



Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc.

The story of Phillip Guiles and John Billinsky

Presented by the ACPE History Network

When Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) first came upon our professional scene, in the Boston and broader New England area, the organizational core of the program was the seminary. The governing board consisted of the seminary president, the seminary dean, and the actual teaching supervisor. CPE was an integral part of theological education and every student was required to enter a CPE program at a center approved by the seminary. The Rev. Dr. Phillip Guiles, PhD and The Rev. Dr. John Billinsky, PhD were two early pioneers who modeled this type of CPE that is no longer our usual practice.

Philip Guiles was a graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He was, also, strongly influenced by Dr. Richard Cabot, MD, a professor from Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts General Hospital.

Cabot was a strong advocate for a clinical year where the student did case studies of people, within a supervisory context. Cabot believed that merely learning academic theories and concepts was not an adequate preparation for ministry. Cabot held this view not only for seminarians, but for the professional preparation of physicians and social workers.

Guiles found these ideas refreshing and challenging to the traditional methods of clerical education. Anton Boisen at Worcester State Hospital also adopted these ideas and coined the phrase that the student should study "living human documents" and not just learned texts. Boisen started the first unit of CPE in 1925 at Worcester State Hospital, a psychiatric facility. He had a profound interest in the interior, emotional, and spiritual life of people. He studied his own interior self as well as his patients at Worcester State Hospital. His CPE emphases flowed out of his own personal history and work as a pastor and therapist.

Dr. Helen Flanders Dunbar, MD had similar interests as Boisen. She was a graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She, also, completed a PhD in "Symbolism in Medieval Thought" at Columbia University in 1927, and she earned a MD degree from Yale University Medical School. She had joined Boisen's CPE program at Worcester State Hospital in 1925 for one month. Dunbar wanted to study religion and religious symbolism, especially as they related to mental health. She felt that science and religion needed to work together and her belief led to an expertise in psychosomatic medicine. Dunbar did not relinquish her interest in CPE and eventually became the Director of the Council for Clinical Training when the offices moved to New York City.

Philip Guiles became a student of Boisen's in 1928, valuing his ideas and teaching for ministry. He decided to center his professional life in the Boston area. He was ordained a minister in the Congregational Church (United Church of Christ today) and was made a Fellow in the American Psychological Association. Guiles helped to form the Council for Clinical Training of Theological Students. The organization was incorporated in 1930. The Council elected Dr. Cabot as President, Anton Boisen as Secretary, Phillip Guiles as Field Secretary and Helen Flanders Dunbar was appointed Medical Director.

Guiles hoped to eventually become the director of pastoral care at Worcester State Hospital, but he was unsuccessful in his application. His second choice was to be chaplain at Massachusetts General Hospital, but again he was unsuccessful.

Finally, in 1934 Andover Newton Theological School appointed Philip Guiles the first Smith Director of Psychology and Clinical Studies.

As the Council for Clinical Training of Theological Students grew in power and influence some significant disagreements between its leaders arose. Cabot and Guiles believed that Clinical Training should find its organizational focus within a theological school and that the training should center on learning the pastoral role of the minister. The context of a general hospital was understood as the appropriate place for Clinical Training.

Anton Boisen and Helen Flanders Dunbar believed that learning ministry was also to learn about mental health. They wanted the minister to learn about psychology and human behavior. Thus they saw the psychiatric hospital as an ideal place for Clinical Training. The theological context of a seminary for students was not seen as primary.

As a result two different organizations came into being: the Council for Clinical Training and the Andover Newton Project. The Council dropped the last part of its title, "for theological students" because they wanted students from other disciplines to be eligible for training. Dunbar and Boisen became the primary leaders of the new Council and they moved their offices to New York City.

Guiles and Cabot became the standard bearers of the old Council for Clinical Training of Theological Students. The new title of their organization was known as the Andover Newton Project. They publicized their ideas that a seminary curriculum was inadequate unless CPE was an integral part of a student's education. The student must be taught by utilizing actual case histories that would make the curriculum more than merely academic learning. The goal was to help pastors grow in their pastoral identity. The general hospital was understood to be the best place for students to learn clinical training.

Guiles and Cabot not only wanted to make Andover Newton Theological Seminary a center for their ideas, they wanted to spread such a concept through many of the major seminaries of New England. Guiles was in a unique position. He had the support and active encouragement of the President of his seminary for his project, Dr. Herrick and his successor, Dr. Harold Tribble. They actively spread the ideas of Cabot and Guiles to other seminary presidents and deans throughout New England. In addition, Guiles married into the Earhart family. His father-in-law was a philanthropist and eager to financially support the ideas and policies of Guiles' Andover Newton Project. Consequently the Earhart Foundation was formed. The following seminaries cooperated with Guiles: Yale Divinity School, Harvard Divinity School, the Episcopal Divinity School, University of Boston's Theological School, Bangor Theological Seminary, and outside of New England the Chicago Theological Seminary.

