussed in more context below in the section on Palmer's later development. Her retrospective analysis can be considered an intuition of altitude. In the analysis, Cook-Greuter points to the fact that Palmer's language is clearly at the level above integral, or 5/6 on her 6-part scale of human development, indicating a postconventional perspective and de-centered, although still bounded, ego. Cook-Greuter writes:

Overall, Palmer's writing seems to come from an advanced personal perspective with occasional forays and intimations of transpersonal experience...The insistence on duality in the description of two selves in one would be scored at stage 5/6, the last stage of post conventional development in the personal rationally-mediated realm. (as cited in Senzon, 2010, p. 241)

Palmer's postconventional development will be described in more detail towards the end of the article after first describing his earlier transitions between stages and their accompanying crucibles and epiphanies.

## The AQAL Model

Analysis using Wilber's framework is Pauchant's fourth criteria to determine whether a leader is integral or not. Wilber (2006) writes, "One of the main difficulties in presenting the Integral approach is that you have to explain it before you can apply it" (p. ix). The AQAL model includes five elements: quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types. In order for a biography to be considered integral, it needs to include at least quadrants and levels. The more elements of the framework are included, the more integral the biography will be.<sup>3</sup>

### *Quadrants*

The four quadrants are the most basic perspectives you can take on any event in the universe. In the Upper-Left quadrant (UL), a person experiences their own interior and subjective experience ("I"). This is where we can view Palmer's levels, lines, states of consciousness, and types. In the Upper-Right quadrant (UR), we can discuss Palmer's actions, behaviors, and his bodily states such as his physical experience as a chiropractor for 60 years or the changes in his brainwaves while in hypnotic or contemplative states ("It"). The Lower-Left quadrant (LL) is the domain of interpersonal resonance, shared meaning, and culture ("We"). This is where we can discuss cultural influences on Palmer and Palmer's ability or inability to connect with others, his influential orations, his philosophical outreach efforts to establish an integral profession, as well as his cultural impact beyond chiropractic. The Lower-Right quadrant (LR) is the interobjective domain: social systems, ecology, or any domain where two or more individuals are gathered ("Its"). Here we can discuss Palmer's social circumstances, economic realities, the development of a school, a profession, and other social interactions he may have had during his life.

### *Levels*

Wilber (2006) developed the concept of *altitude of development* to unite the many approaches of developmental research in psychology. The basic core of this approach is an acknowledgement that there are at least a dozen empirically valid methods to measure human development from infancy well into adulthood. Wilber color-coded these levels for the sake of simplicity (see Wilber, 2006, p. 68). Each color represents a general

altitude of consciousness, which can act as a measure for all of the different lines of development. Pauchant (2005) emphasizes Wilber's concept of soft-stages, that is, individuals oscillate around various stages with a "center of gravity" rather than ossifying at any one stage. This is a helpful way through which to observe Palmer's development, especially in regards to unbalanced lines of development.

### *Lines*

The self's many aspects develop through these broad levels or altitudes, in lines of development. Each line develops independently from the rest, but they are intricately connected. The two most notable are self and cognition. The self navigates and ties together all of the lines, while cognition or knowing usually leads development. There are unlimited ways to measure how many levels exist in each line and many researchers use seven or more levels. Unbalanced development is common, as some lines generally develop faster than others. We can observe uneven development throughout Palmer's life; for example, he had very well developed cognitive and spiritual lines, although his interpersonal lines seem less developed, as noted below in his relationships with his family and others in the profession.

We will examine four of Palmer's lines of development: self ("Who am I?"), cognition ("What am I aware of?"), values ("What is significant to me?"), and spirituality/faith ("What is of ultimate concern?") (Wilber, 2006). To gauge Palmer's development, we will examine his writings, his actions, and his legacy primarily along these four lines. Although I do not discuss Palmer's aesthetic line in detail, it was certainly well expressed, as evidenced by his eclectic mansion, mode of dress, myriad collections, and extensive gardens (Keating, 1997; Maynard, 1959/1982; Palmer, 1949).

Each new altitude is a wider embrace, an increase in complexity and perspective, such as the journey from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric. The first six altitudes represent development from infancy to adulthood and the beginnings of a worldcentric worldview. The integral altitude is often referred to as post-conventional. It is represented by teal and turquoise altitude. It is possible Palmer experienced levels beyond turquoise, but there is no evidence that his center of gravity was there. Descriptions of Palmer's life at each altitude will only be an approximation. The complexity and empirical research behind each line within each altitude cannot be captured in such a brief description. For more detail, see Wilber (2006) and Brown (2007).

