

## **“Be Strong! Take Courage! All Ye Who Hope in the Lord”<sup>1</sup>**

– Comments Honoring the Rev. Dr. John Edwin Harris –

delivered in Columbus, OH, on 11 April 2010 at the Plenary of

the College of Pastoral Supervision & Psychotherapy

– on the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the movement for a specifically clinical chaplaincy

– on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of H[elen] Flanders Dunbar’s article:  
“The Clinical Training of Theological Students”

– on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the final edition of Anton Theophilus Boisen’s hymnal:  
Hymns of Hope and Courage<sup>2</sup>

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Each year the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy presents “The Helen Flanders Dunbar (1902-1959) Award for Significant Contributions to the Field of Clinical Pastoral Training.” Many of those new to this world of clinical pastoral training, education, and transformation may not know who this mysterious Helen Flanders Dunbar was – so let me make several prefatory comments.

In a nutshell, she was the one who translated Anton Boisen’s thought-provoking ponderings about an intimate relationship between religion and medicine into a movement – a now world-wide movement – that has forever changed the definition of “chaplaincy” and of what constitutes “pastoral care,” “pastoral counseling,” and “pastoral psychotherapy”.

Dunbar was brilliant – and sincere.

To some extent just noting that she finished her first magnum opus in April 1927, graduated cum laude from seminary in May 1927, and finished her first year of medical school in June 1927 says it all.

Seventy-five years ago, in 1935, her second magnum opus was published and she added a third doctorate to those bestowed in 1929 and 1930.

Seventy-five years ago, in 1935, having solidified during the previous decade the foundations of the clinical pastoral movement, she launched the psychosomatic movement – viewing these as broad parallel programs for “healing and wholeness”.<sup>3</sup>

Past presentations have explored some of the anguish in Dunbar’s life. Today let me suggest a possible source of her confident drive – her hope and her courage.

Dunbar was born in 1902. Four years earlier, her mother published a translation of a French novel – her only translation of a French novel – the easy-to-read story of a distinctive eighteen-year-old young woman, Colette. It is not hard to imagine that this romance lay somewhere around the Dunbar home and that Helen read it sometime during her pre-adolescent or adolescent years. In brief, the heroine is described quite positively as having “extreme individuality,” “extreme originality,” and “freshness” – as being “very unlike the rest of the world”. With Colette as the role model endorsed by her mother, perhaps it is no wonder that Helen Flanders Dunbar moved into the world establishing two enduring patient-centered movements for “healing and wholeness”.<sup>4</sup>

Now let me focus on the situation at hand – the annual bestowing of the Helen Flanders Dunbar Award for Significant Contributions to Clinical Pastoral Training.

On this occasion last year – 2009 – we examined several heady questions: “How is wisdom lived? How is understanding grasped? **How is knowledge gained?**” Yes, “How is knowledge gained?” We will come back to that. “How is it that conviction, commitment, and **covenant** help foster life’s meaning?” Yes, “covenant”. We will come back to that, too. <sup>5</sup>

The year before that – 2008 – our honoree’s words advised that “if the Spirit wants ... [us] to do something ... , the Spirit will not mind repeating the instructions.” That is, once the guidance “has been repeated so that it is clear,” and once we have “had time to check it out in the community of faith,” we “do not need to act impulsively” – we “only need **to act** obediently.” Yes, we are **called upon “to act”**. We will come back to that. <sup>6</sup>

The year before that – 2007 – we considered “how to function as a knowledgeable professional AND retain one’s soul” – how to “start with engaged service, move toward active inquiry, move on to contemplation, and move still further toward guiding a future generation.” That is, how we might transcend any concern for “the axioms of faith, the art of ministry, and the laws of the spirit” – to focus on what actually takes place – and needs to take place – in “the serious interaction of one human with another”. Yes, what “**needs to take place**”. We will come back to that. <sup>7</sup>