The project partially underwrote the salaries of CPE chaplains who were related to Guiles's CPE program. Boston City Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital were prime examples among others. Guiles was an adept leader, administrator, pastor, teacher and colleague. His administrative skills were profound. He was able to adjust to changing times with constructive action. An excellent example was his role in the formation of the Institute of Pastoral Care.

Rollin Fairbanks came to New England and felt that the creative impetus of the Andover Newton Project had faded and so he endeavored to found a new organization: the Institute of Pastoral Care. He examined several options but decided upon working with Guiles and Paul Johnson at Boston University's School of Theology. Financial support was found in the Earhart Foundation and in the Ella Lyman Cabot Trust Fund. The Board of Governors represented the four participating theological schools, also included were the Massachusetts General Hospital, the Massachusetts Council of Churches and the Federal Council of Churches. Rollin Fairbanks was appointed the first Executive Director of the organization at the incorporation in 1944. The desire to further the teaching and practice of pastoral care was the main reason for the Institute being formed.

Another significant figure, the Rev. Dr. John Billinsky, came upon the scene. He was born in Philadelphia. He was not originally from the Boston area. As a part of his ministerial training he studied for a few years at the Jungian Institute in Zurich, Switzerland. He was ordained a minister in the Congregational Church. He came to Harvard where he earned a doctorate in Education (then equivalent to earning a degree in psychology or psychotherapy). Interestingly enough Billinsky was associated for a while with the OSS which later became known as the CIA.

Billinsky was hired by Philip Guiles at Andover Newton Theological School as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology. They became close friends and spent time with one another's family. Upon the death of Guiles, Billinsky became the departmental chair. He continued the educational work started by Guiles. He exercised strong leadership within the Institute of Pastoral Care, wanting to strengthen the matrix already in existence with seminaries, medical institutions and academic centers where psychology was taught. He also more tightly inter-related with CPE teaching centers, such as Boston City Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, and the CPE supervisors from such centers.

With the full support of the Andover Newton administration, Billinsky required all seminary students to complete at least one unit of clinical pastoral education. He continued in the tradition of Guiles and Cabot in encouraging seminary students to become pastors. His style of ministry was greatly influenced by Carl Jung, with whom he had studied and maintained a personal relationship. Nevertheless Billinsky did not want his students to become psychotherapists. He did not try to sponsor a Boston version of the American Foundation for Religion and Psychiatry as was done under the Council for Clinical Training in New York City.

Billinsky invited many notable persons in the field of psychology to lecture at Andover Newton Seminary, such as Carl Jung and Victor Frankel. Billinsky also brought in other kinds of lecturers such as Harvey Cox and Nils Ferre. He wanted to make Andover Newton Theological Seminary a leading intellectual center for pastors. He enjoyed the inter-relationships of many educational institutions and ministerial leaders.

Billinsky generated financial support for his department at Andover Newton and he usually was given authority over the manner in which the money was spent. The Cutting Fund encouraged qualified seminarians to go to medical school where their financial costs would be subsidized. Many people did and they eventually became psychiatrists.

Billinsky formed a cluster of CPE centers around Andover Newton, at least fifteen in number. Boston City Hospital was his prime teaching center. The chaplains at such centers were in part financially supported by Andover Newton. In addition, the centers had many supervisors in training who met weekly at Andover Newton with Billinsky and his associates for supervision. Consequently a very strong relationship formed between all these people with Billinsky as the prime mover and central figure. At the end of each training unit the chaplains graduating would meet at Andover Newton for formal closure of their work rather than at the center where their training took place.

Billinsky was highly respected and admired by his faculty peers at Andover Newton. Often he was chaplain and counselor and therapist for the faculty.

In 1954 Billinsky hired Henry Brooks as Assistant Professor within his department of Psychology at Andover Newton. Billinsky took a leadership role in the formation of our present Association for Clinical Pastoral Education. In 1967 four different clinical education groups united to become our present organization of ACPE. Henry Brooks became full professor and department head when Billinsky retired.

This is the work of the Rev. C. Leland Udell of Shelburne, VT. Lee was certified as a ACPE Supervisor in 1976. He retired in 2011. He died in December 2012.