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ABSTRACT

The Application of the Thinking of Paulo Freire to the development of Religious Education in British Schools

Eileen Elizabeth Bellett

The thesis begins with a critical analysis of Paulo Freire's work. Brief biographical details are followed by an outline of the roots of Freire's philosophy and an account of his specific literacy method. The study then concentrates on the broader educational perspectives behind his method in an attempt to show that, while his theory has situated origins, its applications are potentially much wider. The Thesis then moves on to an examination of the educational implications of Freire's concept of man. This shorter section is, nevertheless, important, as, for Freire - 'Every educational practice implies a concept of man and the world'. Central themes in Freire's 'vision of man' are examined and a critical evaluation of the more general educational implications of his concept, offered for consideration. The final section of the Thesis explores the implications of the thought of Paulo Freire for the development of Religious Education. Following a survey of main 'trends' in Religious Education from 1944 to the present day and an examination of the relationship between theology and approaches to Religious Education a new approach is suggested from the perspective of Paulo Freire, who, himself represents the inter-action of educational and theological ideas. Against the background of Liberation Theology, the study attempts to show that Freire makes a significant contribution to the development of Religious Education in terms of approach rather than method. Freire's 'Cultural Action for Freedom' is offered as an exciting and genuine opportunity for developments which represent a new unity between theory and praxis. Acknowledging the centrality of 'choice' the Thesis recognises that the new approach may ultimately be rejected, but concludes that the voice of Freire is a challenging one and one that invites us to make our starting point 'reality and not ideas'.

TITLE

"THE APPLICATION OF THE THINKING OF PAULO FREIRE
TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
IN BRITISH SCHOOLS"

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°Our Starting Point is Reality and Not Ideas°

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SECTION ONE

PAULO FREIRE, THE MAN, HIS METHOD
AND HIS EDUCATIONAL IDEAS

CHAPTER I - PAULO FREIRE - A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

"Reading the world precedes reading the word..... Language and reality are dynamically intertwined" (1)

To reach a critical understanding of the writings of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, it is important that here at the outset, the relationship between his text and his own context be made clear. To re-read the world of Paulo Freire is to more fully understand those essential moments of his life, which form a natural precursor to a reading of his word.

"Thought and study alone did not produce Pedagogy of the Oppressed; it is rooted in concrete situations....." (2)

Born in Recife in 1921, Freire recalls that particular world of childhood that was to prove so significant.

"I see myself in the average Recife house where I was born encircled by trees....."

The old house, its bedrooms, hall, attic, terrace = the setting for my mothers' ferns = the back yard where the terrace was located, all this was my first world. It was a colourful world whose texts, words, letters..... were incarnated in the song of the birds..... in the whistle of the wind..... the color of the foliage, the shape of the leaves, the fragrance of flowers" (3)

Animals were an integral part of the Freire family life too. Freire recalls the way the "family cats rubbed themselves coily against our legs" or "the ill-humour of Joli, my father's old black dog when one of the cats carelessly approached too near" (4)

In a paper originally presented at the opening of the Brazilian Congress of Reading in 1981, Freire recaptures many other aspects of those early Recife days when he did "not yet read words", (5) his fear of ghosts, the elegant gas-lamps in the old neighbourhood and the fragile light of the lamp-lighters taper as he walked through the shadowy streets. This then was Paulo Freire's world, the world out of whose familiarity he grew to that deep perception through the reading of the word. His parents, he says, taught him, by their love and example, to prize dialogue and the choices of others. His mother was a devout catholic, but his father was not and Freire says "it was precisely my parents



who introduced me to reading the word at a certain moment in this rich experience of understanding my immediate world." (6)

For Freire, reading flowed naturally from his particular world:

"I learned to read and write on the ground of the back yard of my house, in the shade of the mango tree with words from my world rather than from the wider world of my parents. The earth was my blackboard, sticks my chalk." (7)

Freire's family were middle class but suffered severe financial reversal in the Great Depression and the young Paulo experienced first hand what it meant to go hungry. It was this that made him resolve to dedicate his life "to the struggle against hunger, so that other children would not have to know the agony he was then experiencing." (8) Indeed his book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" is dedicated to "The oppressed, and to those who suffer with them and fight at their side." (9)

From those early days making words in the dust of his backyard, Freire moved on to Eunice Vascanellos private school and later, as a secondary school student, he recalls a fundamental moment in his adolescent experience.

"I would like to go back to a time when I was a secondary school student. There I gained experience in the critical interpretation of texts, read in class with the Portuguese teachers help..... Those moments did not consist of mere exercises aimed at our simply becoming aware of the existence of the page in front of us, to be scanned mechanically and monotonously spelled out, instead of truly read..... rather moments offered to our restless searching, including that of the young teacher, Jose Pessoa." (10)

After completing high school, Freire proceeded to Recife University, where he enrolled in the faculty of law and studied to be a teacher of Portuguese.

A doctoral thesis on the teaching of adult illiterates was submitted to the university in 1959 and he was later appointed to a chair in the history and philosophy of education. In 1962 he was made co-ordinator of a programme to promote adult literacy in Brazil. In the early 60's Brazil was a restless nation. Numerous reform movements were springing up and there was widespread illiteracy. Out of a population of 34.5 million, only 15.5 million could vote because eligibility for the franchise was dependent upon the ability to read and write. It was into this context that

Freire, in his capacity as Director of the National Literacy Programme, a now "eminent, influential and to some extent highly dangerous figure" (11), launched his culture circles. It was in these gatherings of groups of 'campesinos' that Freire and his colleagues arranged discussions on such topics as democracy, illiteracy, rationalisation etc, introducing the topics by means of pictures or slides which then led to a dialogue in which they exchanged viewpoints with non-literates. (A more detailed description of Freire's literacy method appears later.) Freire's teams worked throughout the country and claimed unqualified success for their literacy programmes. The Metodo Paulo Freire was even said to teach adult illiterates to read and write in as brief a time as 45 days. The secret of success lay in the fact that Freire's teams were not simply trying to teach the mechanics of reading. The Metodo Paulo Freire was concerned to present "participation in the political process through knowledge of reading and writing as a desirable and attainable goal for all Brazilians".(12)

For many however Freire's methods were outrageously radical and when, on April 1st 1964, the government was deposed by a military coup, Freire was arrested and jailed for around 70 days. Eventually he was granted political asylum in Bolivia but this was short lived, as, 15 days later, Bolivia also experienced a coup. And so it was, that in late 1964 Paulo Freire arrived in Chile, where he stayed some five years. Having become involved in the Chilean Agrarian Reform Corporation, Freire wrote up his Brazilian experience in the work 'Education - The Practice of Freedom', published in Rio in 1967. Two years later 'Extension or Communication' was published in which Freire examined the problems of Agrarian Reform.

It was, however, five years before this work appeared in English and it was preceded by another major work 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' in 1970. On leaving Chile in 1969, Freire accepted an invitation to be a visiting professor at the Harvard University Centre for Studies in Education and Development.

This move brought him into a different cultural experience, which had significant impact on his thought. America, at this time, gave Freire contact with other radical critics of education, such as Ivan Illich, and the American scene awakened in Freire the

realisation that repression and powerlessness were not only symptomatic of a third world culture. His message began to assume a wider significance and when, in 1970, he wrote a series of articles for 'The Harvard Educational Review', later published as 'Cultural Action for Freedom', Freire's work clearly showed this wider application. Writing in the introduction to that booklet, Freire states that although he began "as a man of the Third World....."(13) presuming to have a voice in the culture of silence, his message is to: "all those who, whether they live in these cultures which are wholly silenced or in the silent sectors of cultures which prescribe their voice, are struggling to have a voice of their own".(14)

So, the message begun in Latin America began to find echoes amongst the oppressed of the First World wherever, in fact, people attempted to redefine the reality in which they lived.

Having found a sympathetic audience for his ideas in North America, Freire spent the first half of the 1970's travelling all over the world, lecturing and devoting his efforts to assisting with the educational programmes of newly independent countries in Africa and Asia. He took up a new appointment as special consultant to the Office of Education at the World Council of Churches in Geneva and established the Institute of Cultural Action in 1971. One of the more recent publications of Freire's work published in 1978 under the title 'Pedagogy in Process' outlines his work in Guinea Bissau. Late in 1979 President Figuerido granted amnesty to 5000 Brazilian exiles and dissidents, including Freire and so, for the first time in fifteen years, he was able to revisit his homeland.

This brief outline of Freire's life and works has, hopefully, served to situate his thoughts and ideas in his own practice. Any understanding of Freire must have a grasp of the life-experience from which his theories have emerged and taken shape. Now in his sixties, those theories continue to emerge as Freire finds himself in that intense process of action and reflection.

More importantly, however, this introduction has attempted to show that what began with Freire's own work in North-East Brazil from a first-hand experience of hunger, success, repression and exile has, over the decades, spoken to a far wider audience of people everywhere who are trying to bring about a more humane social order. Freire is explicit that "the concept of the third world is ideological and political, not geographic".(15)

His own background is a necessary starting point but wherever education is discussed, Freire is relevant.

"He is a gadfly in the best Socratic tradition and speaks to every educator"(16)

CHAPTER II - "ROOTS"

A bare outline of the situation in which Freire grew up is insufficient for a complete understanding of the essential background to his thought.

"Understanding Freire not only requires us to unravel the complex fabric of his thought, but also to detect its origins, traditions and disparate borrowings."(1)

His thinking is a synthesis of many strands and it is precisely this rich diversity of origins that makes Freire's writing relevant on a wide scale. It is the purpose of this chapter to show that Freire's writing is not only of interest to Brazilians, by attempting to unravel that 'complex fabric of his thought'.

It would be an impossibility and not an over-fruitful exercise, to attempt to identify Freire's intellectual roots in their totality, but a broad framework of major influences is a possibility and a useful exercise. The introduction offered a sketchy view of the social, economic, political and educational melting pot in which Freire's theory was conceived - a little more detail with regard to the Latin American background is needed here.

a) Latin American Background

Freire saw Brazil as a society in transition, a society gradually opening up and experiencing a new sense of national cohesion and identity. He supported moves by Brazilian intellectuals to establish an authentic national culture and saw in the formation of ISEB (Institute Superior de Estudos Brasilleros) "an experiment of the greatest importance in graduate and university instruction"(2) ISEB intellectuals took Brazilian reality as their project, rather than perceiving it through European eyes. In this context Freire's work in literacy developed as "wholly consonant with the emerging Brazilian national consciousness"(3).

Alongside Brazilian nationalism, Freire, was also considerably influenced by European and North American liberalism. "Education, The Practice of Freedom", quotes from Popper, Dewey, Whitehead and Mannheim among others. From Popper, Freire gleaned his notion of Brazil in the process of opening and the idea that in this transitional phase education plays a crucial role. However, its role is limited - education is not in itself, capable of effecting the changes necessary to move a nation from one epoch to another. As

co-ordinator of The Adult Education Project at Recife, Freire demonstrated his indebtedness to Dewey and Mannheim. Freire's contention that "before it becomes a political term, democracy is a form of life"(4) is reminiscent of Dewey and he also endorses Mannheim's argument that "as democratic processes become more widespread, it is difficult and undesirable to allow the masses to stay in ignorance"(5). Hence, Freire's attempt to design an education programme aimed at producing a critical consciousness, or conscientizacao, so adults could actively participate in the "emerging forms of the democratic life"(6). Whitehead spoke of the transmission of inert ideas and Freire sought vitality in education. His analysis of conscientization in ⁶Education, the Practice of Freedom⁹, is located firmly within a liberal democratic framework. He closes ⁶Education, The Practice of Freedom⁹ with an affirmation of Mannheim's notion of militant democracy.

"A democracy which does not fear the people, which suppresses privacy, which can plan without becoming rigid, which defends itself without hate, which is nourished by a critical spirit rather than irrationality"(7) Later discussion of conscientization was couched in more revolutionary terms.

If the Latin American context, with its situation of dependence upon foreign culture forms the first major background to Freire's thought, modern theology and catholic radicalism contribute the second.

b) Theological Background.....

Key theologians had a substantial impact on Freire and, taken alongside the Brazilian phenomenon of grassroots, catholic, political and cultural movements for social change, these influences prepare us to see, without surprise, why a catholic like Freire calls into question, in a fundamental way, the failure of traditional education to produce Christians who can function as effective agents for change in contemporary society.

Freire's statements on God and the church are vigorous expressions of the need for social engagement and action by professing Christians.

He writes: "washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral".(8)

Or "I can't reconcile Christian love with the exploitation of human beings"(9)

In the best tradition of liberation theologians such as Juan Luis Segundo, Gustavo Gutierrez and others, Freire is concerned that the churches must address themselves to the here and now. In the tradition of Christ he rules out indifference to such questions as hunger, thirst, homelessness and expresses the desire that the Church practise what it preaches with fundamental urgency in tackling social reform.

Freire has little time for explanations of social injustice in terms of the 'Will of God'. "As a child, I knew many priests who went out to the peasants saying 'Be patient. This is God's will. And anyway, will earn heaven for you.' Yet the truth of the matter is that we have to earn our heaven..... we have to build our heaven, to fashion it during our lifetime, right now."(10)

Further, Freire declares, "God is an invitation to me to make history. God is thus a presence in history, he is not my boss but my friend."(11)

Freire's Christianity then is always an expression of compassionate active struggle for the liberation of humanity on earth.

The roots of Freire's Christian beliefs lie, not only in the papal encyclicals of 1961 and 1963 - *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*, both of which had profound consequences for the catholic world, marking a distinct shift in the definition of socialisation - but also in the theological writings of Teilhard de Chardin, Henrique de Lima Pe Vaz, Emanuel Mounier and R. Niebuhr. All helped Freire to clarify his thought on the church, religion and education.

"For Freire, the formulations of Teilhard and Vaz are crucial"(12).

Freire quotes Teilhard when he says that we are not only beings who know but⁶ beings who know they know⁷ (13). Echoing Vaz,

Freire contends "consciousness of and action upon reality are inseparable constituents of the transforming act by which people become beings of relation."(14)

Freire further uses Teilhard de Chardin's concept of hominisation to show that "In becoming hominised in the process of evolution, people become capable of having a biography".(15)

Early in his intellectual development, Freire read the works of Emmanuel Mounier, a French intellectual who was a catholic critic both of Christianity and of European rationalism.

Mounier sought to prove that "the impulse to recreate the world, which receives so much Christian disapproval, has a Christian origin".(16) Many of Mounier's themes, e.g. history has a meaning, history drives towards the betterment and liberation of mankind, man has 'glorious mission of being the agent of his own liberation' find expression in Freire.

Mounier stressed the Christian task of making visible the spiritual activity of their Creator - his personalism - was an optimistic perception of the world and a summons to action.

Mounier was further concerned with authenticity attained by honest choices and this emphasis underpinned the horror Freire, among others, felt, towards any attempt at curtailing the freedom of choice of the people. The impact of Mounier's work can most clearly be seen in Freire's concern to facilitate dialogue.