The year before that – 2006 – we considered an amalgam of these concerns – “having strong feelings, taking bold action – without being self-righteous” – recognizing that we are “**called to act in the face of uncertainty**, knowing that we are inadequate – but probably the best available – knowing that we do not know the end of the story or even where it lies.” We considered while it might be “easier to fulfill the exact command – obsessively tithe of mint, anise, and cumin – the minutiae – to act as if we know with certainty what to do” – more likely we are called upon to accept that it is “harder to fulfill the inexact command – faithfully perform mitzvah – gut level acts of justice and mercy – to accept that we do not know for sure what to do – that we **must act but in a world of unknown unknowns, with minimal reassurance that what we do is right.**” <sup>8</sup>

Anton Boisen rightfully is remembered for his faithful working out of his received “conviction that one must break ‘a hole in the wall’ – the wall ‘separating religion and medicine’.” Flanders Dunbar rightfully is remembered for her steady “commitment to removing that wall forever.” <sup>9</sup>

Our honoree today **wandered** in a manner reminiscent of Boisen, and he **established** in a manner reminiscent of Dunbar.

Boisen, Dunbar, our honoree – I doubt that they ever met. Oddly enough, they symbolically share a meaningful date. Boisen spoke of the “cutting loose from the beaten path” of our lives – the “starting forth into unknown territory”. Boisen’s three decades of wandering – living within over three dozen communities before settling down – began self-consciously at age 25, in 1902. Dunbar was born in 1902. Today’s honoree’s two decades of wandering – living within about a dozen communities before settling down – began self-consciously at age 25, in – 1966. You thought I was going to say “1902” – right? No, the connection here, odd as it may be, is that our honoree’s favorite “congregation” of sorts – a touchstone in his life – was first dubbed “The Volunteers” in – 1902. <sup>10</sup>

The plenary’s focus this year is on the journey – literally “the pilgrim’s progress” – toward recovery of spirit and soul. Now, by “recovery of spirit and soul” I am not sure that we need to imply that either is something we had just last week and then somehow lost. Rather, I think we might consider that the situation is somewhat like that proposed by Plato – that we have been wandering about UN-whole, wandering about searching for a missing something – a missing something that we somehow know must exist and the recovery of which we sense might make us more whole. <sup>11</sup>

I know that sounds vague, but I suspect it does come close to describing how today’s honoree wandered, slowly living within others’ wisdom, slowly grasping some measure of understanding, slowly gaining the requisite knowledge – to act, within a community of faith – to act, within a covenant of peers – to act, both on the level of here-and-now relationship and on the level of providing for future sufferers’ needs.

Today's honoree wandered into the military, then wandered into the railroad world, then wandered into a Methodist college, then wandered into a Baptist college. This is sounding a bit like Boisen, isn't it? <sup>12</sup>

While Dunbar knew exactly what she wanted to do – attending medical school, graduate school, and seminary simultaneously, it was Boisen who wandered from foreign language teaching, to career forestry, to social activism, to battlefield chaplaincy, to psychiatric research, becoming what he himself called a “Presbyter-gationalist” along the way.

Today's honoree, blessed with a beautiful voice, finally realized that he wanted to become a Minister of Music. For reasons not entirely clear, he ended up taking a unit of clinical pastoral experience with Chaplain Walter Jackson, in Louisville. As today's honoree phrases it, “that one unit .. made me question my chosen path ... .”

He took off a year from his pastoral duties in Sullivan, Indiana, to work with Chaplain Joe Boone Abbott, in Birmingham. He was hooked. Now his path was entirely clear. As today's honoree tells it, “That year ... was the start ... , and I knew that CPE would be my destiny. I learned so much about myself that year ... that I knew I wanted ... the same for other men and women.”

He went back to his home congregation for a year – but only a year – before heading off to work for two years with Chaplain Ken Reed, in Indianapolis, and for six months with Chaplain John Galloway. From there he went to work for three years with Vern Kuehn in Richmond, Indiana, before becoming a player in Rush Jordan's conglomerate of interlocking directorships at Dayton, Ohio.

That's quite a collection of mentors: Abbott – a Baptist student of depression, Reed – a Methodist student of grief, Galloway – a Presbyterian student of “The Gospel According to Superman!” – and Kuehn – another outspoken Presbyterian. That was only the start.

To begin making this long story short, today's honoree ended up in southwest Ohio, convinced of the value of pastoral care, counseling, and psychotherapy, but needing to invent an enduring conceptual structure for making competent services happen. He felt called upon to act – to create something from nothing – to do what he had to do – to create a new model for which there was no guarantee of success.