I hypothesize Palmer's development was driven by his cognitive line, and more specifically, his subtle-cognition. Cognition can be viewed along three streams: gross, subtle, and causal (Wilber, 2000). Each of these streams develops independently. Gross cognition ceases development after thought begins to reflect on itself. This type of self-reflection involves subtle cognition, as the individual no longer reflects on the gross physical world but on the subtle world of thoughts, imagination, and concepts. Subtle cognition is evident in early childhood, and then reappears in a mature form in later development. Throughout development, it may be cultivated through techniques such as hypnosis and contemplation, and these can lead to the development of causal cognition (Wilber, 2000). Hypnosis and contemplation were two of Palmer's primary techniques of self-development, and they pushed his development forward throughout his life. Preliminary evidence of the leadographies shows all integral leaders have a regular practice of meditation or prayer (Volckmann, 2004). Palmer did as well, and from an early age.

### **B.J. Palmer's Evolution**

Palmer's development was marked by at least five identifiable crucibles. Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas (2002) define a crucible as "a transformative experience through which an individual comes to a new or an

altered sense of identity” (p. 40). Such crucibles can involve overcoming prejudice or insurmountable challenges, or being pushed on by a mentor. More specifically, Thomas (2002) names four types of crucibles: enforced reflection, mentoring relationships, immersion in a foreign land, and disruption/loss. True leaders emerge from crucibles with what Bennis and Thomas call “adaptive capacity,” the ability to creatively and almost magically emerge stronger than before. I suggest that each of Palmer’s primary five crucibles were transitions from one soft-stage to the next, one altitude to a more embracing and adaptive one.

The rest of this article will examine each crucible in terms of the four quadrants, altitude, four lines, and important epiphanies. The five transitions/crucibles based on my intuition of Palmer’s altitudes are as follows: his move from a red to amber altitude (between 1895-1903), his move from amber to amber/orange altitude (between 1907-1924), his move from amber/orange to orange/green altitude (between 1924-1949), his move from green to teal altitude (1948-1953), and his move from teal to turquoise altitude (1953-1957). Due to limited space, only a bare outline will be provided for Palmer’s first four crucibles. Emphasis is placed on his final levels of development in order to determine just how integrally developed he may have been. Appendix A provides a sample quote from Palmer at each major level.

### ***The First Crucible: Palmer’s Transition from Red to Amber Altitude***

In Palmer’s (1950b) writings about his childhood and teenage years, he recounts a difficult childhood with time living on the streets. This was his red altitude phase, centered on the egocentric self. Two of his biographers described the harshness of a demanding father (Maynard, 1959/1982), and an even more demanding stepmother (Keating, 1997). Palmer was expelled from high school in 1895 (for releasing the white mice in order to get the girls to jump on their chairs), the year attributed to the first chiropractic adjustment by his father (Lerner, 1952, p. 52).<sup>4</sup>

In order to “straighten” his son out, D.D. Palmer, a former magnetic healer and an avid spiritualist, sent B.J. on tour with Professor Flint, a vaudeville hypnotist, for two seasons in 1899 (LR). It was with Flint that B.J. learned to cultivate his inner depths (UL) and master the art of meditative hypnotic trance (Lerner, 1952; Senzon, 2004). It was also during this time, between the ages of 17-19, when Palmer claims to have “found himself” in relation to the principle of innate intelligence and universal intelligence (Palmer, 1949, p. xix; 1950b, p. 65; 1952, p. 79; 1961, p. 56; 1966b, p. 116). He became a doctor of chiropractic soon after this epiphany (UR). A series of legal cases against him and his father forced B.J. to take over leadership of the school in 1902, and eventually the profession (LR/LL).

I suggest Palmer used this moment as a leadership crucible (Thomas, 2002). He utilized the mentorships of Flint and his father. He learned to access inner states (Thomas’ enforced introspection) from the deep hypnotic trances taught to him by Flint (Lerner, 1952). Palmer also developed internal energies and dedicated his life to an inner contemplation of the relationship between matter, life, and spirit (Senzon, 2004, 2007). His contemplation, given to him by his father, of the link between innate intelligence and universal intelligence and chiropractic’s role in that linkage became a daily meditation, a spiritual practice, and a subtle practice (Palmer, 1961). This meditation was presumably made experiential through his hypnotic states, his reception of chiropractic adjustments, and his mastery as a practitioner and teacher of chiropractic. With these new inner resources, he became a leader.