"Dialogue facilitates human communication by which people become 'available' to one another....."(17)

To impede such is to deny our authenticity. Alongside the writings of various theologians, the humanist orientation of the political stance taken by catholic radicals in Brazil was also endorsed by Freire. Social humanism was seen by him and many others, as far preferable to the politics expressed by the Brazilian Communist Party.

c) Freire's Own Politics

"In terms of broad political positions - conservative, liberal, socialist - Freire today would be firmly in the socialist camp"(18).

There are many diverse positions which can loosely be subsumed under the heading 'socialism' and most elements are at work in Freire's thought. There are three main areas of contribution:

- 1) humanist socialism
- 2) revolutionary socialism
- 3) Marxist socialism

There are many examples of humanist socialism in Freire. Adherents to the position believe in the ideal of human unity and "express an optimistic faith in the future of humanity".(19)

Freire goes further, "A pronounced characteristic of Freire's political and educational theory is the support he gives to charismatic revolutionary leaders".(20) Recognising that the dialectical relations between opposing classes can only be resolved through the struggle of the oppressed for their liberation, Freire endorses revolution as the central component of his pedagogy of the oppressed.

Robert Mackie maintains that "Paulo Freire's politics are most correctly conceived in terms of a revolutionary socialism. This has its initial roots in humanism and nationalism, but is radically transformed by his adoption of some aspects of Marx, espousal of revolution and violence, along with a clear recognition of the need for revolutionary leadership".(21)

The sources of Freire's revolutionary socialism are largely to be found by reference to the writings of Fromm, Memmi and Fanon. Freire draws on Fromm when he contends that the oppressed are 'fearful of freedom' because they have 'internalised and adopted the image of the oppressor'.

Memmi and Fanon feature prominently in Freire's analysis of oppression and liberation. Freire's work echoes Memmi's words, "I am unconditionally opposed to all forms of oppression. For me oppression is the greatest calamity of humanity. It diverts and pollutes the best energies of humanity - of oppressed and oppressor alike."(22) And further Memmi's description of the essential dilemma facing the oppressed, "It is not easy to escape mentally from a concrete situation to refuse its ideology, while continuing to live with its actual relationships."(23)

Fromm and Kermi bequeathed humanist legacies to Freire, but confronting revolution as a political solution brings Freire to Marx.

d) The Marxist Root

The Marxist critique of society is extremely popular among the Catholic Left in Latin America. Freire, as a Latin American, confronted by contrasts between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, is a ready receptacle for the Marxist view of history. Just as Marx affirmed that people change circumstances, so Freire locates the roots of his pedagogy in the need for critical intervention by the oppressed in their reality. For both Marx and Freire, language is consciousness in practice and consequently Freire's approach to literacy involves more than a mere mechanical domination of techniques. Consciousness and activity are, for Marx and Freire, a unity conceived in terms of revolutionary praxis. Freire understands that the revolutionary praxis he advocates will take place in a context of class conflict, but central to the struggle, in Freire's politics, is the role assigned to the revolutionary leaders. Leaders who have exerted a decisive influence on Freire include Mao, Castro, Che Guevara, Camillo Torres and Amilcar Cabral.

Mao Tse-tung's remark:

"We must teach the masses clearly what we have received from them^a confusedly, contains for Freire a whole dialogical theory. Of Guevara Freire writes:

"Che Guevara is an example of the unceasing witness revolutionary leadership gives to dialogue with the people....." Guevara did not hesitate to recognise the capacity to love as an indispensable condition for authoritative revolutionaries"(24).

Mao, Castro, Guevara, are symbolic, for Freire, of the leadership he desires.

Freire does not pay the same degree of attention to the political and economical bases of power as does Marx. Mackie maintains "Freire deserts Marx at the very point where Marx is most effective"(25).

e) Existentialism

Finally, any treatment of essential background to Freire's thought would be incomplete without reference to the Existential root. Freire quotes liberally throughout his works from Sartre, Jaspers, Heidegger, Camus, Buber and Marcel. Freire's concern for 'true acts of knowledge', for authenticity in education for freedom for men and women to become subjects, for a horizontal relationship of mutual trust characterised by dialogue-all are existentialist themes. He endorses Karl Jaspers:

"dialogue is the only way, not only in the vital questions of political order but in all expressions of our being"(26).

Dialogue, as the essential tool for subjects who not only interpret the world but seek to transform it, owes much in definition to Martin Buber's 'I-Thou' relationship - one of pure dialogue, "... the dialogical I, however, knows that it is precisely the thou.... which has called forth his own existence.... The I and Thou thus become, in the dialectic of these relationships, two thous which become two I's."(27)

Freire's literacy programme is largely based on the insight that "the oppressed can only perceive how they have been conditioned when they are confronted with problems arising from their existential situation".(28) He repudiates what he terms the banking concept of education or what Sartre calls the 'digestive' or 'nutritive' concept of education. Indeed his literacy programme is an application of Sartre's critique that 'to know is to eat'. The nutritionist view of education is exemplified in those literary programmes concerned with the illiterate as being "thirsty for words". For Freire, such programmes understand people as mere objects of the literacy process. He draws a sharp distinction. "To be an act of knowing" says Freire, "the adult literacy process must engage the learners in the constant problematising of their existential situations".(29)

In summary, therefore, Brazilian, Catholic, Marxist, existentialist - Freire is influenced by all of these. The variety of sources drawn on by Freire and the numerous intellectual and philosophical strands present in his work must serve to illustrate that his

thought is much more than parochial. His is an intellect both curious and provocative. He has been called many things - 'a Theologian in disguise', 'an idealist', 'a communist', but his multi-coloured philosophy can only challenge those who encounter him_x to a re-appraisal of their own viewpoint.

This survey of important themes and influences now leads us to a more detailed, critical examination of his method and underlying philosophy.

CHAPTER 3 - "THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ACT OF READING" - An Outline of
the Literacy Metodo Paulo Freire

There are two ways of looking at Freire. The first is to focus on his specific literacy method and the second is to examine the ways in which he arrived at that method. An analysis of the broader educational issues which lie behind the Freire Literacy programme will constitute the greater part of this present study as it is precisely through such a procedure that the wider applications of his work can possibly lead us to a new approach to the teaching of children in general, and Religious Education in particular. However, at this stage, and in order to equate theory with practice, a brief outline of the literacy method is considered necessary.

The Literacy Method

Freire first launched his literacy programme in the villages and slums of Recife with a group of five illiterates "of which two dropped out on the second or third day"(1). Prior to the commencement of his programme, Freire had long been convinced, along with Mannheim, that "as democratic processes become widespread, it becomes more and more difficult to permit the masses to remain in a state of ignorance" .(2) The realisation that a definition of ignorance could not be limited to illiteracy but necessitated the inclusion of the masses' lack of participation in the historical process, lead Freire, from the beginning, to "reject the hypothesis of a purely mechanistic literacy programme".(3) He wished to offer the people an introduction to the democratization of culture, a programme in which they were subjects in the act of knowing and not mere recipients of donated texts. In Freire's own words "We wanted to offer the people the means by which they could supersede their magic or naive perception of reality by one that was predominantly critical".(4)

With these aims in mind, how did Freire and his colleagues set about implementing their method? First, and foremost, acceptance was sought of certain necessary conditions by the political authorities, in the specific locality where the literacy programme was to take place. Freire describes these conditions when relating

details of his latest literacy work in Sac Tome and Principe. "Perhaps I should say a word about how I understand my relationship as a consultant to a government that has requested my assistance. Neither my wife nor I regard a consultant as a cold neutral, uncommitted figure..... on the contrary, it seems to us that the consultant's role is a political one..... It is our position therefore, that agreement on fundamentals is indispensable to the consulting relationship. I would find it impossible, for example, to collaborate even minimally on a literacy campaign sponsored by a government that does not represent the people."(5)

Having assured themselves of shared common ground, and gained assurance that there will be no partisan interference, the next step in the implication of the Metodo Paulo Freire is to investigate the life and vocabulary of the community concerned. With this as a priority, Freire's teams would visit the area and gather together significant words used by the community. This research was carried out by means of informal encounters with the local inhabitants and often interviews revealed unexpected discoveries about the exuberance and beauty of the people's language. The archives of research teams working in North East Brazil are full of such examples. "I want to learn to read and write", said an illiterate from Recife, "so that I can stop being the shadow of other people."(6), or "I have the school of the world", (7) said an illiterate from Southern Brazil.

From this field vocabulary research and not from the educator's personal inspiration, a list of generative words was constructed. These words were chosen with a double criterion in mind:

- a) a word's emotional impact and capacity to generate discussion and
- b) its syllabic value, i.e. its potential to unfold phonetic difficulties for the learner and its peculiar construction, - they all had three syllables.

Freire and his colleagues decided that no more than seventeen words are necessary for teaching adults to read and write such languages as Portuguese or Spanish. Having chosen the generative words, careful analysis was brought to bear on the sequence in which the

words were to be presented - words that named concrete or familiar objects appeared first, whilst those naming more abstract social and political realities appeared later in the list.

The next phase in the development of the literacy programme involved the creation of "codifications". Codification was the method by which representations of typical situations encountered by members of the group were projected on to slides or pictures. These representations then functioned as challenges containing, as they did, coded problem situations to be 'decoded' by the participants with the aid of the co-ordinator (teacher). The generative words were set into the relevant codifications. Freire gives the example of the word 'tijolo' (brick) as a first generative word placed in a situation. The 'situation' described is one representing construction work. After discussing the pictorial representation, shown first without the word tijolo - a discussion involving a wide range of topics generated by the picture - such as building with bricks, their own homes, better housing etc. - a second picture is introduced showing the construction scene alongside the word tijolo. In the third picture the word tijolo appears in isolation and thereafter as ti-jo-lo. Beginning with the first syllable the group is motivated to learn the whole phonetic family, resulting from the combination of the initial consonant with other vowels and so on with the second and third families introduced from the syllables jo and lo. The most important moment arises when the three families are presented together:

ts-te-ti-to-tu

ja-je-ji-jo-ju

la-le-li-lo-lu

One by one the group then begin to 'make' words with the combinations available. The presentation of the three families is called the 'card of discovery'.

It is important to note here that Freire and his colleagues chose to avoid the use of books or primers on the grounds that these were mechanical - did not lend themselves to flexibility in discussion. Freire felt that such primers discouraged people from expressing and writing their own ideas and words. To underline his view in

Cultural Action for Freedom Freire puts forward examples from the reading texts being used by the official adult literacy campaigns in rural and urban Latin America. Students in these schemes studied such texts as 'Eva saw the grape' or 'If you hammer a nail, be careful not to smash your finger'. Freire comments: "Analysis of these texts reveals then, a simplistic vision of men, of their world, of the relationship between the two, and of the literacy process which unfolds in that world." (8) Such texts then deprive the illiterate of "authentic dimension as thought language in dynamic interplay with reality..... They are not authentic expressions of the world." (9)

Contrast these with the reading matter used in the Metodo Paulo Freire, a reading matter created by the students themselves who, writing words with their tools on the dirt roads where they were working, composed their words from the syllabic combinations they had learnt. These "sowers of the word" (10) not only wrote words, they discussed ideas and came to understand a little better their role in the world.

"Before the Agrarian reform my friend I didn't even think. Neither did my friends"

"Why?" we asked.

"Because it wasn't possible. We lived under orders. We only had to carry out orders. We had nothing to say." (11)

Or from another member of a literacy "culture circle":

"When all this land belonged to one Latifundio there was no reason to read and write. We weren't responsible for anything. The boss gave the orders and we obeyed. Why read and write? Now it's a different story. Take me, for example. In the asentamiento, I am responsible not only for my work, like all the other men, but also for tool repairs. When I started I couldn't read, but I soon realised that I needed to read and write. You can't imagine what it was like to go into Santiago to buy parts. I couldn't get orientated. I was afraid of everything - afraid of the big city..... Now it's all different." (12)

In 1968, a Uruguayan team published a small book 'You Live as You Can' - the contents of which were taken from tape recordings of literacy classes. The whole book is an expression of the thought world of the authors, the 'sowers of words', who were in the process of emerging from the culture of silence.

Freire writes: "Yes, these ought to be the reading texts for people learning to read and write and not 'Eve saw the grape..... Intellectualist prejudices and above all class prejudices, are responsible for the naive and unfounded notions that the people cannot write their own texts....."(13)

How did the literacy method function? A place to meet was arranged, co-ordinators were carefully selected and trained, a circle of culture was formed comprising 25-30 non-literates. When the group convened, the following procedure was inaugurated. Meetings were held every week night for 6-8 weeks. The first 2-8 sessions were devoted to analysing 16 key pictures, at the next session the first generative word was introduced and at the end of the session participants were encouraged to make up new words from the card of discovery. At the remaining sessions other generative words were introduced, one at a time.

What were the results of Paulo Freire's literacy campaign? Freire himself comments, "We were amazed by the results."(14), and during the twenty first hour of study one of the non-literates wrote confidently, "I am amazed at myself." Cynthia Brown writes, "Those who finished the literacy course perhaps three-quarters of those who began, could read and write simple texts, make something of the local newspapers and discuss Brazilian problems."(15)

A participant in Rio Grande de Norte, discussing the fact that he and his comrades knew how to brand their names, commented, "It means to copy our name..... we learn it by heart..... we have to brand our names - the landlord gets us a voting certificate and sends us to vote for whom he wants..... But now, we are going to unbrand our names, to really learn to write and then vote for whom we want."(16)

The military coup in Brazil in 1964 terminated the literacy programme. Freire's involvement in literacy programmes in later years in many places around the world and most recently in Guinea Bissau, have shown that each programme has to be carefully planned in the specific context of the country concerned. Adult literacy programmes can not simply be a transference of the Brazilian method. Nevertheless, the Freire method has had continued success in different environments and has served to reinforce Freire's belief that a prime motive in any literacy campaign must be to enable the participants to stand apart from their situation. Particularly significant is a memory Freire recalls of a culture circle in a small fishing community in Monte Mario. The generative word 'bonito', a local fish, had been codified by means of a picture showing the village with its typical houses, boats and a fisherman holding a bonito. The class studied the picture then four members looked out of the window to the world outside and said "It's Monte Mario..... That's what Monte Mario is like and we didn't know it."(17)

In that moment, the participants had assumed the position of 'observing subjects'. They had put distance between themselves and the world and come to know it in a new way.