He brought together a diverse array of congregations – and non-congregations – into an entity called “The **Covenant Society for Pastoral Counseling**,” within which, through institutions' payments of an annual contribution, each member gains access to pastoral care, counseling, and psychotherapy on a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week basis – at one-half of whatever would have been the member's out-of-pocket cost. <sup>13</sup>

Today's honoree saw the problem and acted – on both a one-to-one and a systems basis. He made services available to a wide-spread patient population, made collegial support possible for isolated clinicians, and made a structure for nurturing the next generation of clinicians.

Eventually his became one of the largest programs in the country for the clinical training, education, and transformation of a new generation of pastors. Eventually he and his colleagues around Dayton decided that the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy's comfort with individuality, originality, and freshness – with being “very unlike the rest of the world” – was attractive, and that becoming the “Miami Valley Chapter” of CPSP would best meet everyone's needs.

Please congratulate the ninth recipient of **The Helen Flanders Dunbar (1902-1959) Award for Significant Contributions to the Field of Clinical Pastoral Training**, a proud son of Tennessee, a Tennessee “Volunteer,” a man of hope and courage, **The Rev. Dr. John Edwin Harris**.

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 31:24; compare Psalm 27:14.

<sup>2</sup> on the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Helen Flanders Dunbar's & Anton Theophilus Boisen's "Schizophrenic Thinking: Psychiatric Examination"; actually titled as by "HFD and ATB," in folder by the same title, loose materials, Boisen Files – now renamed as the "Boisen Papers Collection" – at the Chicago Theological Seminary Library; as of 25 April 2010 this manuscript is not listed on the CTS Library website; this is not to be confused with what was called the "Boisen Papers" in the Menninger Foundation Archives – now filed under "Boisen, Anton" in "Collections of Individuals" under "Menninger Historic Psychiatry Collections" under "Menninger Ms. Collection and Supplementary Research Material" administered by the private Kansas State Historical Society for the governmental Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS.

Dunbar, H. Flanders. "The Clinical Training of Theological Students," Religion in Life, 4: 376-383, 1935.

Boisen, Anton Theophilus. Hymns of Hope and Courage [4<sup>th</sup> revised, enlarged (& final) edition]. Chicago: Chicago Theological Seminary, 1950; initially called Lift Up Your Hearts: A Service Book for Use in Hospitals. (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1926) then reissued in revised, enlarged editions as Hymns of Hope and Courage (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1932, 1937).

on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Anton Theophilus Boisen's Out of the Depths: An Autobiographical Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960

<sup>3</sup> Powell, Robert Charles. "Healing and Wholeness: Helen Flanders Dunbar (1902-59) and an Extramedical Origin of the American Psychosomatic Movement, 1906-36," doctoral dissertation, 347pp. Department of History, Duke University, April 1974. Ann Arbor: [University Microfilms >] ProQuest (order # 75-2415).

Powell, Robert Charles. "Dunbar, Helen Flanders," Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement 6: 1956-60. New York: American Council of Learned Societies, 1980. reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>

<sup>4</sup> Schultz, Jeanne. Colette. translated from the French by Edith V[aughn]. Flanders [1871-1963]. New York/Boston: T.Y. Crowell, 1898, pp. 201, 220, 223. [print-on-demand paperback exact reproduction of this specific translation: Colette. Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar/ BiblioLife, 2008.] [Jeanne Schultz is also listed under the pseudonym "Saint Hilaire Philippe".] [uniform title per the US Library of Congress: Saint Joseph, or, The Nine Days' Devotions of Colette] [A "neuvaine" or "novena" is a period of nine days spent in invoking a saint – a practice obviously following the example of Jesus' mother, Mary, and Jesus' Apostles in their praying during the nine days from Jesus' "Ascension" to "the Pentacost".]

Eighty-five years ago, in 1925, the novel, Colette, found new popularization via the movie, La Neuvaine de Colette, starring Mary Harris, later a producer of "The Brighter Day," the first religiously themed "soap opera" on network TV, from 1954 to 1962.