Palmer’s line of subtle cognition was the driver for his personal evolution for the rest of his days. Lerner (1952) suggests that Palmer used his new ability of “self-hypnosis” to take on new personas, such as profes-

sional leader, for the next 50 years. The line of subtle cognition takes interior states as its referents (Wilber, 2000). Subtle cognition is thought acting on thought as well as creativity, imagination, reverie, illumination, and hypnotic states. Since cognition generally leads the way for the other lines of development, Palmer's subtle cognition led the development of his values, faith, and self.

### ***The Second Crucible: Palmer's Transition from Amber to Orange Altitude***

At amber altitude, individuals seek to fit into society and often develop a rigid value system of right and wrong. They exhibit ethnocentric, conventional, and conformist attributes. The limbic system, which governs emotions, dominates the self at this level of consciousness. It is also characterized by logical inconsistencies, where science is valued only when it supports "the truth" (Wade, 1996). Here, the individual is most interested in the "in-group," such as friends and family. Those who are outside of the group are largely rejected (Cook-Greuter, 1990).

From 1902, when he received his chiropractic degree (UR), until 1907, when he helped to win a landmark case for chiropractic's legal scope, Palmer's self and values were firmly rooted in amber altitude (UL). The social (LR) and cultural (LL) climate helped to shape Palmer's development (Peterson & Wiese, 1995). He became conventional in the outward aspects of society such as getting married, starting a family (his son David was born in 1906), purchasing a 22-room mansion (1912), running an institution, and guiding the initial years of a profession (Gibbons, 1987; Keating, 1997).

Palmer's uneven development was inevitable (UL). At the heart of his conforming and conventional self and values was his postconventional profession with its radical philosophy (i.e., that chiropractic adjustment unlocked the hidden potentials of health, sanity, and enlightenment). The philosophy continued to push his development. And yet he codified his philosophic approach to defend his father's legacy and his life's vision, along with his livelihood. He fought to develop an alternative health profession in the face of incredible pressures from the newly organized medical profession (Gibbons, 1987; Keating, 1997).

This crucible came to a head while his father still lived, causing great interpersonal stress between father and son (and resulting in false charges of patricide after D.D.'s death in 1913) (Gibbons, 1994). B.J. forced the legal issues in the courts by instigating the landmark *Morikubo vs. Wisconsin* case (Keating & Troyanovich, 2005). This was the first legal case to establish chiropractic as a separate and distinct profession. It catapulted B.J. to a new level of leadership, with the start of his organization, the Universal Chiropractors' Association. With mentors Tom Morris (his legal counsel) and Elbert Hubbard (the eclectic founder of Roycrofters, a reformist community of craft workers and artists), B.J. evolved in his consciousness and took many new actions. He began to dress and write like Hubbard with his long hair, a flowing tie, and the shortening of words such as "thot" for "thought" (Weise, 2003). Inspired by Hubbard, B.J. also began to cover the campus with hundreds of epigrams (Gromola, 1985; Palmer, 1952; Senzon, 2010). Palmer started publishing books, fighting legal battles, and expanding the school enrollment dramatically (Bower & Hynes, 2004; Callender, 2004; Keating, 1997). Palmer's quick rise to the leadership of the new profession would soon meet great obstacles.

### ***The Third Crucible: Palmer's Transition from Amber/Orange to Orange/Green Altitude***

The self at orange altitude is focused on individualism, objective criteria for truth, and rationality. From the time he became the president of the Palmer School of Chiropractic in 1906 to the opening of his research clinic in 1935, Palmer wrote 14 books, started a printing press, owned 2 radio stations, taught classes around the country and the world, traveled the world 3 times, and expanded chiropractic into a global profession.

Science, individualism, and the pursuit of the truth of chiropractic were his early guides.

Entrepreneurship and advertising were two of Palmer's gifts. His attitude of success permeated all he did and was strewn across the campus in the form of epigrams such as, "He that bloweth not his own horn, for him shall no horn be blown," and, "Early to bed, early to rise, Work like hell—and advertise" (Palmer, 1952). As a radio pioneer, he broadcasted chiropractic programs as well as others programming nation-wide. In 1942, he published *Radio Salesmanship: How its Potential Sales Percentage can be Increased*. Palmer was even considered a motivational inspiration by Napoleon Hill in 1920, and gave future U.S. President Ronald Reagan his first job as an announcer (Keating, 1997; Linhart, 1988).