Literacy in 30 hours? An evaluation of The Paulo Freire Method in these terms alone would constitute a gross underestimation. Hopefully, this brief outline has initiated the process of uncovering the wider social, educational implications of Freire's methodology. At the outset, it must be made clear that we are not dealing here with a mere set of new literacy jargon. True, by replacing teacher with co-ordinator, lectures with dialogue, pupils with group participants, classes with culture circles, the impression can easily be given that this is simply an interesting word game. Yet, the crux of the matter can be perceived in Freire's own words that: "I always saw teaching adults to read and write as a political act, an act of knowledge and therefore as a creative act."(18) This is the significant contribution of Paulo Freire that "learning to read is a political act"(19). Through the culture circles in the villages of Brazil, Chile, Guinea, Bissau and elsewhere, Freire has demonstrated that the

chief aim of his literacy process is not merely the technical mastery of the written word - as he says in *Cultural Action for Freedom*:

"Only someone with a mechanistic mentality which Marx would call grossly mechanistic, could reduce adult literacy learning to a purely technical action."(20)

Freire was concerned to bring about a quality of consciousness, a changed awareness which people could express through language and action. Having convinced the people of their own worth:

"I make shoes and now I see that I am worth as much as the PhD who writes books."(21)

or:

"Tomorrow", said a street sweeper in Brasilia, "I'm going to go to work with my head high."(22)

Freire made it possible for them to rediscover the value of their own person, Freire's aim was to show his group participants that they were, in fact, makers of their own culture. Through discussion of the key pictures depicting the difference between nature and culture, Freire's colleagues demonstrated that however denuded of dignity, men can know as conscious beings, can act on the world and transform it. This transformation from a naive magical almost fatalistic view of the world prevalent among the illiterate members of the culture circles was Freire's main objective in the application of his literacy method.

For Freire:

"acquiring literacy does not involve memorising sentences, words and syllables - lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe - but rather an attitude of creation and recreation, a self transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context."(23)

Thus, the pictures of existential situations enabled people to reflect on their former interpretation of the world.....

"It's Monte Mario and we didn't know it..... before going on to read the word."(24)

Learning to read, for Freire, is simply a matter of assembling written expression for what can be said orally.

The concept of conscientization is crucial to any understanding of Freire's literacy programme and educational aims. When education and literacy liberate, they shatter the silence and bring people to an awareness of their condition and to their democratic rights to participate in making decisions regarding the problems of their existence.(25)

By increasing self-awareness, self confidence, Freire was concerned to develop an emergent understanding - an understanding of the illiterates' significance in the world. This deliberate aim of awakening people from the dehumanising effects of life brings to the fore the undeniable political content of Freire's literacy programme. The only valid form of literacy training is one which enables the learner to intervene in reality to demythologise and decode their culture. Thus, "When adults learn to read and write, they begin to take initiative in shaping history in the same way that they begin to remake themselves."(26)

The learner is not a mere recipient of the teacher's word, he is encouraged to speak his own word,
 "Learning to read and write ought to be an opportunity for men to know what speaking the word really means."(27)

It is not sufficient to dominate reading and writing techniques, questions need to be answered about what is written and why. Freire certainly wanted to teach adult illiterates the techniques of the reading process but, as has been shown, more than that, he wished to present people with a clearer world view and a greater understanding of their own life-situations. It would be a mistake to evaluate Freire's contribution in purely 3rd world terms. We, in the first world, can re-think some of the basic assumptions, which underlie our educational process. Those of us who are engaged in the task of teaching can learn from Freire that we can give (children) the power to be the "architects of their own liberation".(28) Too often children leave our schools, having

mastered the literacy technique, but far from literate. Wayne O'Neil puts forward the following plea:

"Let them learn to read. Don't teach them, let it emerge as they go about talking and telling of the riches they already possess..... Keep all the words and the world together and them involved in it."(29)

This is the value of the Freire approach. It is an approach which binds inextricably the reading of the world with the reading of the word. It recognises the need for those who have "been denied the right to speak their word, to reclaim it".(30)

CHAPTER 4 AN EXAMINATION OF THE CENTRAL THEMES IN FREIRE'S
EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

"In the United States, we are gradually becoming aware of the work of Paulo Freire, but thus far, we have thought of it primarily in terms of its contribution to the education of illiterate adults in the Third World. If, however, we take a closer look, we may discover that his methodology as well as his educational philosophy are as important for us as for the dispossessed in Latin America?" (1)

What are some of the central principles around which Freire's pedagogy is based? Thus far, this study has focused on Freire's literacy method and although Freire's main concern has been the analysis of the needs and interests of adult illiterates, he nevertheless insists that those same philosophical considerations should permeate all education.

"It is not a matter of memorizing and repeating given syllables, words and phrases, but rather of reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself and on the profound significance of language." (2)

The intention here is to examine those themes in Freire's educational thought which have that wider significance but, more especially, those which are most relevant to the subject of Religious Education teaching in British schools. Aspects of Freire's own authentic perspective on education will be critically explored in a general fashion at this stage and more singularly pedagogical issues relevant to religious education will be examined, in detail, in the final section of this study. Above all the aim is to provide new insight, fresh hope and provocative models as we face our own educational situation and not simply to recommend a simple transference of the Freire method - this would be a misrepresentation. If, however, we can take time to distance ourselves from our own educational scene we may yet find ourselves involved in a re-appraisal of the very meaning and method of education as "over the years (Freire) has engaged in a process of study and reflection and has produced something quite new and creative in education philosophy". (3)

a) The Impossibility of Neutrality

"..... neutral education cannot exist - in whatever field."(4)

Any appreciation of the work of Paulo Freire must take into account the fact that his emphasis on the non-neutrality of education represents one of his most fundamental theses. A personal footnote endorsing the words "education cannot be neutral" in an article entitled 'Education: domestication or liberation' reveals that Freire himself considered this issue central:

"I have insisted on this point in various different studies."(5)

What does Freire intend the reader to understand by this contention?

Behind his statement lies an even more fundamental belief:

"Every educational practice implies a concept of man and the world."(6) Freire's concept of man and the world is an optimistic one - he opts for a belief in man's potential to be more, in his ability not only to name the world but to transform it. His option then is for the liberation of man. Beginning thus from a 'theory of man', Freire presents all education as falling into one of two categories:

"Education cannot be neutral..... its role will always be either in the service of the 'domestication' of men or their 'liberation'" (7). What does Freire mean by the 'domestication' of man? What view of man does such an educator possess whose theoretical stance, whether he is aware of it or not, is for the 'domestication' of man? Education for domestication is synonymous with a specific view of the nature of reality. Such a view is founded on a belief that concrete reality consists only of physical things and that people and reality together exist only as objects to be analysed as though "the world were an anatomy laboratory in which a body is analysed".(8) The aim of such an educational perspective is, according to Freire, quite clear. It is an option for conformity, the preservation of the existing structure and a means to enable people to fit in with the status quo. Systematic education constitutes, for Freire, a superstructure and functions as "an instrument to maintain the infra-structure in which it is generated".(9) This is the basis for the non-viability of educational neutrality. A domesticating education will,

consequently only adapt new generations to the social system it serves and it is this view of education - as an instrument for social control - which characterises domestication. "... thus education for domestication imposes the mythification of the world instead of its truth."(10)

What is the alternative? The opposite to education for domestication is education for 'liberation'. This view does not see reality as a mere fact, but rather "includes the ways in which the people involved with these facts perceive them."(11) In this way, the people are not objects but subjects in the act of knowing. The aim of 'education for liberation' is not, therefore, the maintenance of the status quo but rather the radical transformation of society. In the process of humanising liberation, "action and reflection and dialogue actually begin to transform the social cultural realities of one's life".(12)

Freire's own educational theory regarding the impossibility of a neutral education is thus very clear cut. In the Brazilian situation in which he worked his purpose was to bring about "cultural action for freedom". The success of his practice cannot be denied but can the themes of his educational theory be verified under wider scrutiny? John Elias offers a timely reminder here: "... success in practice obviously does not mean truth and consistency in theory..."(13)

There are several questions arising from the Freirian statement that there can be no neutral education. What of those subjects which, by definition, imply an impartial view? Scientific research must surely deal with subject matter in an objective fashion? Indeed, if people are invited to participate in the research, results will not be in the pure form required. Freire would counter such objections with the following statements: "We could add to all this, the myth that science is neutral, that the scientist is impartial, the myth of what must necessarily come out of his lack of preoccupation with the aims laid on the results of his activity as a scientist."(14)

The neutrality of science thus constitutes a myth. The possibility of any kind of 'results in a pure form' from the research of social scientists is similarly dismissed. To think of science or technology as neutral is, for Freire, to think only in terms of productivity and people as objects of research. "This is a bourgeois policy, a capitalist method..... It is deplorable to find people calling themselves social scientists thinking like that."(15) It is at such a point that Freire's philosophy is most vulnerable. Although there is merit in his statement that "the very scientists writing up their own research..... cannot escape from their own subjectivity."(16) and a salutary lesson to be learned in his warning that an over emphasis on neutral technology relegates people to the role of objects, there is, nevertheless, a tendency demonstrated here to see fundamental issues in a very polarised way. This leads on to a further question - Can education be evaluated in such hard and fast terms? Does Freire's experience in the Third World cloud his vision, in that he sees no grey areas, only black and white? The educational process, he says, functions in one of two ways, as either an instrument of domestication, or liberation. His major works are peppered with diametrically opposed alternatives. He speaks of 'dominator and dominated, oppressor and oppressed, subject and object'. William S Griffiths has commented:

"Freire sees only 'good guys' and 'bad guys', he acknowledges no middle ground."(17)

There is a danger in applying simplistic oppressor and oppressed dichotomy to all societies.

If it is impossible to talk about the neutrality of education, the neutrality of the church is also a non-starter. Freire writes: "When they insist on the neutrality of the church, in relation to history, or to political action, they take political stands, which inevitably favour the power elite, against the masses. 'Washing one's hands' of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral."(18)

Here again, Freire recognises only two opposing views on any problem. Is his perspective on reality an over-simplification? At times

his Third World practice represents a strength - that unity of theory and practice seldom found - at other times it restricts the more general application of his theory. In the Western World, issues can rarely be so simply categorised in terms of one kind of relationship. The rigid 'Victorian' concept of right and wrong as absolutes finds little support in the 'woolly' area of moral issues 1984-style. "The mistakes made by too facile a translation of Freire's methods into other cultural situations could be minimised by a more pluriform theory of relationships."(19)

Any insistence on the non-neutrality of education must beg the question: Is all education political education? In a conversation with Professor Ian Lister Freire remarked:

"I would like to say this to teachers. By teaching, they are engaged in a political process, so they have to be clear about this in order to make their choice..... Educators should know they are political beings."(20)

Traditionally, education has claimed a politically neutral stance and consequently Freire's words have a surprising, if not revolutionary, ring to them. It would be easy to dismiss his words, relegating them to only Third World significance, but a closer look at what Freire is saying here could have a profound impact on the development of our own educational philosophy. If education is both a political and cultural act based either consciously or unconsciously on a theory of man, Freire challenges us to examine the actual politics of education and the way in which those politics educate us.

"Freire's greatest potential contribution to the reform of American Education, however, lies perhaps in his challenge to us to probe the view of man on which we base our education as well as our political structures and processes."(21)

Certainly, Freire leads us to examine that set of assumptions on which rests the institution of school and in turn to an evaluation of these assumptions. He reminds us that:

"Education cannot be reduced to the activities of schools and universities because we cannot think of Education without thinking of power, political power."(22)

It may well be that previous attempts to reform aspects of our educational system have had only limited success as a result of failure to recognise that political power. Freire challenges us to analyse schools in terms of their total connection with the dominant culture.

"His direct concern with education as a means for political and cultural change challenges the concept that political change must precede educational change - that it is necessary to alter political control before anything meaningful can happen educationally."(23)

"Recognition that all education is political education does not, however, lead to an overt party-political stance on the part of teachers, as some have thought."(24) "Where the educational practice is such that social structures are not discussed as a problem to be unveiled, the role of the educator must not be to impose liberty but to respect the right of the educators to choose and to 'learn how to choose by choosing'."(25)

Can a neutral stance be legitimately upheld? Freire clearly states that any claim to neutrality in the field of education is an illusion - a smokescreen to mask the interests of entrenched groups. Those who make such claims are, says Freire, either naive or subtle.

The naive view is one that maintains that the hearts of men can be transformed, while the social structures which make those hearts 'sick' are left unchanged. The subtle share this view but "mask a realistic understanding behind a claim of neutrality."(26)

Both groups are caught up in the ideology of the ruling classes and therefore not neutral. As far back as 1940, F Clarke wrote: "If the word 'ideology' had not already been ruined for any precise use (having been employed so much recently as equivalent to 'creed' or 'doctrine') we might cite English writers upon education as illuminating examples of it. For strictly, it would seem, the word applies to exactly this phenomenon - the undetected influence upon what is supposed to be generalized thought of the interests and attitudes of national, class and other groups by which the writer or thinker has been formed."(27)

Freire calls attention to this 'undetected influence'.

The pretence of neutrality can be sustained by the introduction of modernising techniques. Freire rejects palliative reforms - those which can be reduced to liberating students from blackboards, static classes and text book curricula by offering them projectors, more dynamic classes and a new technico professional style teaching. These so-called neutral techniques are still instruments for the domestication of men. Such modernising has been one of the guises employed by the church to lay claim to neutrality. Freire calls on the church to be 'prophetic'.

"Because it thinks critically this prophetic church cannot think of itself as neutral."(28)

The prophetic position demands an ideological choice - a critical analysis of the social structures in which conflict takes place and in this respect can never be neutral.

Is it sufficient then to merely state as a fact 'Education is not neutral'. Not so. This is only the starting point. Awareness of the fact is not knowledge of it, and it is possible that even perception of the fact can lead those who so perceive the true role of education to disguise it and still opt for domestication. Freire offers the prophetic approach as a means to education for liberation. It lays no claim to neutrality and as such represents a risk. It demands that we go beyond deceptive appearances, that we detect influences and seek the *raison d'être* of facts; the relationship between different facts and the totality of which they are a part.

"It is fundamental for us to know that when we work on the content of the curriculum when we discuss methods and processes, when we plan, when we draw up educational policies, we are engaged in political acts which imply an ideological choice. Whether it is clear or obscure is not important."(29)

What then is the value of a non-neutral view of education? How can it help us in an appraisal of our own educational aims? If education is to be for liberation. Freire invites us to consider the proper relationship between education and social criticism. George S Counts wrote: "Dare the schools build a new social order?"

The word 'dare' here is significant. It has already been implied that education for liberation involves risk. It is a risky business because such an option involves a commitment to the idea that education should prepare those involved in it to create a society with fewer imperfections than the present one. In this respect education might be deliberately designed to counteract the dominant values of the larger environment. It runs the risk of being categorised as subversive or anarchic. Critical consciousness may lead to disorder. Should education take on this critical role? If so what role should the teacher play? To what extent must the educator direct his energies toward counteracting dominant values when he judges them to be unjust. This is a constant dilemma: "how to free the child yet shape it; how to free the child from indoctrination into a kind of society that we want to change and yet to shape it for the fight for freedom and for change".(31)

There is no easy answer. Traditionally, schools have tended to be a conservative force in society, designed to support the status quo. Theoretically we assert that students should be helped to learn how to think critically but in practice critical thinking is often restricted. It is again that element of risk. If we assume a position of non-neutrality, the price may well be the loss of stability. What Freire is saying is that the alternative - play it safe, don't rock the boat etc. only leads to a domesticating education - bland, safe, respectable, non-controversial.