<sup>5</sup> Powell, Robert Charles. "Practical Theoretician: Conviction, Commitment, and Covenant" – Comments Honoring the Rev. Dr. Rodney J. Hunter – delivered at the 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy, Virginia Beach, VA, 30 March 2009.

As Solomon is said to have phrased it, "Through wisdom a house is built; through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled . . ." (Proverbs 24:3-4); compare, [G-d to Moses:] "... And I have filled him [the workman] with the spirit of G-d, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge . . ." (Exodus 31:3); compare, "By wisdom the earth's foundations were laid; by understanding the heavens were set in place; by knowledge the deeps were divided . . ." (Proverbs 3:19-20).

Oglesby, W. B., Jr. "Covenant and Contract," in Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling, expanded edition. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990, p.242.

<sup>6</sup> Thornton, Edward E. Being Transformed: An Inner Way of Spiritual Growth. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984, p.26.

Powell, Robert Charles. "Discerning Spirituality in Everyday Life – and Allowing Oneself to Be Transformed" -- Comments Honoring the Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Thornton – delivered at the 16<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy, North Little Rock, AR, 31 March 2008. On the internet at [http://www.pastoralreport.com/the\\_archives/2008/05/discerning\\_spir.html#more](http://www.pastoralreport.com/the_archives/2008/05/discerning_spir.html#more)

<sup>7</sup> Powell, Robert Charles. "How to Function as a Knowledgeable Professional AND Retain One's Soul" Comments Honoring Chaplain Henry G. Heffernan – delivered at the 15<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of The College for Pastoral

Supervision and Psychotherapy, Raleigh, NC, 29 March 2007. On the internet at <http://video.google.com> [under "Robert Powell, MD, PhD"] and at [http://www.pastoralreport.com/the\\_archives/2007/05/how\\_to\\_function\\_1.html#more](http://www.pastoralreport.com/the_archives/2007/05/how_to_function_1.html#more)

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 23:23; Micah 6:8.

Rumsfeld, Donald H. US Department of Defense news briefing, 12 February 2002. On the internet at <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2636> To make a very long story short, Rumsfeld's quote is a paraphrasing of a comment by Confucius (c.500 CE) quoted as "Analect 2.17" then recited by David Henry Thoreau in Walden, or, Life in the Woods (1854) as "To know that we know what we know, and that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge."

Powell, Robert Charles. "Religion IN Crisis / Religion AND Crisis: 'Having Strong Feelings without Being Self-Righteous'. A response to 'Christianity and Crisis: An Editor's History,' by Wayne H. Cowan," delivered at the 14<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of The College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy, Virginia Beach, VA, 30 March 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Powell 2009 op cit. for these two sentences.

Powell, Robert Charles. Anton T. Boisen (1876-1965): "Breaking an Opening in the Wall between Religion and Medicine", pp.47, special supplement to the AMHC Forum, 29(1), October 1976. The Association of Mental Health Chaplains [AMHC] merged with the College of Chaplains in May 1998 to form the Association of Professional Chaplains.

<sup>10</sup> Boisen 1960 op cit, p.51.

Hoopédia: The Basketball Wiki. "Tennessee Volunteers". Website accessed on 25 April 2010. "A UT athletic team was dubbed the Volunteers for the first time in 1902 by the Atlanta Constitution following a football game against Georgia Tech. The Knoxville Journal and Tribune did not use the name until 1905. By the fall of 1905 both the Journal and the Knoxville Sentinel were using the nickname."

<sup>11</sup> The reference obviously is to John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come (1678) – a book much loved by Boisen – and a book much compared to Dante's Commedia (c.1321) – a book much loved by Dunbar.

The notion of a person's two halves seeking to be re-united, while noted in Plato's Symposium, actually is credited to Aristophanes.

<sup>12</sup> These biographical details were conveyed to this author during an extensive e-mail exchange with the Rev. Dr. John Edwin Harris. Questions were sent to his wife, Mary Louise Harris, who would read the questions to her husband and then take down his verbatim responses. Because of his current medical condition this was an exhausting exercise, but all parties considered it important that Dr. Harris supply his own answers – and thus have these priceless quotes.

<sup>13</sup> Readers are encouraged to do a quick web search to get a sense of how proud various organization are to be members of "The Covenant Society for Pastoral Counseling".

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