Palmer's lines continued to diverge unevenly from this point. His sense of self and values were deeply entwined at amber altitude, with proving chiropractic and maintaining his leadership very important. Quigley (1989) states, "He often said, 'If you're not for me, then you're against me.' This facet of his personality can be seen to play a major role in his life and destiny" (p. 11). His cognition centered on orange altitude as a dominant "center of gravity" from around 1910, with his introduction of x-rays into the profession, until the 1950s. This drive, coupled with lingering gravity in amber altitude, often impacted his relationships and created the type of crucible Thomas (2002) would define as loss/disruption.

Palmer's attempts to embrace science were met with great resistance from his followers. In 1924, he introduced the Neurocalometer, an early thermography device, in hopes of combining objective readings into chiropractic analysis. His insistence that all chiropractors should use the device and lease them from his school led to his core faculty breaking off and forming their own school and his decline as a leader of the growing profession (Keating, 1997; Quigley, 1989). Maynard describes the stress as so overwhelming from the extensive criticism that Palmer had a breakdown and spent a short time in Pass Christian, a sanitarium in Mississippi. Palmer eventually healed himself by collecting glacial rocks and boulders by the ton from the banks of the Mississippi River, which were used to build a gigantic garden on the campus during 1923 and 1924. One of his students, Ester Mork (1990), states, "I often heard B.J. say that building the Little Bit O' Heaven saved his sanity" (p. 46). The construction of this garden could be viewed as a two-year long meditation for Palmer, a deepening of his subtle cognition, his spiritual line, as well as his self and values.

### ***The Fourth Crucible: Palmer's Transition to Green Altitude***

Green altitude is marked by contextual thinking, sensitivity, equalitarianism, as well as an ability to reflect on the self in more complex ways. This crucible happened for Palmer over several years as a result of the crises he faced, his travels, and his research. At the height of these crises, Palmer traveled the world three times with his wife Mabel and his son Dave. Travel to foreign lands is a potential crucible (Thomas, 2002). This pivotal and transitional time allowed Palmer to grow in his sensitivity, compassion, vision, inspiration, and spirituality (Palmer, 1926, 1953). He also introduced the upper-cervical chiropractic technique in 1933, and opened the B.J. Palmer Research Clinic in 1935. Combined, these events were to profoundly transform Palmer. Since he was focused on "researching the unknown man" for 14 years (Palmer, 1951), it is difficult to ascertain when Palmer may have transitioned to a mature green center of gravity. We already know that he was contemplating pluralistic, holistic, and postconventional philosophies and transpersonal awareness for most of his life. His father was probably one of the early green altitude pioneers (Callendar, 2007; Gaucher-Pelsherbe, 1993; Senzon, 2005, 2007). There is, however, a vein of his voluminous writings in his final years that points to a pluralistic core. We can conjecture it developed during this crucible time of travel and research. Based on his empirical research, he declared to the profession that he had developed the greatest chiropractic technique

yet known, the hole in one (HIO). This technique, also known as the Palmer Upper Cervical Specific Toggle Recoil, adjusts the upper cervical spine. From the 1930s to the 1950s, Palmer believed this was the only place chiropractors should focus on (Palmer, 1934, 1961, p. 94).

Through his writings in the 1950s, we can infer a profound transformation in values, spirituality, cognition, and perhaps his very self structure. His view of religion and medicine evolved to dismiss miracles, disparage hypocritical doctors, and embrace innate intelligence in a deeper way. For example, for Palmer, the idea of a virgin birth was an insult to the innate intelligence of Mary (Palmer, 1950a). In the same vein, he poked fun at doctors who pretended to believe in God and then tried to alter the body through drugs and surgery (which he viewed as sacrilege to innate intelligence). He also began to write in terms of the relationship between the innate intelligence within and genius. He began to interpret all truth as one and eventually all people as reflections of this oneness (i.e., the innate intelligence in each body is the same working principle in all). Palmer believed he had found the missing link between spirit and matter, for which humans had always searched. And this is where he transitioned from a rationalistic orange altitude to green and beyond.