"The highest purpose of education is not to train students for specific roles, but to help them gain some understanding of the meaning of their lives and to become more sensitive to other people."(32)

It is an approach worth testing.

A final question needs to be answered: "Is the Freire method itself indoctrinative, domesticating or manipulative. Does he simply impose on people another view of reality?" Some critics have been led to believe that Freire's insistence that there is no such thing as neutral education implies that his own educational practice pretends to a neutrality not possessed by others. This

is not the case. Freire's own pedagogy is also partial but significantly it is 'partial in favour of humanisation'.(33)

Freire raises the important question of whether it is possible, or even desirable, to educate in a value free manner. His contention is that it is not. He confronts our pre-conceived notions of neutrality, exposes them for the illusion they are and offers an alternative. He would no doubt endorse the view of the writer to the churches at Laodicea:

"You are neither cold nor hot. I could wish that you were either cold or hot. But since you are lukewarm..... I intend to spit you out of my mouth."(34)

There can be no 'lukewarm' in the Freire approach.

b) Conscientization

"..... my actual crime was that I treated literacy as more than a mechanical problem and linked it to conscientizacao, which was 'dangerous'."(35)

Although the concept of 'conscientization' is fundamental to Freire's understanding of both literacy and education, he is not, as is generally thought, the author of the term. The word in fact originated from a series of discussions held by professors at ISEB (Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros) and it was Helder Camera, the Brazilian Bishop, who spread it and translated it into English. However, Freire himself endorses the view that the concept is central in any examination of his educational ideas.

"..... when I heard the word 'conscientization' for the first time, I immediately realised the depth of its meaning because I was absolutely convinced that education, as a practice of freedom, is an act of knowing, a critical approach to reality, necessarily then, this word became part of the vocabulary with which I express my pedagogical thought."(36)

What is conscientization?(37) (Its Brazilian form, keeping its original spelling 'conscientizacao' is probably more accurate.)

Firstly, conscientization^o is a process; it is that process through which men as 'knowing subjects' achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality."(38)

The term has its origin in the word 'conscious' and is therefore closely related to the understanding one has of consciousness in its relationships with the world. The process seeks to affirm, seriously, the social dimensions of any theory of human learning. Two schools of thought on this issue are significant here. One can be traced back to Marx and the other to Freud. Both are, however, agreed that man is victimised by 'false consciousness' from which he must be freed, in order to be fully human. For Marx, it is the exploitative social reality which produces the false consciousness, whereas for Freud, false consciousness is the result of the projection of illusions on to the cultural reality. Paulo Freire's conscientization process derives from the former school of thought. He uses a Marxist analysis in his theory of consciousness. He calls the lowest level of consciousness 'intransitive consciousness'. This primary stage is characterised by a pre-occupation with man's most elementary needs. It is a spontaneous approach to the world and not a critical one.

"At this level of spontaneity, man simply experiences himself with that reality which is with him - his mind does not yet take a critical stand."(39)

The next stage can be defined as the post-primary or 'magical consciousness' stage. Elsewhere, Freire also uses the term 'semi-intransitive'. This is the prevalent level of consciousness to be found in the emerging societies of the Third World. It is the consciousness of the culture of silence, characterised by a fatalistic mentality, "which leads men to fold their arms, resigned, to the impossibility of resisting the power of facts".(40). As a serious questioning of the concrete situation begins, however, the third level of "naive or semi-transitive consciousness is reached. At this point there is indeed a perception of reality which includes a certain kind of knowledge of it. This is the 'doxa' referred to by the Greeks and is the level of opinion or belief. It is not yet 'conscientizacao'. The Metodo Paulo Freire was an attempt to offer the people the means by which they could supersede their naive perception, so that they could assume a predominantly critical attitude - they could exchange their

partial doxa for the full logos of reality. Freire refers to the former level as the 'prise de conscience' and it is only through the process of conscientization that the highest level of critical consciousness is reached. Conscientizacao is thus the deepening of the 'prise de conscience' and implies going through the spontaneous stage to a critical one.

"The more one acquires conscientizacao, the more one discovers reality." (41)

Conscientization cannot exist without praxis. Action and reflection characterise Human praxis and it is for this reason that man can look at the world from a distance. Critical consciousness is, therefore, the authentic union of action and reflection - not brought about by intellectual effort alone but through praxis. Conscientization does not stop at the stage of 'the revelation of reality - it is not something which is, but something which is becoming and, therefore, a process. Freire has, more recently, been self-critical in this respect. In a talk entitled "An invitation to conscientization and deschooling", he comments on the fact that he had previously considered the moment when social reality is revealed to be sufficient psychological motive for attempting to transform reality:

"It was as if I were saying that to discover reality already meant to transform it." (42)

However, in later works he does not take the same position and warns against educators who do not see the political implications. It is impossible, says Freire, to talk of a 'strictly pedagogical conscientization'.

"Learning, for Freire, is the total process of becoming aware of the concrete situation in which one lives, understanding how that situation may be changed, then acting to change the situation." (43)

Conscientization in Freire's own Practice

For Freire literacy and post literacy training represent both the tool and the result of conscientization. The formation of the culture circles was carried out under the firm conviction that the problem of teaching adults to read must be examined in relation to the "awakening of their consciousness". (44) The reading programme thus attempted to move learners from naivete to critical analysis

through the literacy process. The method was, therefore, an introduction to the democratisation of culture. Men were considered as subjects capable of engaging in relations with the world. Freire took people at the point of their emergence from a naive perception of reality and helped them move to critical transitivity through dialogue and the use of fresh content and new techniques such as 'codification'. Through decoding Freire writes: "the learners gradually, hesitatingly and timorously place in doubt the opinion they held of reality and replace it with a more and more critical knowledge."(45)

The circle of culture was not, in itself, the sole instrument in the development of critical consciousness. Freire himself notes that this awareness occurred in the concrete context of their lives? What the theoretic context or culture circles did offer was the reason for their exploited condition. The Metodo Paulo Freire was one which aimed to be both the instrument of the learner as well as of the educator, it emphasised that in educating adults one must make it possible for them to achieve critical consciousness "so that they can teach themselves to read and write". (46) The Post Literacy phase was further developed to encourage what Aldous Huxley termed the 'art of dissociating ideas' - in this way participants were helped to distinguish between education and propoganda.

What is the Relevance of the Process of Conscientization for our own Educational Practice?

It would be tempting to dismiss the process of conscientization as something specifically Third World or to conclude that it refers only to specific literacy methods in the training of Latin American adults. A similar error would be the often argued contention that conscientization is inappropriate in complex societies. Such an assertion disguises the mistaken claim that Third World societies are not in themselves complex. Freire himself has said: "Conscientization is not a privilege of the Third World, since it is a human phenomenon."(47)

All human beings are, by virtue of being human, involved in a permanent process of conscientization. What does change is the context and objectives of conscientization. It is true, nevertheless that in attempting to see the wider implications of Freire's

conscientization concept, several ambiguities and distortions have occurred. Some educators have given to the conscientization process, powers that it has not. The word itself has assumed almost supernatural properties seen to operate as a kind of magic wand, capable of healing social injustice by changing the conscience of men and women. When the 'spell' is broken the very role of subjectivity and capacity of men to transform reality is denied. The very process aimed at demythologising reality has in itself become a myth: Freire writes, "one of my main tasks, while working for the World Council of Churches, has been to strip away the myths surrounding conscientization."(48)

It is not possible, then to transplant conscientization - it is undesirable to transfer that which is done in different ways in different areas of Latin America to another historical space without due respect for that different context. This is not to say that conscientization is not in itself viable, rather, it is the transplanting that is non-viable as this inevitably brings about the bureaucratization of the process. Conscientization is transferred "into a rainbow of solutions..... another way of making a myth out of it."(49)

What positive contributions can be made? How can we find the process of conscientization?

Primarily, the concept implies a basic starting point, i.e. the distinction between education as an instrument of domestication and education as an instrument of liberation. Conscientizacao is not possible in the former, as in this process, education is an act of transferring knowledge. Conversely, however, education for liberation is conscientizing education for it is an act of knowing - a search by all to discover something. Education in this way tries to make and not simply state history.

Through continuous questioning of culture, a liberating education truly communicates by removing slogans.

Conscientization is interesting from another viewpoint. It places learning in direct relationship to the entire cultural situation in which people live. Freire emphasises the political nature of education:

"For Freire education is clearly a sub-system dependent upon political and economical structures."(50)

Conscientization makes this contribution. It guards against thinking of education in isolation from the power which establishes it. It avoids the reduction of education to abstract values by its insistence that education cannot be detached from concrete reality. Education, thus operates as a lever for the transformation of reality.

Conscientization offers a clearer understanding of its own limitations. For Freire, education does not form society in a certain way, rather society having formed itself in a certain way, establishes the education to fit the values which guide society. Freire thus places emphasis, not on methods and techniques, but on the overall character of education. Those who uphold the view that if education maintains society, it is because it can transform that which it maintains always forget, says Freire that 'the power which created it will never allow education to be turned against it.'(51)

What then is the point of conscientization if the educator can apparently do nothing? Freire contends that even limited effort is worthwhile and suggests:

"In history one does what is historically possible and not what one would like to do."(52)

Perhaps a closer examination of the 'historically possible' would lend a more purposeful view of educational reform.

This 'total-view' approach facilitated by the concept of conscientization, makes a further contribution. It helps to highlight those aspects of human learning which are often ignored. It focuses on the circumstances in which learning takes place, the relationship of learning to action the way in which we internalise the values of society. Freire encourages us to confront more deeply the social, cultural and political consciousness that exist in society. His philosophy is relevant in any appraisal of current educational method and any consideration of educational change.

"He forces us to think of the historic role and the vocation of schools as the democratic socialization of those who are schooled.

He challenges the individualistic concept of learning and focuses on that learning process which is fundamentally a social reality."
(53)

It may be that above all the major contribution made by Freire's concept of conscientization is the insight it offers that all men are capable of sustaining a critical relationship with their environment. Conscientization is not the prerogative of a particular class or group, rather it is the right of every man to be more aware. Freire reminds us that even ordinary people can come to grips with great ideas if they are presented to them in a manner and approach which is meaningful and moreover relevant in their daily lives.

"It is remarkable to see with what enthusiasm these illiterates engage in debate....."(54)

The awakening of consciousness is necessary so people can not only critically analyse their world and thus attain freedom, but also become aware of their own dignity as human beings.

The mythification of reality reduces human beings to things, conscientization enables men to fulfill their humanity to become more human. The growth to critical consciousness, as people work together to change their oppressive living conditions, helps them to reject the cultural myths that prevent their clear perception of reality.

Freire's work is a vote of confidence. If he has succeeded in demonstrating that the most powerless and marginal of peasants can be inducted into a life of responsible praxis, one is led to believe that similar results are possible however degraded the circumstances. People everywhere can become aware of their own dignity as human beings.

There are problems, however, with Freire's concept of conscientization. Some have accused him of a hidden elitism, not least of these Peter Berger who speaks of Freire's conscientization in terms of "conscience raising".(55) Freire is wide open to this charge but it is, I feel, a charge based on a misunderstanding. Freire is clear that the process of conscientization also implies the awareness that

nobody can ever liberate another. To do so would be to treat people as objects. No-one can give freedom to anyone else, all must join together to participate in their own liberation. Freire is not interested in that elitist educational approach which seeks to produce imitations of the educator - this represents education for domestication and not liberation. If, however, the charge of elitism is founded on flimsy evidence, where, in fact, Freire is rather vague and open to criticism is on the question of the emergence of leaders. More will be said on this subject at a later stage in this study, suffice it to say, at this point, that Freire is never totally convincing and often rather sketchy on this matter. How can he be sure that the conscientized leaders will not become oppressors themselves? Oppressive regimes could make use of the conscientization concept to achieve exactly opposite ends. Although he counters the elitist charge with a strong affirmation that the development of critical consciousness is a joint development, the roles of those who act as educators alongside the educatees is still unclear. He emphasises that only those who have undergone the 'Easter Experience' and effectively participated in the rebirth to emerge on the side of the people can become leaders. However, he does not fully examine the practical aspects of how, in history, specialists in education for liberation emerge. Further guidance is needed on how to act realistically in the actual work of education, how, in fact, to 'do in history what is historically possible'. The success of Freire's own conscientization programme in Brazil did not provide sufficient basis for resistance to the military coup d'etat which swept away the hopes, born among the peasants who had experienced conscientization.

An equally important criticism on the subject of conscientization is the charge that when a theory of learning is subordinated to political and social purposes, that theory is itself open to claims of indoctrination and manipulation. After all, the themes chosen for discussion are simply the ones with the greatest capacity for challenging the existing social order. Freire is adamant that such a challenge consistently comes through free dialogue but can he really escape the charge of manipulation? Surely the values

of the educators were present in the codifications? Was not another view of social reality simply imposed upon the members of the culture circles? Freire has admitted himself that the danger of manipulation exists but contends that his goal is simply to encourage people to learn by having them challenge the concrete reality of their lives. He would argue that the freedom and rational ability of the learners is always respected. In answer to those who accuse him of subtle manipulation, he would say this:

"The reactionary party must, of necessity, avoid by all means, the creation of class consciousness among the oppressed. The revolutionary party finds this to be one of their important tasks... I don't want to say that the revolutionary party has to create in every historical situation, theoretic contexts - as if these were revolutionary schools to prepare people to 'make the revolution'. I've never claimed this. What I did say, and I repeat it here and now, is that the revolutionary party which refuses to learn with the masses of people..... is not revolutionary. It has become elitist. It forgets a fundamental point of Marx in his third thesis on Feuerbach: 'The educator himself needs education'."(56)

Conscientization, then, although a painful process can never be an imposition or a manipulation.

"I cannot impose my opinions on others. I can only invite others to share them, discuss them."(57)

Finally, what of the charge that conscientization is anarchic and will therefore lead to disorder? This has been a constant fear for many who have encountered Freire's ideas. There has been debate that the conscientization of people will lead to fanaticism. In a training course about the Freire method, a former factory worker made this comment in answer to accusations of fanaticism:

"I can't say that I've understood everything you've said just now, but I can say one thing - when I began this course I was naive and when I found out how naive I was, I started to get critical. But this discovery hasn't made me a fanatic, and I don't feel any collapse either."(58)

More importantly this question of the anarchic consequences of conscientization disguise a deeper fear on the part of the questioner. It is the fear of freedom. Conscientization threatens the status quo - the reason Freire found himself in prison. Those who

fear freedom confuse freedom with the maintenance of the status quo. But conscientization is historical commitment. The more we analyse the perception of reality, the more we expose that reality to discover the myths that deceive us and help sustain dehumanising structures. Conscientization is, therefore, an option for commitment - "I either commit myself to the historic process with all the risks..... or I remain outside it."(59)

It is a demanding process not "an intellectual hobby"(60). Freire's concept offers a fresh questioning of our own educational practice by means of a theory of human learning that has been elaborated following a unique practice. Through an understanding of the poverty experience in the slums of Recife, Freire derives his methodology of conscientization and invites us to a problematic approach to our own culture. He is, in his own words, a 'Pilgrim of the obvious' but challenges us to an alternative way of looking at the seemingly obvious through a radical re-examination of existing forms of education.