### ***The Fifth Crucible: Palmer's Transition to Integral Consciousness***

Cognition at teal altitude has more to do with the creation of new paradigms (Commons & Richards, 2003). The self links practice with theory while understanding the interconnected systems and contexts involved and emphasizes the value of higher levels of development (Cook-Greuter, 1999, 2004). The body-mind is understood as a system and one begins to reflect on the evolutionary unfolding of development itself. Intuition aids rational thought (Cook-Greuter, 1999). Values at teal are focused on being (Beck & Cowan, 1996).

The premise of Palmer's new chiropractic technique, the HIO, was extremely holistic and based on two implied hierarchies. It was holistic because at its core was the principle that the innate intelligence does the adjustment, impacting the entire body, mind, and spirit, and the chiropractor only introduces a specific force in the right direction at the correct time. It was hierarchical because it categorized a major and minor subluxation (a misaligned vertebra, putting pressure on a nerve, and interfering with the flow of mental impulse from the innate intelligence) as well as compensatory distortions in other areas of the spine (and for society and culture, because the unsubluxated individual could then impact the world in more profound ways due to more ready access to the innate). The major and minor were always the top two vertebrae in the neck, C1 and C2. It was also hierarchic because it was based on the idea that the central nervous system was the master controlling system of the body. Palmer created the B.J. Palmer Research Clinic to study this phenomenon.

This HIO technique and the research clinic came at the height of Palmer's orange altitude, and both became vehicles for his transition through green altitude and into second-tier in regards to his cognition, self, values, and spirituality. Of the years of Palmer's research into these phenomena, Augustus Dye, who wrote *The Evolution of Chiropractic* (1939) with Palmer's assistance, noted how B.J. mellowed in his animosities towards his chiropractic enemies and his sensitivity increased as he immersed himself in his research (p. 293).

Palmer's research led him to study the subtle energies of the body (Palmer 1936, 1951; Senzon, 2001, 2008). He began to view the human organism as an energetic and spiritual being. He writes, "It is true we are spiritual, using the body as an instrument" (1949, p. 32). Reports from diverse spiritual traditions suggest the contemplation of subtle energies accelerate one's development, especially along the spiritual and subtle cognitive lines (Senzon, 2007, Wilber, 2006). Palmer developed verifiable proof to match his life of subtle contemplation.

Palmer understood the differences of developmental levels, which is a hallmark of teal altitude. He viewed the conflicts between science and religion to be solvable by using rationality to embrace the intelligence immanent in matter and life (Palmer, 1953, 1966b). He expected others to develop as he did, through a *satori*-like burst of subtle cognition. He did look back to his own development but credited his evolution to “that something” in the soul which opened him to circumstance, intuition, inner knowing, and what we might call serendipity/synchronicity (Palmer, 1949).

The final crucible and second major epiphany for Palmer came around the time of his wife Mabel’s death, just as he was completing his 14 years of research. Their relationship had been strained for years. This is another indication of Palmer’s uneven development and may be a source of his growth into the next stage of development. Mabel bought a house in Tucson, Arizona, in the late 1930s. Except for visits back home, she stayed in Arizona until her death in 1949. In her will, Mabel left B.J.’s mansion and all of her stock in the school and the radio stations (which were in her name for legal reasons from years before) to her granddaughters. “It left him with a bitterness he was unable to exorcise,” his nephew wrote (Quigley, 1989, p. 13). After Mabel’s death, Palmer wrote 16 books in 11 years. It is in these books that his higher development can be assessed.

### ***Palmer’s Turquoise Epiphany: I becomes We***

Turquoise altitude represents cognition that crosses paradigms by creating new fields (Commons & Richards, 2003). Sri Aurobindo coined the term *higher mind* for this level, the spiritual inspiration for mind, especially in regards to big truth (Aurobindo, 2005). The self at this level is in conflict between a need to de-center the ego and to merge the self-consciousness with a larger and wider self-sense. The ego may be viewed as a great threat to future growth and the individual has great inner-tension (Cook-Greuter, 1999). It is this level that Cook-Greuter (as cited in Senzon, 2010) suggests Palmer writes from in one of his final books.

In 1949, Palmer publicly announced the use of “We” and denounced the use of “I.” All of his works from 1949-1953 have a disclaimer to the use of the term “We.” In the preface to most of these books, he refers to the pronoun “I” as “disgusting,” “egotistical,” and “selfish.” In regards to the pronoun “We,” he acknowledges that it represents an inclusion of the innate, the educated mind, as well as all people working towards this new truth. Of this statement, Cook-Greuter observes:

Stage 5/6 is quintessentially about the person who has discovered the shenanigans of the ego, but has not yet permanently transcended the critical, constantly measuring stance towards reality. S/he is in a constant struggle to achieve transegoic states, but they have not developed into a stage or position from which one can systematically and consistently write. Thus, the vacillating voice, sometimes personal, other times transpersonal. (as cited in Senzon, 2010, p. 242)

In 1953, upon re-writing his 900 pages of notes and photos from his 1933 trip to the Buddhist temples of Cambodia, Palmer changed every pronoun of the manuscript from “I” to “We” (Palmer, 1953). In terms of the quadrants, he spoke from the UL and UR as one voice, invoking the LL “We” and thereby challenging the LR societal, linguistic, and social standards. I suggest this very process of re-writing was a form of deepening his new insight and furthering his own development. In each of his 16 books from 1949-1961, the author pronoun is expressed as “We.”

In his book *The Glory of Going On* (1961), Palmer tells the story of his awakening to this new way of speak-

ing. He writes that he stopped “involving” and started “evolving.” I asked Susanne Cook-Greuter to examine the language used in that chapter to determine whether Palmer’s linguistic structures matched language that an individual uses at second or third tier in self development. Cook-Greuter concludes that Palmer was still stuck in a dualistic relationship (at least in this brief passage) and that he had some very clear transcendent and even nondual insights or states, but his self or ego seemed to be at stages 5/6, turquoise altitude, or what she calls Construct-Aware (at the end of second tier) (as cited in Senzon, 2010). Cook-Greuter acknowledges that a context of his life would help, and it would have been best to have him take her developmental survey when he was still living! From this and the other evidence thus far, I suggest Palmer’s self structure evolved driven by his subtle-cognition, his spirituality, and his values.

Spirituality at teal and turquoise altitude is called *Universalist* by James Fowler (1995). Individuals at this level have a felt sense of a universal connection that they actualize in their life. They are usually “contagious” in the way they inspire movements or become martyrs (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, Mother Theresa) (Fowler, 1995, pp. 199-201). I am not suggesting that Palmer developed fully in every line. And as to his spirituality, we would be hard pressed to compare him to Gandhi or Mother Theresa, but we can certainly view his impact on his followers and the world as the mark of a very advanced soul.

### *“Thot Flashes” in Turquoise*

Palmer embraced a very deep intuitive voice that guided him in daily actions as well as in business (Palmer, 1949, 1955a, 1966b). He even carried a pad and pen with him at all times to write inspirations, especially at night by his bedside. He referred to these as “thot flashes” from universal to innate to educated. Universal intelligence is a source of organizing intelligence and wisdom in all matter, sometimes referred to as God (Palmer, 1949); innate intelligence is the source of the body’s living organization and also a source of intuition, sometimes referred to as the I AM, the soul, ego, and spirit (1961, p. 247; 1955a, p. 48; ); and educated is the adapted intelligence accumulated through life, often attempting to manipulate the world through an inflated sense of knowledge and importance (Palmer, 1949). According to Palmer, it is only when educated can sublimate itself to innate intelligence that greatness can unfold (Palmer, 1949, p. 17). Wade describes this type of transformation as the authentic level of the self, when mind and body are becoming one. Wade (1996) writes, “[There is] a frank acknowledgement of the intuitive voice... accompanied by a cognitive sophistication far in advance of the ‘gut’ voice” (p. 163).

The analysis of an integral leader should include any different ways the leader acted in business (Pauchant, 2005). Palmer began to run his business on the advice flashed to him from the innate (Maynard, 1959/1982; Palmer, 1958). According to Aurobindo, with the Intuitive Mind (turquoise altitude), intuition “flashes” like lightning to the thoughts. It acts as a transitional stage between mental and higher truth. “WHEN Innate thot-flashes came, they MUST BE accepted for full face value and acted upon AT ONCE,” Palmer states (1955, p. 116). Palmer’s board of directors eventually learned to listen to his “thot flashes” as well. It turned out extremely well on one occasion, when his innate intelligence told him to pay back NBC for the options they had purchased in his radio station. He had no obligation to do so. The president of NBC was so impressed that he invited Palmer to lunch whenever he visited New York (Maynard, 1959/1982).