Mao's formula for cultural action was:

"progressing from emotional knowledge to a rational perception of reality."

A dangerous progression, perhaps, but worthwhile for:

"the more men are conscientized, the more they exist, not just live."
(61)

CHAPTER 5 - FREIRE'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

"Education is above all a certain theory of knowledge put into practice."(1)

Paulo Freire's theory of knowledge is crucial in any understanding of his pedagogy. Michael Matthews, in 'Knowledge, Action and Power' (in 'Literacy and Revolution' edited by Robert Mackie) has commented: "An educator without an epistemology is like a sailor without a rudder - blown around by whatever fads, fashions and ideologies dominate the current educational scene."(2)

Freire is no distressed sailor! He is certainly not tossed around by every wind of doctrine. He himself has recognised the necessity for discussing epistemology in any discussion on education. He goes still further and suggests that, although there is undoubtedly an epistemology which determines the method, "both epistemology and method are determined by the ideology which is behind".(3)

What epistemology lies behind Freire's educational thought and by what ideology is his methodology determined? These questions form the main concern of this particular section.

Firstly, it must be stated that, although Freire's epistemology is possibly the best developed part of his theory, we are not dealing here with a systematic elaboration concocted by a philosopher in some remote institution. Freire's theory of knowledge begins with his own existential situation and that of his 'peasant' learners. This experience constitutes the first aspect of Freire's theory of knowledge - knowledge is intimately linked with praxis. "The act of knowing involves a dialectical movement which goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to new action."(4)

This, then, is Freire's main assertion, that knowledge comes out of reflection upon the actions of questioning subjects and that by participation in such reflection men transform their world. Consequently, a further aspect of Freire's epistemology is that the act of knowing is the task of subjects and not objects. "Knowing, whatever its level, is not the act by which a subject transformed into an object docilely and passively accepts the contents others give or impose on him or her. Knowledge, on the

contrary, necessitates the curious presence of subjects confronted with the world."(5)

Here Freire echoes the words of Erich Fromm:

"Knowledge means that the individual makes his own way, learning, feeling and finally coming to a conviction without having an 'irresponsible opinion'."(6)

Freire's epistemology is nowhere more clearly defined than in his insistence that 'knowledge is a process'. It is not something which is becoming, rather, something that is in the making. This assertion offers the means of overcoming the dichotomy between existing knowledge and the creation of knowledge. Thus, "Knowledge is not a fact. It is not a package. Knowledge is a process which demands the transforming action of human beings on reality."(7)

It is this active making and remaking of knowledge through language and dialogue that distinguishes Freire's theory of knowledge from other classical conceptions of knowledge. Indeed Freire is critical of both the Socratic and Platonic definitions. Socrates was concerned with definitions and his search for definitions was associated with the thesis that virtue was knowledge. Thus, the Socratic definition conceived of knowledge as knowledge of the thing defined but further to this, Socrates was concerned with judging the definition in the light of some other knowledge and, therefore, advocated a particular method of cross-examination as the best means of attaining knowledge. The thesis that virtue is knowledge is the thesis that to know what is good is necessarily to do what is good and assumes the further ideal of determining what is good by a systematic method of inquiry. This method, Socrates assumed, would yield knowledge of what is good as opposed to the many and various opinions as to what is good. Aristotle confirmed the Socrates' ideal of knowledge was closely associated with a search for definitions. He wrote that Socrates: "believed that knowledge of virtue was the end and inquired what justice is and what courage is, and so with each of the parts of virtue..... for he thought that all the virtues were forms of knowledge, so that to know what was just was at the same time to be just."(8)

Knowledge is to be attained, in the Socratic sense, by a question and answer method of discussion, seeking a definition which can be considered adequate if it is accepted as correct by the interlocutors.

Freire comments that such a view equating knowledge with virtue "did not constitute a true pedagogy of knowing even though it was dialogic".(9) Although agreeing with Plato about the necessary conditions for knowing, i.e. that man was capable of a 'prise de conscience' and that passage from doxa to logos was indispensable for man to gain truth, Freire regards such a definition as inadequate in that:

"For Plato, the prise de conscience did not refer to what man knew or did not know or knew badly about his dialectical relationship with the world; it was concerned rather with what man once knew and forgot at birth. "To know was to remember or recollect forgotten knowledge."(10)

In Plato the term 'pris de conscience' indicates an awareness but in Freire this awareness carries with it an indication that awareness must necessitate taking some kind of action. Conscientization must supersede the 'pris de conscience' - awareness must become critical consciousness.

For Freire - the overcoming of doxa by logos can only occur in the 'dialectical relationship of man with his world'.

This is a valuable Freirian insight, that a person as a conscious body can not only know the existing knowledge, but know new knowledge. It is in this sense that knowledge is a process, for it implies transformation "When we know", says Freire, 'we transform'. No knowledge is ever complete. We see, as the writer to the Corinthians put it, 'through a glass darkly' and this is because reality is always changing. Knowledge depends on the uncovering of real problems and actual needs but in order to deal critically with reality and to penetrate the raison d'etre of our situation, Freire maintains that a basic operation in the act of knowing must be the ability to gain distance from the knowable object.

"From the point of view of a theory of knowledge, this means that the dynamic between codification of existential situations and decodification involves the learners in a constant reconstruction

of their former 'ad-miration' of reality..... For this reason, there is no act of knowing, without 'admiration' of the object to be known."(11)

Freire thus stresses the active part the mind plays in knowledge acquisition. To know things is also to know them in relation - to know how the part articulates with the whole. Here similarities between Plato/Socrates and Freire himself are evident - 'we know in order to do' rather than be told. So, for instance, a peasant in one of Freire's culture circles tells the story of going for tractor parts in Santiago. He needed knowledge in order to act. When he wasn't responsible for anything there was no reason to read and write'.....'Now it's a different story..... I am responsible not only for my work like all the other men, but also for tool repairs. When I started I couldn't read, but I soon realized that I needed to read and write....."(12)

Freire calls for the 'total visicm' which we call knowledge and demonstrates a more complete understanding of the epistemological cycle which does not end at the stage of acquiring already existing knowledge but continues on to the stage of accepting and re-creating new knowledge. This type of epistemological cycle binds together both action and reflection and subjectivity and objectivity. Since then, knowledge results from this constant interaction between invention and re-invention, learning cannot authentically take place outside of enquiry or apart from praxis. We cannot dichotomise existing knowledge and the knowing act.

If Marx was insistent in saying that man is a social being, Freire also consistently recognises the necessarily social nature of thought:

"The 'I think' is enhanced if the 'we think' is enhanced and this is an epistemological basis for dialogue."(13)

This emphasis on the social dimension of knowledge is important in Freire. It brings into focus his central notion of conscientization which occurs among men and women who live in social structures. This removes Freire's epistemology from the level of the individual and again emphasises the historical aspect of the theory of knowing recognising once more that 'it is total vision we call knowledge'.

For Freire, critical consciousness sees facts "in their casual and circumstantial interrelations".(14)

Freire is not a pessimist. Knowledge is possible but knowledge is for a purpose and that purpose is action. Knowledge does not exist for its own sake - we know in order to do or to put it in Freire's own words: "we know to the extent that we transform".(15)

In the Freire approach, knowledge does not come as a slogan, it is not a matter of techniques, games, gimmicks or methods, but rather as Brigham has written "a whole stance, a matter of basic relationship".(16) Knowledge is a "fundamental way of being for individuals who work to re-create the world which they inherited and in this process of construction and re-construction make themselves. They are because they are in a process of becoming."(17)

"There is undoubtedly an epistemology which determines the method and both epistemology and method are determined by the ideology which is behind."(18)

The 'Banking Concept' of Education

"If my choice..... is a domesticating one, then education for me is a mere act of transferring knowledge."(19)

"Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts. Nothing else will ever be of service to them....."

The speaker and the schoolmaster and the third grown person present, all backed a little and swept with their eyes the inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim."(20)

Charles Dickens' character of the austere school teacher, one Mr Gradgrind, is a classic embodiment of the view that knowledge is most successfully acquired by inert objects and as such is a vivid representation of the Freirian concept of 'banking education'. The banking concept is portrayed by Freire as one of two possible

ways in which education can be practised. Education in the 'Grad-grind' mould is 'an act of depositing' in which the teacher deposits a corpus or package of knowledge on the students, who in their turn act as empty receptacles for parcels of facts bestowed upon them. Banking education thus begins from the false understanding of men as objects. This type of education is a mere act of transferring knowledge. The educators recognise themselves as those who possess the knowledge. That knowledge is necessarily a fact, something static and the task of those in possession of such facts is to transfer that knowledge to those who do not know.

".....knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing."(21)

In such a way men as recipients of prescriptions for the illness of ignorance are viewed as objects. Similarly Jean Paul Sartre has referred to this educative method as the 'digestive' or 'nutritive' concept of education in which knowledge is 'fed' by the teacher to the students to 'fill them out'. Hence such imagery as 'hungry for knowledge', 'a thirst for facts' etc.

By what method is this transference of knowledge carried out?

The central characteristic of the Banking method is narration aimed at encouraging memorization. It is a mechanical process whose narrative style offers limited scope for action. Participation on the part of students extends only as far as receiving, filing or storing the deposits. "Education of this type", says Freire, "is suffering from narration sickness..... The outstanding characteristic of this narrative education is the sonority of words not their transforming power." Students are thus encouraged to adapt to the world:

"The educated man is the adapted man, because he is more 'fit' for the world."(22)

Fundamental, therefore, to the banking concept is the understanding of men as manageable beings. The 'why' of education is reasoned to be the adaptation of individuals to the established system of values "man must submit to history".(23)

If the educators aim is to 'regulate the way the world 'enters into' students, the less likely it is that such students will develop critical consciousness.

"Banking education is utilised to avoid the threat of student conscientization."(24)

Implicit in such a concept, then is the assumption that there is a dichotomy between man and the world; man is merely in the world, not with the world or with others. Banking methods not only dichotomise teacher from student and teaching from learning, but through a fragmentation of consciousness dichotomise man from the world.

In summary, banking education is for isolated individuals who act as empty containers; it consists of the transference of 'ready-made' packages of information by those who are in possession of the knowledge and proceeds by way of mechanistic repetition and memorisation to adapt men to history.

On what grounds does Freire reject this educational concept?

Banking education, claims Freire, minimises or annuls the students creative power. By integrating the oppressed into the structures of oppression, the possibility of men becoming 'beings for themselves' is denied. The more students work at storing, filing and cataloguing deposits, the less they develop critical consciousness. Banking education proceeds, therefore, from a false premise, it sees men as objects.

In the Banking concept, teachers are not in the 'business' of communication. Communiqués have replaced communication. The process is thus a vertical one and a one-way process at that. The focus is on the teacher and not the student, a partnership is precluded. The Banking concept says Freire serves the interests of oppression:

"Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialised view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action leads men to adjust to the world and inhibits their creative power."(25)

Banking education attempts to conceal certain facts which explain the way men exist in the world by mythologising reality. It resists dialogue and fails to acknowledge men as historical beings.

Those who utilize the banking method, knowingly or unknowingly, fail

to perceive that the deposits themselves contain contradictions about reality. If men are searchers, sooner or later they may perceive the contradiction in which banking education seeks to maintain them and then they will engage themselves in the struggle for their own liberation.

Freire contends that the truly committed must reject the banking concept in its entirety and offers us an alternative ideology - the ideology of liberation.

Problem-Posing Education

"It is not difficult to come on the practice of domestication..... in systematic education. In the primary and secondary schools..... we are witness to the transfer of knowledge and not the search for knowledge."(26)

If banking education epitomises the 'transfer' of knowledge, Freire's problem-posing method is an opportunity to participate in the search "I have to have another concept of epistemology which determines another methodology. So education for me now, no longer, is transference of knowledge but on the contrary, an act of knowing."
(27)

How is this radical educational concept characterised?

The educational goal of deposit making is abandoned in favour of a problem-posing method which sees man not as an isolated 'ignorant' being, but as man in his environment, rich in experience. In the banking concept, students are not called upon to know but to memorise but in the problem-posing method, students are no longer docile listeners but critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. They are active human beings discovering the object of their knowing:

"..... the conception of education which recognises..... that it is a gnosiological condition challenges them to think rather than memorise."(28)

If the banking method viewed men as objects, problem-posing education enables teachers and students to become subjects of the educational process. The educator is a cognitive subject who recognises not "I think, therefore, I am," but "we think, therefore, we are".(29)
Thus, this alternative concept of education responds to man's

vocation to be a subject and, whereas banking education suffers from a fragmentation of consciousness, the educational content of the problem-posing approach corresponds to the problems of emergent consciousness. Problem-posing affirms men as 'beings in the process of becoming' and is aimed at making men critical of the established system of values. Men do not, therefore, submit to history; men make history. Knowledge is no longer a prepared package, but is to be discovered. The role of the problem-posing educator is to create, together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of doxa can be superseded by 'true' knowledge at the level of the logos. Consciousness is not something to be kept submerged, but rather is encouraged to emerge in the critical intervention in reality. Men thus develop their power to perceive critically the way in which they exist and to consider their relations with the world to see the world in process... in transformation. In this way, the role of education is the unveiling of critical consciousness as learning consists of problematising reality.

Education can take consciousness as a starting point by performing what Freire calls an archaeology of consciousness. The archaeology of consciousness invites men and women who are at a naïve level of consciousness "... in which they cannot express their word... to know that they can know".(30)

Whereas Banking methods dichotomise man and the world, problem-posing education considers men in their relation with the world. In the very incompleteness' of human beings lies the roots of humanistic education. Education must be an on-going activity; if knowledge is not static it is impossible to transfer it as it is in the process of becoming day by day. The educator does not possess the knowledge, he knows rather that he does not know in a complete or total way: knowledge is thus a process not a fact and educators are in the business of transformation and not transfer-ation.

Problem-posing breaks the vertical one-way pattern of the banking approach and replaces it with a two-way horizontal relationship.

A new term emerges, teacher-student and students with teachers (more will be said on this relationship in the following section).

Problem-posing education is continually remade in praxis, it does not reinforce men's fatalistic attitudes but presents the realistic situation itself as a problem.

In summary, Freire offers his 'problem-posing' method as a creative education which deals with the "inevitable praxis of knowing".(31)

It exists for men in his environment and is aimed at making him critically conscious. The method proceeds by way of investigation, thematisation and problematisation and placing consciousness at the centre demythologises reality in order to facilitate the creation of new knowledge. Education is thus a relationship between subjects in the act of knowing and challenges both teachers and students to see reality as transformable. Problem-solving education is, therefore, 'cultural action for freedom'.