At the transcendent stage (what Wilber calls indigo altitude), it is common for individuals to develop paranormal abilities but not to make a big deal of them. Marcus Bach, a religious scholar who led the services at Palmer’s funeral, describes his first meeting with Palmer in the 1940s. After recounting the incredible oration Palmer gave to an annual homecoming audience of about 2,000 cheering chiropractors, Bach (1968) says of

their meeting: “Now that I had this nearness to him, what were my impressions? His personality? Electric. His presence? Contagious. His influence? Provocative. His manner? Supernal” (p. 159). This description clearly meets Pauchant’s third criterion (Pauchant, 2005), but there was more. Bach goes on to describe how Palmer was able to read his mind; they even discussed it openly. Bach (1968) continues:

Disturbed and thrilled by the apparent way in which this plural-personality called B.J. read my mind, I realized that thoughts *are* things, lines of communication defy-  
ing words, transmitted, as B.J. had correctly said, “from spirit to spirit.” (p. 161)

As Bach (1968) reflects on Palmer’s ability to read his thoughts, he states, “What kind of an extra-sensory man was this?” (p. 161). Finally, Bach concludes, “He was a receiving and sending station, turned on, tuned in, seeing with an inner eye, listening with an inner ear, speaking with an inner voice” (p. 161). According to Bach, Palmer’s interests and activities overflowed into many fields—from radio, to organ music, to art, to collecting—as a reflection of his passion for chiropractic. This range of activities seemed to distribute his energy so that he was not consumed by the passion of his own inner fire. We might simply call this *being integral*, where one form can no longer hold you.

### *From Nature Mysticism to Deity Mysticism*

Palmer began to view religion as the striving of man to commune with the infinite. His lifetime contemplative practice focusing on innate intelligence was a form of nature mysticism, a way to use nature itself as an object through which to experience spiritual depths. In his final years, there is ample evidence that Palmer’s mysticism also evolved to a more subtle deity mysticism, where God becomes the object of meditation rather than nature (Wilber, 2006). This is similar to the drivers of his cognition from his early days, where his subtle cognition became a source of personal evolution. Now in his seventies, he came full circle and his spirituality became fully immersed in the subtle aspects of reality itself.

From 1949-1955, Palmer (1955a) wrote about the relationship between the individual and the infinite. For example, “Innate Intelligence is the Great I am that I am. Innate is the internal source of all and everything” (p. 48). His writing was still focused more on nature and the innate, yet striving towards something deeper. Then his writing changed, and from 1957-1961 these types of writings are geared more towards awakening to the inner God. To Palmer, God was the universal source of intelligence, which was the archetypal ground of all nature, a universal and individualized law. God as the infinite communicated to the finite through the innate intelligence.

Palmer’s experience of deity mysticism was an evolution of years of nature mysticism and the culmination of a life dedicated to subtle cognition, spiritual growth, and creating a better world. Palmer’s deity mysticism is best depicted in his final writings about chiropractic and shows a dramatic evolution of his thinking about the traditional tenets of chiropractic theory. Chiropractic became a practical means to answer the questions of all religions while healing people in the meantime. To Palmer, chiropractic was a transformative practice and philosophy destined to change the world’s focus on healing, life force, and God as within. He even considered the chiropractor to be “an apostle to the living god” that manifests through the tissues of the body, spine, and nervous system (Palmer, 1961, p. 261).

## **Conclusion**

B.J. Palmer died on May 27, 1961. More than 3,000 people attended his funeral at a Masonic temple in Dav-

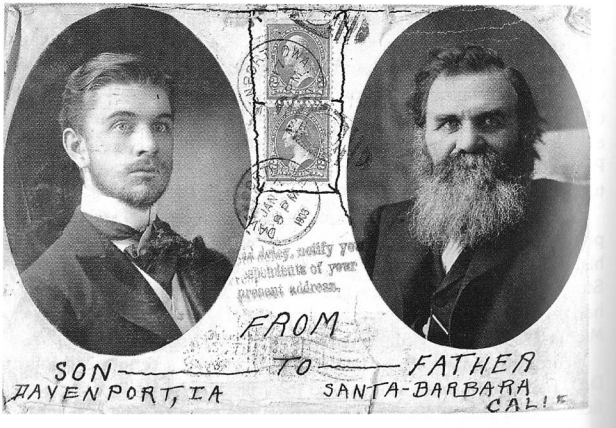
enport, Iowa (Luckey, 1961). A life of genuine search for the ultimate answers was complete. At his funeral, his son David confided in his biographer, Joe Maynard (1959/1982): “He’s at peace now, Joe, the struggle is all over” (p. 191).