CHAPTER 6 - THE BANKING CONCEPT OR THE PROBLEM POSING METHOD? -
A CRITICAL EVALUATION IN RELATION TO OUR OWN EDUCATIONAL
PRACTICE

As with earlier accounts of Freire's emphasis on neutrality and conscientization, the main criticism of his educational ideas stems from his all too easy division of the human race into oppressor and oppressed and, as a consequence, education is seen as a simple choice - either for domestication or liberation.

"Whereas banking education anaesthetises and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality."(1)

Is it really as simple as this? Can not education sometimes contain elements of both and is it necessarily true that a process which prizes knowledge for its own sake is always, in each and every case, anaesthetizing? Do we not, just occasionally, operate at a level somewhere in between? Freire would naturally say that 'somewhere in between' is no more or less than an option for the 'oppressor' but maybe he is making here a peculiarly Third World comment.

Is Freire merely offering a new set of jargon?

"Instead of a teacher we had a co-ordinator, instead of lectures dialogue, instead of pupils group participants, instead of alienating syllabi compact programmes were broken down and codified into learning units."(2)

At a quick glance, it would seem that Freire is simply offering us a different set of labels and it would be easy to dismiss him with a 'we've heard it all before, this is nothing new' attitude. However, taken in the total context of his own practice and not just as an isolated set of terms, we can penetrate beyond this superficial rejection of Freire and see that, although he is not saying anything particularly 'original', it may yet turn out to be revolutionary.

"On the subject of originality, I have always agreed with Dewey for whom originality does not lie in the extraordinary and fanciful but in putting everyday things to uses which had not occurred to others."(3)

Bruce Boston, in an article entitled 'Notes of a Loving Critic' has made an interesting criticism of Freire's theory of knowledge. Boston claims that Freire's epistemology is 'at odds with itself.

"His epistemology was arrived at inductively. What is objectionable is that when the whole matrix of theory and praxis is presented, the reverse order is followed. A theory of knowing is developed then a method is advanced which corresponds to the theory, then a situation is evolved in which the method can be or has been used. As Freire works he proceeds inductively as he speaks he proceeds deductively."(4)

I cannot agree with Boston's view. Taking Freire's works, talks, lectures, discussions as a whole, the most abiding impression is of one who speaks from experience. If his epistemology is at odds with itself, as Boston maintains, this 'impression' is presented surely by Freire's honest effort in standing back from his existential situation in order to evaluate it and recreate new possibilities. It is in this sense that he clarifies his experience and deduces his theories, constantly re-clarifying them through conversation with hundreds of people around the world. A method is not "advanced to correspond with a theory". Rather theories are deduced from an evaluation of experience. Freire constantly reminds his listeners of the fallacy of borrowing his theories, wholesale, without due attention to the local situation. His letters to workers in Guinea Bissau are constantly indicative of this.

Perhaps a more valid criticism, at least for the purposes of this project, is that made by Professor Ian Lister. He suggests that: "The greatest weakness of the Freire method is political."(5)

Here we have a strange paradox. Freire has always insisted that "we cannot think of education without thinking of power, political power"(6), and already in this study this emphasis has been singled out as a 'strength' in Freire in that he encourages us to see the underlying issues behind our educational philosophy. However, in an examination of Freire's educational philosophy in the context of our own schools, here in Britain, this political issue may well prove to be a stumbling block. Boston makes the point clearly: "His pedagogical stance is one geared to explosion..... what might be more useful is a pedagogy geared to erosion - the systematic undermining of the social, political and cultural assumptions which perpetuate not only the slums of Rio and Harlem, but also the board rooms, university lecture halls and legislative classrooms."(7)

The point is well made, although to be fair to him, Freire has distinguished between 'systematic education' which can be changed only by radical political power and 'educational projects' which can be carried out in the process of joining the oppressed in their organising and development - needless to say, the practical methods for carrying out the latter are never too clearly drawn.

However, Lister's criticism deserves attention. A misguided transplant of the Freire educational method could well be confrontationalist, whereas in many societies a steady picking away at the dominant culture, or, as Boston has called it, "a kind of educational guerilla warfare skirmishing here, digging out a foundation stone there, inserting a wedge somewhere else,"(8) may well be more likely to succeed.

Conscientization has, nevertheless, a significant political dimension. It is not simply a process of increased awareness but one geared to the radical transformation of social reality. It is important here to remember that most of Freire's work was done with adults and was carried out outside of any traditional institution. We are concerned here with the application of Freire's thought to the education of young people (and in particular religious education) within the institution of the school. How can social and political action be related to the educational needs of children? Let it first be made clear that Freire is not against institutions or even a member of the Ivan Illich 'deschooling' group. He calls us to ask important questions such as: "whom the schools are serving", "against whom are they working" etc, and then relates the political/social aspect to a need to create 'free space' within the institutions. He would not agree that young people have nothing to do with politics and believes it is possible to challenge young people to understand how and why society works. In this sense, therefore, Freire is relevant. His is not a plea for a generalised educational effort, but rather:

"individually..... we could have some kind of experience in islands, of challenging the young people, concerning political questions..... We don't need a branch of political science to teach students politics. We can discuss politics through language for example, or through geography or history."(9)

It may be that we can also discuss such issues in Religious Education.

Perhaps the most antagonistic view of Freire's 'problem-posing' method is to be found amongst those groups of 'educators' who consider Freire's methods interesting but far too time-consuming. Freire himself has encountered this objection several times in various seminars where his methods have been considered non-viable because:

"..... results are slow, uncertain and long drawn-out..... this time wasting cannot be justified. In choosing between dialogue and anti-dialogue, we choose the latter because it is more rapid."(10)

Related questions also involve the contention that there are some areas of knowledge, for example technical knowledge, where 'rapid deposits' of that knowledge are necessary for reasons of speed.

One can imagine these objections finding ready expression and support in most staff rooms in British schools. Freire's answer to such questions is to re-affirm that the objectors reveal a 'false conception' of the way knowledge is acquired. There is no real argument against this answer. It may, however, be a frustrating answer, for 'authentic' education in the Freire mould must, of necessity, be a long, arduous process.

What is the value of Freire's Educational Approach?

"The brilliant quality of Freire's analysis is relevant to any educational programme. As a serious scholar he demands careful study in our own country."(11)

Freire has a positive contribution to make. He offers new insight on the fundamental issues which underlie traditional methods. It is not an imposing analysis but rather presents us with a choice - whether or not to continue to utilise the banking concept of education or to opt for the 'problem-posing' approach and all the possibilities that option might entail. Freire challenges us to examine even the very word education. Ivan Illich has said this about our use of the term:

"The word 'education' was invented and then remained pretty constant in the meaning until very recently. It was used exclusively to designate - look it up in the dictionary - the heteronomous production of a set value of learning (as opposed to the non-

alienated learning in contact with reality)."(12)

Freire would agree with Illich, that schools are, in fact, instruments of social control and will remain so as long as they maintain the 'wrong perception' of their task..... which is to transfer to the students the existing knowledge".(13) His educational method is not only negative and concerned with what schools are and why schools 'fail', but it is a positive philosophy based on what schools might become through an active attitude by which it is possible to create knowledge. This is Freire's major contribution, his emphasis on the centrality of creativity. He offers a welcome alternative to the ever-increasing campaign for inculcating the three R's or the 'Back to Basics' bandwagon. In an article entitled 'Creativity at the Centre' Gerald Haigh has written:

"It is in a sense tragic that there is this continuing need to re-iterate - the notion of primary education as process..... The need arises because there is a continuous groundswell and every now and again a fairly assertive, bubbling up of attempts to bring the primary curriculum to account by means of measuring it against objectives, or in terms of acquisition of basic skills."(14)

Freire restores creativity to the centre. He would no doubt agree with Haigh that:

"everything in the primary school must start from creativity and without it, there is nothing worthwhile."(15)

Freire's analysis offers a further choice. It is the choice between authority centred learning or autonomous learning. Authority centred learning is an approach based on the banking concept of education. Michael Rossmann, in 'On Learning and Social Change : Transcending the Totalitarian Classroom' has identified the autonomous learner as one who 'knows how to formulate problems... identify the relevant sources of information..... choose or create procedures, evaluate his own skills or, stated very loosely, they include the ability to know what he wants (or needs) to learn, the ability to see clearly the process of his learning and the ability to interact with others..... Out of all this he is able to create useful knowledge. Let us call him an autonomous learner, for he directs himself."(16)

If our choice is a significant critique of traditional methods,

coupled with a desire to produce the 'autonomous' learner, Freire's problem-posing method deserves serious consideration.

Freire's view gives to education "a better sense of history", (17) if schools are not to be trapped in the dichotomy which divorces existing knowledge from the knowing act, the classroom will, more and more, be concerned with the discussion of causes rather than the effects of all aspects of knowledge.

"Depositing in the classroom must give way to problem-posing, so that the students are required to examine, to know, and to transform their world and thus participate in genuine communication." (18)

The curriculum will no longer represent 'an ivory tower of ideas', rather, by taking as its starting point thematic investigation, the curriculum will become, more and more relevant.

It may well be a mistake to speak of Freire's pedagogy. A better term could be 'andragogy' - the art and science of helping 'adults' learn. If we can take the risk and refocus on learning rather than teaching, the quality of our education may well be improved. Education can thus operate to emancipate and not subjugate the individual. It is a demanding choice but, nevertheless, it is a demand for the great and not the mediocre. By inviting people to believe in themselves, by expelling the myth of inferiority, we may not yet have the whole answer, and we may have many problems, but we may yet do something towards the realisation of the possible dream." (19)

CHAPTER 7 - THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

"In the educational process for liberation, educator and educatee and educatee-educator are both cognitive subjects before knowable objects which mediate them."(1)

A fundamental issue in Freire's pedagogy is the resolution of the teacher-student contradiction. The problem-posing method advocated by Freire postulates a break with the traditional vertical relationship which is presumed to exist between teacher and student. For Freire, teaching can never be carried out "from the top down, but only from the inside out, by the 'illiterate' himself with the collaboration of the educator."(2)

A new term emerges, therefore, - 'teacher-student with students-teachers'. Thus, the teacher is no longer simply 'the one who teaches' but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students. Freire endorses the statement of Marx: "The educator himself needs educating."(3) The relationship does not stop there. The students in turn, while being taught, also teach. This type of education is therefore a horizontal partnership or "a joint endeavour involving teacher and students who become teachers-students and students-teachers, all growing, learning and creating."(4). It is in this sense that the dichotomy between teacher and learner is dispelled. In a domesticating practice (the banking concept), where educators are the 'possessors of knowledge' and educatees 'empty pots' to be filled by the educators, manipulation, says Freire, is a central connotation as the vertical relationship between educator and educatee implies that the second are the objects of the first. When this pattern is broken and replaced by partnership, the educator invites the educatee 'to know in a critical way' and there is no such dichotomy as that between manipulator and manipulatee. This is because a dialogical process has, in fact, superseded a prescriptive one.

Two crucial questions arise. What is the role of the teachers in the process of knowing and what is the role of the students?

Freire maintains that a teacher is an inductive presence in a group of inquirers. He is a subject seeking to know with other subjects in an attempt to develop a synthesis between teacher-student and

student-teacher. The teacher recognises the role students play in the re-creation of knowledge and seeks to involve them in the preparation of their own further education. Mary Louise Somers has called this process 'engaging the learner'.

"If the teacher is to engage the learner in genuine learning, he must assist the classroom or unit system to draw deeply from his background of individual life experiences, and to use the rich resources of thought, feeling and action of each learner."(5)

It is an important task for any teacher to recognise these 'rich resources'. Freire's own experience led him to acknowledge that the peasants in his culture circle had their own 'knowledge'.

"What can one presume to 'teach' an adult who affirms 'I have the school of the world'?"(6)

The teacher suggests rather than pre-determines generative themes. He presents cognitive material for consideration and then reconsiders his earlier presentations in the light of his students' considerations. The teacher does not possess his material as his property. Rather the material is the teacher's reflection on the students reality or better still, it is material prepared by the students themselves: this was Freire's own practice when members of his literacy groups created their own reading matter by scratching words in the dirt road where they worked.

Freire preferred the word 'co-ordinator' to that of teacher. However, given that his work was with adults and took place outside formal institutions, he himself sees his theory on the crucial relationship between educator and educatee as a link between his own Third World practice and our own educational work. In a discussion with Ian Lister in 1976 he commented:

"When people speak about complex societies like yours here, it is as if they were saying that the Third World is not complex, but it is also complex. There is a difference of levels of complexity. For me the real problem, the real question we have, is once again the 'political character of education' which conditions the methods and techniques we use. For example if you take only one point, the relationships between the educator and educatees in the process of education."(7)

Taking this one point, it follows, in answer to the question "What is the role of the teacher?", that the teacher's role, in the Freire practice of education must be a clearly defined one. Educators have to choose which side they are on. They must emphasise either the 'false consciousness' of the educatees or their 'critical consciousness'. Educators must examine themselves; they must know "what to do, how, when, with whom, why, for and against whom". (8)

"What seems fundamental to me is the clear-cut position which the teacher must assume in relation to the political option; this implies values and principles, a position with respect to the 'possible dream' that is to be accomplished." (9)

Once his options are clear, how can a teacher become a 'good' teacher; how can he initiate the 'possible dream'? In a letter to the co-ordinator of a culture circle Freire lays down guidelines: "In order to be able to be a good co-ordinator for a 'cultural-circle' you need above all, to have faith in man, to believe in his possibility to create, to change things. You need love." (10)

This 'faith in the people' is paramount in Freire. He stresses repeatedly that the efforts of any educator must be imbued with a profound trust in men and their creative power. Faith in the students must precede any curriculum development in order to achieve an authentic praxis. It is a trust in students' power to reason and reflect that the teacher must actively demonstrate.

A further necessary quality is humility:

"You as the co-ordinator of a 'cultural circle' must be humble, so that you can grow with the group, instead of losing your humility and claiming to direct the group - once it is animated." (11)

With faith, love, humility, as pre-requisites, how does the teacher operate in the learning process? Freire offers the following advice:

"During discussions do all you can to ensure that the entire group participates..... become a part of the group..... respect the significance that the group attaches to materials..... Seek to deepen the analysis until the situation presented as a problem is criticised. Do not move ahead of the group....."

It is important that you believe that each meeting with your group will leave both you and the members enriched..... Seek to have a critical posture."(12)

How does such an educator emerge?

"Underlying the entire methodology of Freire and his own commitment to education as 'cultural action for liberation' lies the Easter Theology of death and resurrection."(13) This is the key. Freire has written:

"He is an educator who has to live the deep significance of Easter."(14)

What does Freire intend us to understand by his use of this Biblical concept?

In order to practice education as the 'practice of freedom' the educator has to 'die' as a unilateral educator of the educatees in order to be 're-born' again as the educator-educatee of the educatee-educators. This willingness to 'die' to oneself is, furthermore, a daily experience. Yet again, this is not a one-way process for, writes Freire, "on the other hand at the moment at which the educator for liberation is dying as an exclusive educator, he also has to challenge the educatees in order for them to die as exclusive educatees in order to be born again as educators."(15)

Without this Easter experience, there can be no valid engagement in the practice of 'education for liberation'. The experience is not simply necessary for educators within a school, it is absolutely indispensable contends Freire, "for the revolutionary leadership".

The second crucial question concerns the role of the students in the process of knowing. Clearly, students are to be 'subjects in their own right'. The students share with their teachers information, ideas and perceptions. They are to be involved, responsible, learning from each other as well as from the teacher. The student operates as 'an autonomous learner', as Brigham puts it "freed up rather than inculcated down".(16)

In the Banking concept of education, students are merely called upon to memorize contents narrated by the teacher. They are

docile listeners. In the problem-posing situation students, as critical co-investigators, are called upon to 'know' and together with the teacher, to help create conditions under which knowledge at the level of doxa can be superseded by knowledge at the level of logoi. Here again the erroneous nature of the 'banking concept' is demonstrated. Not only does it separate teacher from student, but also man from the world. The role of the student is necessarily critical. As emancipated individuals rather than standardised human beings, students are given the opportunity to become 'fully literate' and this, for Freire, implies 'political literacy'. Learners are asked to 'think' not passively receive prefabricated knowledge and through such learning they also teach.

The Importance of Dialogue

"To know which is always a process, implies a dialogical situation."
(17)

The central characteristic of the problem posing method is dialogue; it is the principle by which the banking concept can be opposed.

"The quintessence of dialogue is the word" (18)

For Freire, the word has two components - reflection and action. He is critical of the traditional curriculum because he says it is based on words divorced from reality - 'alienating blah'. In an authentic dialogical situation both teachers and students are engaged in the constant problematisation of their existential situation and, therefore, 'teaching is an apprenticeship in naming the world'. The dialogical relationship which is necessarily implied when knowledge is re-created with the students and not transferred to the students must begin before the classroom programme is organised. Communication is the central theme and questions such as 'how do the students think, what is their vision of the world' are important preparatory considerations. Dialogue is not simply another technique and for this reason it permeates the whole educational process - it does not operate as an alternative classroom method. For Freire, dialogue is what learning is all about. In his frame of reference education is designed and experienced as intimately linked with all other aspects of life.

"It is to devote oneself to the constant transformation of reality... dialogue is the content of the form of being which is particularly human." (19)

Dialogue is an existential necessity, it is the encounter between men mediated by the world. "It consists in people meeting together in a spirit of trust, humility and co-operation..... to make and remake knowledge, which will help them to transform the world."(20)

True dialogue requires critical thinking - it generates critical thinking and above all communication.

"Without dialogue, there is no communication and without communication there can be no true education."(21)

Dialogue cannot, by its very definition, invade, manipulate or 'make slogans'. On the contrary, dialogue awakens an awareness. In education it begins with thematic investigation.

"The important thing from the point of view of libertarian education is for men to come to feel like masters of their thinking by discussing the thinking and views of the world explicitly or implicitly manifest in their own suggestions and those of their comrades. Because this view of education starts with the conviction that it cannot present its own programme, but must search for this programme dialogically with the people, it serves to introduce the pedagogy of the oppressed in the development of which the oppressed must participate."(22)

Dialogue thus corresponds to the essential nature of men who are "essentially communicative creatures."(23)

A Critical Assessment of the Dialogical Learning Process

A cursory glance at Freire's resolution of the teacher-student contradiction frequently begs the question: "Is the role of teachers to be ultimately eliminated?"

Freire's theory certainly seems to demand a radical revolution of traditional knowledge structures and a re-appraisal of the role of the intellectual. Not surprisingly, many educators have felt their own position not a little threatened by Freire's approach. However, Freire has insisted that he is not against the intellectual (24) but in favour of a new kind of intellectual shaped through the dialectic between practice and theory. Neither is he against the professor.

"I think that we need educators but educators who are also educatees who are not the possessors of knowledge of the truth, but who are able to learn with the educatees together mediated by reality."(25)

Teachers are not, therefore, to disappear and dialogue does not necessarily deny the legitimacy of expert knowledge. Expert knowledge is an integral part of education through conscientization although, say, Freire, "such knowledge should be utilized without the oppressive consequences implicit in the banking approach. Each person makes a unique contribution through his own area of expertise but the ultimate objective must be the problematisation of reality."(26) The inductive presence of the teacher gradually gives way to the synthesis in which teacher-student and student-teachers become subjects in the knowing process.

Several writers and educationalists have, however, expressed serious doubts about the relationship Freire suggests between teachers and learners. A central point of issue has focussed on Freire's use of the term 'Easter experience'. This mystical transformation of leaders (both educational and revolutionary (27)) by an act of moral and religious will has been criticized on a number of grounds. The first of these is based on the fact that Freire's 'rebirth' process is obscure, vague and lacking thorough analysis. This is linked to the view that the whole theory of the emergence of leaders has an insufficient material base and therefore runs the risk of becoming mere abstraction, or simply lyrical rhetoric.

'Freire trades on hope rather than prediction, faith, rather than expectation and love rather than political realism.'(28)

Faith in man has always been an a priori condition for Freire but does the evidence of history support his optimism? Manfred Stanley has written:

"both church and secular history suggest that the saintly educators whom Freire depends on to keep his revolution honest, would turn out to be in short supply."(29)

Even third world precedents do not give us grounds for optimism.(30)

Has Freire simply offered us an idealistic vision?

"His emphasis is not on 'bedrock' social realities but upon communion, trust and dialogue..... No-one would dispute the desirability of these qualities - but do they arise from an act of will - a utopian idea or from a concrete historical process?"(31)

Others, among them Griffiths and Mackie, would endorse the view that Freire is, in fact, idealist. Mackie quotes Freire's almost romantic tendency to idealise revolutionary leaders such as Mao, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, whereas Griffiths accuses Freire of postulating "a utopian scheme offering a simplistic solution to the problems of the world."(32) However, his emphasis on qualities such as love, trust and commitment does not necessarily suggest that Freire has ignored the economic basis of the political struggle. His position is a salutary reminder of the danger of presuming that if you change economic conditions you will change the man. Personally I take the view that Freire is in fact being more realistic for, without the qualities of faith, love and humility, the whole process is worthless. It is only with such qualities that Freire's approach can possibly work.

Is Freire's approach Utopian?

Pierre Furter, in defence of Paulo Freire's approach has indicated a certain ambivalence not always appreciated in the use of this term:

"The term may designate the illusory, fantastic and the unattainable as well as the refusal to accept the 'status quo'."(33)

Freire's theory appears to be characterised by the former definition but to evaluate his work at this level would be to miss the point of his optimism, namely the possibilities of being utopian - man's capacity to be more. Any relationship between teacher and student imbued with this latter hope must be the richer.

Freire has further been accused of 'hidden elitism. Leach has written:

"He seems to imply that leaders 'help' to stir the faculties of the oppressed..... they initiate dialogue."(34)

Although this is a vulnerable position in Freire's theory his emphasis on partnership, love and humility would appear to counter this. A relationship based on love is not:

"boastful or proud" (35). It may be that "at the end of the process the professor is still the professor and the peasant is still the peasant" (36), but the one is not the object of the other. Certainly dialogue itself can be used to engineer a more potent teaching situation and therefore the threat of hidden elitism with all its manipulative possibilities will always be a danger but Freire never expected his 'Easter experience' to be an easy way; the risk of misuse is ever-present and so is the challenge.

Freire's emphasis on dialogue has been questioned on the grounds of its inconsistency. On the one hand Freire insists that "it is necessary to trust in the oppressed" and on the other he praises Che Guevara for his exhortation that the "revolutionary be always mistrustful of the people".

This certainly appears to be contradictory, but Freire himself claims that he is simply being realistic. He is probably trapped here by his own theory and this remains an inadequately answered question and a peculiar tension in his writings. Dialogue cannot take place, according to Freire, between antagonists. This has led Griffiths to comment that Freire does not allow free-expression of opinions, that he silences dissent. This is surely a misrepresentation. Freire is merely emphasising the need for true communication and trust and the necessity before any successful dialogue can take place of "dying to oneself". Idealist perhaps, but who could realistically suggest that dialogue could ever be authenticated in an atmosphere of antagonism?

The relationship between educator and educatee proposed by Freire and mediated through dialogue is not without its weaknesses and the fact that the same principles govern Freire's view of the roles of both the educator and the revolutionary leader presents problems. The connection between language and politics is not always so obvious in societies which lack "pivotal clashes between cultures".
(37)

However, with these reservations readily acknowledged it does seem that Freire can indeed offer both teacher and students something new and positive. Taken as a whole stance and not simply a technique Freire challenges us to re-examine the role of teachers

and students in our educational institutions. Teachers are often considered to be models for their students. T Brigham writing about the relevance of Freire for developing the work of social workers has made the following comment:

"If we treat them (our learner-colleagues) as subjects and relate to them through dialogue as collaborators in seeking knowledge, learning skills and identifying values, it is more likely that they will relate to clients in like manner."(38)

The same can be said of teachers preparing students to leave school. It brings us to a new evaluation of the dignity of every human being. If we can accept the premise of partnership in the educational effort, all those involved can experience an exciting and demanding learning experience. Dialogue must start before the relationship between educator and the educatees in the classroom, it begins in the organisation of the very content of the programme. This is not easy in a complex society, but jointly and in partnership with each other, it may well be fruitful.

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit."(39)

SECTION TWO

THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF
FREIRE'S CONCEPT OF MAN

CHAPTER 1 - "SEVERELY EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE IMPLIES A CONCEPT OF MAN AND THE WORLD" (1)

In order to facilitate a better understanding of the various aspects of Freire's pedagogy and before attempting an application of his educational ideas to the area of Religious Education, in the final section of this study, a careful description of Freire's concept of man provides an indispensable 'aid' at this juncture.

Mashayekh has commented:

"Freire's literacy method derives from his conception of man and man's role in the social order." (2),

and Lister has written:

"Freire begins less from a theory of knowledge than a theory of man." (3)

Freire's fundamental thesis is that the main purpose of education is the formation of man as a creative and critical being. Faith in man as indicated earlier, (4) is crucial for Freire and although his theory of man is clearly delineated, the word 'theory' may, in fact, be a misnomer. The Freirian stance, summed up in Pedagogy of the Oppressed as:

"my trust in the people and my faith in men and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love" (5),
may more accurately be considered under the phrase "vision of man" (6).

It is this vision that underlies all Freire's literacy efforts and his more general educational recommendations.

"Without a vision the people perish," (7) wrote the writer of Proverbs in the Old Testament and it this vision of man and his capacity to be more than what may yet be Freire's most significant contribution to our own educational thought and practice.

"If we have faith in men, we cannot be content with saying that there are human persons while doing nothing concrete to enable them to exist as such." (8)

What is Man.....?

(An outline of Freire's concept)

Denis Collins, in his book 'Paulo Freire, his life, work and thought', has indicated several useful sub-sections for consideration of Freire's concept of man. I shall, largely, follow his outline, in an attempt to answer the central question of this section:

What is man?

1. MAN NEVER EXISTS APART FROM THE WORLD AND MEN EXPERIENCE REALITY AS A PROCESS. In studying reality men devote attention at different times to different moments of the dialectical historical process. Men are situated in history and as a consequence in the "spatio-temporal conditions of history, conditions which are perceived as contradictions, which can keep men submerged"(9). The "culture of silence"(10), is one such contradiction cited by Freire. Man belongs to different communities which are continually shaping him. In his relations with the world, man does not behave like any given model; he is a being in the process of transformation. In his relations with the world man becomes increasingly aware of himself and "arrives at the act of knowledge through reflection".(11) Man's initial attitude is not this act of knowledge as he often fails to discover reality as a process, being submerged in his historical conditions. However, these conditions perceived as contradictions do not limit man. Man has the ability to emerge and intervene in the historical process. This is Freire's fundamental contention: that man has the ability "to be more". Man can emerge through conscientization and act, through critical reflection, to transform the world. For this reason Freire advocates a problem-posing approach to education, because, unlike the banking concept, such an approach does not assume that man is a finished product. On the contrary, it affirms men as 'beings in the process of becoming'. Human beings then are seen, by Freire, in their interaction with reality and it is in this dialectical relationship with reality that he discusses education as "a constant process for the liberation of human beings".(12)

2. MEN MUST BE CONSIDERED IN THEIR RELATION WITH THE WORLD.

"Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without men, but men in their relations with the world."(13)

Men are historical beings and if men cannot be considered apart from the world neither can history. Freire is opposed to a view of history as a "mythical entity outside of and superior to human beings, able to capriciously command them from above and beyond"(14) and prefers the view of Marx expressed in the Holy Family:

"History does nothing, possesses no great riches, liberates not one class from its struggles; what does all that, possesses and struggles, is man himself - real living man. It is not history which uses men as a tool to reach a goal, as though History were a being apart, for History is nothing but the action of man following his objectives."(15)

The essential starting point, for Freire, is that man is not only present in the world but also part of it and must be considered as such. Reality implies constant interaction between man as a thinking subject and history. Man is both a cause and an effect of history. "There is no historical reality which is not human. There is no history without men and no history for men, there is only history of men, made by men."(16)

Over and over again Freire insists on this key issue, that to be human is to engage in relations with others and with the world. Men's relationships with the world are thus "per se historical, as are men themselves."(17) "Education as the practice of Freedom", which Freire suggests as the only authentic form of education is justified by Freire on the grounds that it considers men not as isolated, abstract beings, but as men in their relations with the world. In such relations, consciousness and world are simultaneous. He exemplifies this with a story taken from one of his culture circles in Chile:

"In the midst of the discussion a peasant..... said: 'Now I see that without man there is no world.' When the educator responded: 'Let's say, for the sake of argument, that all the men on earth were to die, but the earth itself remained, together with trees, birds, animals, rivers, seas, the stars....., wouldn't all this be a world?' 'Oh no,' the peasant replied emphatically, 'There would be no-one to say: 'This is a world'.'"(18)

Thought - language as a unit, is what mediates the world to man, according to Freire, because thought is impossible without language and both of them are impossible without the world to which they refer. Only men are capable of thought language. The 'human word' is a combination of thought and action to humanise history and culture and is not confined to formation of vocabulary. The word, in Freire's educational method, is not disconnected from

man's existential experience, rather it is a dimension of his thought language about the world. "Men educate each other through the mediation of the word."(19)

Within the word, there are two dimensions - reflection and action. If the word is deprived of either of these dimensions it becomes an unauthentic word or 'alienating blah.' Alienation is due, says Collins, to "the fact that his (man's) thought-language does not reflect reality as process, but expresses a distortion using thought-language to describe reality as if it were static".(20) Freire's educational method recognises that human existence cannot be nourished by false words:

"Thought and language cannot be separated from structure. In whatever moment of history a social structure exists..... it is the task of the educator to attempt to overcome the 'doxa' by the 'logos' of reality."(21)

Men, as beings who possess a thought-language must be able to have a lucid grasp of any action they perform. It is Freire's view that any human being is capable of looking critically, of transcending the domain of 'doxa' by reaching that of 'logos'. Men have the capacity and must have the right to "say their own word".