### *Acknowledgments*

The author would like to thank Sherri McLendon and Alana Callender for their editorial support and suggestions. The author would also like to thank Susanne Cook-Greuter for her analysis and insight. This article was supported by a grant from the Global Gateway Foundation. The grant was meant to support projects furthering the mission of the foundation.

## Appendix A

### *Palmer's Stages of Development During His Lifetime*



B.J. Palmer (son) and D.D. Palmer (father), c. 1903. Image courtesy of Palmer College of Chiropractic Archives, Davenport, Iowa.



B.J. Palmer, c. 1920s. Image courtesy of Palmer College of Chiropractic Archives, Davenport, Iowa.

#### Red Altitude: 1890s

We roamed streets and alleys. We were alley-cats, wharf-rats, dead-end kids... We had hangouts and meetings of alley gangs. We [B.J.] were generally the leader of a gang who directed activities... (Palmer, 1949, p. 87)

#### Amber Altitude: 1900-1924

We do not claim that this something which controls and runs our body is electricity, but we have seen fit to give it an added attribute—intelligence, Innate Intelligence—which is a segment portion of Universal Intelligence (God). (Palmer, 1920, p. 202)

#### Orange Altitude: 1924-1936

Although vitally interested, and a student of the occult all my life, I have yet to talk with any person in India or to see any manifestation which would justify my practical mind making the statement that there was anything transcending the human in anything they claim to accomplish. (Palmer, 1926, p. 368)

#### Green Altitude: 1936-1952

It is true we are spiritual, using the body as an instrument. (Palmer, 1948, p. 32)

#### Teal-Turquoise Altitude: 1953-1955

Long ago we learned that WHEN Innate thot-flashes came they MUST BE accepted for full face value and acted upon AT ONCE, regardless whether we educationally thot they were right or wrong, good or bad, would or would not work. To do this was to humble education but we looked up to Innate and heeded its counsel. (Palmer, 1955, p. 116)

#### 1957-1958

Let us open our minds and discipline our thoughts and actions that we may better understand God's laws and become more efficient workers and "masters of our fate." (Palmer, 1958, p. 18)

#### 1959-1961

The value TO mankind of that "God"—LAW IN man depends upon how well man permits that "God"—law IN man to express itself, and how much he utilizes that LAW OF LIFE to become A LAW OF EVERY DAY ACTION in himself AND IN OTHERS, wherein he aims to liberate THAT LAW in himself as well as in others. (Palmer, 1961, p. 251)

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Social and cultural forces exert influence on both authors and readers. As for my own perspective, as the biographer, my influences are many. I am in a direct lineage from Palmer. The founder of the school in which I studied chiropractic was a student at Palmer's school while he lived. I am also a long-term student of human development, consciousness studies, and philosophy, which gives me a unique perspective on Palmer's role in the history of ideas. I have been studying Palmer's life and writings now for 14 years. Thus I will aim for accuracy, honesty, and a check on any tendency to over-glorify or exaggerate Palmer's life and accomplishments. And as to you, the reader, I only ask that you suspend all preconceived notions you may have about chiropractic. This is an important point, as the social and cultural forces that have shaped modern-day chiropractic have also influenced common perceptions and misconceptions, which, if not checked at the outset could interfere with an objective look at Palmer's life as a unique human being.

<sup>2</sup> Pauchant (2004b) importantly notes there are three types of criticisms of individuals: critiques blatantly wrong, critiques from other levels of development, and critiques that are accurate. In the writings about Palmer, all three types of criticism are readily identifiable.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of B.J. Palmer, it is important to include quadrants, levels, lines, and states. Types have more to do with his style of management, personality, extroversion/introversion, or other measures of how he acted through all of his levels. In my estimation, types are not essential for understanding the levels to which he may have developed.

<sup>4</sup> There is some controversy over these dates. Cyrus Lerner attributes two dates to Palmer's entry into high school, September 1896 (which is probably more accurate, as B.J. would have been 14 years old) and September 1895. Lerner goes on to note the coincidence of the first chiropractic adjustment coinciding with B.J.'s expulsion from high school.

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