This concept of 'speaking the word' is a very important one in Freire, and one that has several valid implications for our educational practice. A more detailed exposition of the concept is undertaken in a later sub-section of this study of Freire's concept of man.

3. AN ESSENTIAL FEATURE OF FREIRE'S VISION IS THAT - MEN ARE DIFFERENT FROM ANIMALS.

Men have a relationship with the world - animals have only contact with it. Men and women are unique in this sense, they are the only beings who have relationships with the world. This is the fundamental characteristic, according to Freire, which distinguishes man from the animal - whereas the latter adapts itself to nature, man attempts to humanise nature. Men are historical beings, animals are a-historical, live in an eternal today, submerged in life without time, with no possibility of emerging. Animals as beings in themselves, remain so, but men are not only in the world, they are also with the world, differentiated from animals by a capacity to reflect. The consciousness and actions of men are historical.

"For animals 'here' is only a habitat with which they enter into contact, for men 'here' signifies not merely a physical space but also an historical space."(22)

In this way men both create history and are in turn created by history.

The capacity to reflect is another fundamental factor. Men have this capacity in that they are able to perceive the cultural conditions of oppression. They can, therefore, stand apart and consider life and having denounced the exploitation, are able to announce the need for liberation and justice. This is the key - man's ability to distance himself from his situation:

"Men can fulfil the necessary condition of being with the world because they are able to gain objective distance from it. Without this objectification, whereby man also objectifies himself, man would be limited to being in the world lacking both self-knowledge and knowledge of the world."(23)

Man's ability to 'separate' himself from the world distinguishes him from the animal but it is not the act of separation alone which forms the distinction but the possibilities this objectification opens up for the 'project of historical becoming'."(24)

"Animals adapt themselves to the world in order to survive, but men modify the world in order to be more."(25) This is the sense of project which men have, in sharp contrast to the instinctive routines of animals. Animal activity is not creative, they are beings of pure activity, whereas men, as beings of praxis, are creative and can transform the world.

"..... bees remain bees in the contact with the world; they do not become more or less bees."(26)

If animals are a historical, they cannot commit themselves and as their condition does not permit them to 'take on life'... they can never transform it. This is the difference: animals live out their lives on an atemporal flat uniform prop, whereas men exist in a world which they are constantly trying to reform. Man is thus able to emerge from the world and as he transforms nature he leaves his impression on it. Only man is capable of successfully accomplishing this complex operation of transforming the world. This is the Freire vision - a vision of man capable of transforming, producing, deciding, creating and communicating. Man can also

ask questions about his relationship with the world. He is truly reflective - not merely stimulated but challenged and determined. Having stepped back and looked objectively at the world, he is capable, in a developing climate, of critical perception, of struggling to overcome his "limit situations". (27) Animals adapted as they are to their situation, are only able to stimulate physical need - men can challenge that situation. "For this reason, their (animals) products undoubtedly belong to their physical bodies, while man is free before his product." (28)

Man is unique among the 'becoming ones'. He is able to have, not only his own activity, but himself as the object of his own consciousness - he is different from animals. In this sense men are said to 'exist' while animals merely 'live'." (29)

4. IN CONTRAST to the enormous possibilities that man has of becoming more, a fourth point in Freire's concept of man is a salutary reminder - SOME MEN LIVE IN A DEHUMANISED STATE. Dehumanisation is a distortion of being fully human. It results from an unjust order, claims Freire, that engenders violence in the oppressors which, in turn, dehumanises the oppressed. The oppressed, by denial of their right to name the world, are reduced to a state of 'being-for-another'. Some men, therefore, only 'live' and fail to 'exist'. This denial of a right to a voice, is to follow the prescriptions of those who speak and impose their words, it is the difference between "being present to shape history and being merely represented in history". (30) What is important says Freire, "is that people should know that they have to make history..... they have to transform the reality in which they are prevented from being full human beings." (31) This dehumanisation of some human beings is in sharp opposition, so Freire believes, to the vision of humanity that the Christian tradition would espouse. The oppressed human is a silent human, bound in a culture of silence, unable to participate in the transformation of the world - in other words less than he should be. For Freire, man strives for the realization of his own humanity, and must struggle to fulfil his responsibility to become fully human or else be reduced to a 'thing' or 'being-for-another'.

5. Freire indicates that HUMAN EXISTENCE IS A TASK OF PRAXIS "..... only human beings..... only they are beings of praxis. They are praxis." (32)

By combining reflective activity with his actions, man gives meaning to history. To be content with mere reflections results in verbalism and failure to reflect when he acts, produces only activism. Neither is real praxis which always combines reflection and action in order to create.

"Men and women are human beings because they are historically constituted as beings and praxis and in the process they have become capable of transforming the world - or giving it meaning."
(33)

6. The opening statement in this study of Freire's concept of man made clear Freire's view that reality is experienced as a process. MEN TOO ARE PROCESS - SITUATED IN HISTORY THEY ARE UNFINISHED. As beings of praxis their permanent task is one of becoming.

"Man is man to the extent his condition of being expresses itself in these dialectical opposites to be and to be becoming. They characterise him as a historical and cultural being."
(34)

Man does not perceive the data of reality - his existential situation - in a pure state. His perception becomes the more critical once the true causality of problems and phenomena has been apprehended. This is the process of conscientization. Men are because they are becoming as they work to recreate the world which they inherited and through whose reconstruction they make themselves. Through creating and being conditioned by his own creation, man finds the great challenge of freedom. Men are in the process of achieving freedom.

"Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest of human completion."
(35)

This concept of freedom and in particular the Freirian contention that men need to have freedom restored as a right, is not only important as an aspect of his theory of man, but is crucial for any application of Freire's thought to our educational practice. Some amplification of the concept is probably useful at this point.

Freire's notion of freedom owes much to Marx. Marx's philosophy, like Freire's, is one of protest and it is a protest imbued with faith in man. Independence and freedom for Marx are based on the act of self-creation. For him, man is independent only if he is not only free from but also free to. It is this freedom to that

is embodied in the words of Jesus recording in St John's Gospel:

"Then you will know the truth and the truth will make you free." (36)

Freire sees people as essentially free and capable of freedom. He wants to awaken men and women to the possibilities of "man in the process of achieving freedom". (37) Freedom lies in man's subservience to God, yes, but far greater is the possibility of man's freedom 'for God' and 'to God'. The life pattern of the aeon was one of 'becoming conformed' to this world. Freire sets over and against this the possibility of 'becoming transformed to new manhood so that:

"the man of God may come to completeness and be perfectly equipped." (38)

Having examined the main aspects of Freire's view of man, one important and concluding point remains.

7. MAN HAS A TWO-FOLD ONTOLOGICAL VOCATION - a. TO BECOME A SUBJECT AND b. TO NAME THE WORLD. Man creates a special link in his relationship with reality - that of subject to object. He has only to be a man to have this potential. By distinguishing himself from nature and recognising himself as a subject, man discovers himself to be a creator of culture and as a subject of culture, he is also a subject of history. If men are capable of reflecting they discover that they are capable of reflecting upon their reflections, that they are in history and that they are becoming. All these discoveries are "operations proper to subjects". (39) Animals do not discover themselves to be anything as they are objects and do not reflect. But man's discovery of himself as a being for himself is not limited to one moment in history:

"Man has to re-create himself as a subject by continual reflection." (40)

This is Freire's existentialism coming to the fore. He designates man as a 'subject in process of becoming' when he calls man a 'creator', 're-creator' or 'searcher'. Men must see the task of becoming subjects as vocational, as it is a daily task and one that involves respect for others' subjectivity.

Man is empowered to interact with the world, as a subject and thus becomes the author of his own history.

Men only become fully human when they are capable of speaking authentically as subjects, when they are capable of uttering their own logos.

"And out of the ground the Lord formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field....."(41)

Man fulfilling his function as head of the created order by giving names to each of the living creatures is the central focus of the writer, in the Genesis account. The act of naming is an important symbol and one which Freire draws on readily because it has in it an element of creative activity. To know the name of a person and thing is to know its essential nature and to have power over it. Adam's dominion over the universe was signified by his activity of naming the animals and Freire's treatment of 'naming' as a dialogical process is based to some extent on this model of naming found in Genesis and throughout the Old and New Testament. The act of naming calls forth a possibility of a new reality: "There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world..... To exist humanly, is to name the world, to change it."(42)

In naming the social reality, man assumes a dialectical relationship with it. By speaking authentic words, man gives meaning to history and thus 'names' the world.

It is not just the 'naming' process that is significant for Freire. Alongside the Genesis myth he also has in mind the western philosophical emphasis of logos (word). The idea of the divine word as possessing a quasi independence was well known among Sumerians - when something did not exist it was not regarded as having a name. The special characteristic of Hebrew thought was the view of the world as dynamic and energetic - the spoken word was a creative activity. For the Hebrews the spoken word was the expression of the whole man. God's word was not merely the abstract revelation of his mind, but, rather, the expression of God's will in nature, in men and in history. Coming from the verb Lego (I say), the word also indicated in the Greek, not only a word or speech but also reason and discourse. The philosopher Philo combined the idea of imminent reason with the Hebrew idea of divine-creative energy and

self-revelation, but the writer of the fourth gospel personified the logos in a new way, when he wrote:

"The word was made flesh and dwelt among us....."(43)

Word is to be thought of not primarily as the spoken or written word, but as the underlying idea which is conveyed by a sound uttered or a group of letters on a page. In this sense, a word is the account we give of something, its description or explanation.

Having regard to the whole background to the term logos, Freire indicates that in the process of liberation, men and women speak the word that they would become. When they are capable of uttering their own logos they speak authentically as subjects. If the destiny of man is to become an authentic being, each man, says Freire, "must win back his right to say his own word, to name the world".(44) This is a fundamental theme - saying the word is not the privilege of some few men, but the right of every man.

"The role of the problem-posing educator is to create together with the students the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the doxa is superseded by true knowledge at the level of the logos."(45)

Freire thus means two things by logos in this context. Firstly it refers to demythologised awareness, ie a man's true awareness of his position in the socio-economic structure in which he is situated and secondly, and more philosophically, man must understand his ontological vocation to be more fully human..... this refers to man's exercise of his freedom to name the world. For Freire the phrase to 'name the world' must always have a powerful connotation. Teaching men to read and write is, therefore, no inconsequential matter of memorising an alienated word, but, "a difficult apprenticeship in naming the world".

Freire wants people to stand apart from their lives and 'name the world and this is a characteristic of his 'vision of man' that men are able to put distance between themselves and their existential situation so that, instead of accepting the world as it appears to them they may exchange the doxa of appearances for the 'logos' which liberates men and transforms the world.

"Human beings are active beings, capable of reflection on themselves and on the activity in which they are engaged. They are able to detach themselves from the world in order to find their place in it and with it."(46)

To enter into reality, means to look at it objectively and apprehend it as one's field of action and reflection. Men, too close to their natural world, find this act of 'entering into' difficult. It is the task of the educator to help men overcome this 'magical' perception of reality to enable men to overcome the 'doxa' by the 'logos' of reality. This entails a clear lucid grasp of our own actions. As men come to understand their role in the world better as all men are capable of doing, according to Freire, they become true 'sowers of the word'. From a culture of silence where men had 'nothing to say' their word forbidden, they are able to discover the joy of making words speak. A story from one of Freire's culture circles is illustrative of this process:

"When all this land belonged to one latifundio", said another man, "there was no reason to read and write. We weren't responsible for anything. The boss gave the orders and we obeyed. Why read and write? Now it's a different story. Take me, for example, I am responsible not only for my work..... but also for tool repairs When I started I couldn't read, but I soon realized that I needed to read and write. You can't imagine what it was like to go to Santiago and buy parts. I couldn't get orientated. I was afraid of everything..... Now it's all different....."

"What did you feel, my friend..... when you were able to write and read your first word?"

"I was happy because I discovered I could make words speak." (47)

He had truly won back his right to speak his own word.

8. A final factor remains in connection with man's ontological vocation. MAN IS NOT RESTRICTED TO AN ETERNAL PRESENT; PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE ARE INTERCONNECTED IN THE CONTINUOUS HISTORICAL PROCESS. MAN, THEREFORE, EXPERIENCES REALITY IN EACH AGE, AS A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED.

"Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires a new naming." (48) Freire argues that each epoch is characterised by its own themes which, like the structures within which they emerge, overlap and interplay with their opposites throughout history. The problematic aspect of reality is discovered in what Freire terms 'limit situations'.

"In the last analysis the themes both contain and are contained in limit-situations; the tasks they imply require limit acts." (49)

As men engage in the discovery of these limit-situations, reality is revealed as a challenge. The crucial factor is man's response to the new as his reflection sends him back to the concrete context. He is called upon, says Freire, to clarify the facts anew. The only way for men to be fully human is through this critical reflective process. Inevitably praxis involves political activity for Freire asserts that "to exist is to take political action in favor of humanization".(50)

This, then is Freire's vision of man. The educational implications of this vision are manifold. Those of a general nature will be outlined here and those more specifically relevant to the area of Religious Education will be the subject of analysis in the final section of this study.

CHAPTER 2 - SOME GENERAL EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF FREIRE'S
VISION OF MAN

If reality is experienced by men as a process, education must complement that process. Freire writes in 'Educational Practice of Freedom':

"I shall discuss education as a constant process for the liberation of human beings."(1)

Education, in accordance with the Freirian 'vision' of man, must be liberating in order to be authentic and if the philosophical presuppositions of his pedagogy involve the principle that man is in a process of becoming a rejection of the thesis that the educated man is the 'adapted' man, is necessarily implicated. Any attempt to adapt men to reality and to formulate an education based on making men better 'fit' their world implies a denial of man's potential to become 'more' to engage in the process whereby he has the right to transform the world. Education based on Freire's philosophy of man must facilitate, process and contribute to the formation of a 'new' man. Freire calls for a re-evaluation, then, of the process of education and of its power to recreate.

Men are historical beings and cannot be understood apart from their relationship with the world. The language of those who seek to involve themselves in the educational process must be attuned to the concrete situation of the men they address. Freire attempts to formulate a type of education which corresponds to the specifically historical human mode of being. His formation of literacy circles was always preceded by an in-depth research of the peculiarly local situation in which they intended to operate. On the wider educational front, he offers to those of us in the 'first' world, an explanation of the failure of some of our educational endeavours:

"..... Many political and educational plans have failed because their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality, never once taking into account (except as mere objects of their action) the men-in-a-situation towards whom their programme was ostensibly directed."(2)

For Freire's own educational practice, the implication of his view of men as essentially historical beings was clear. He sought constantly to relate 'reading the word' to reading the world. He

rejected alienating 'blah' in favour of generativewords. He consequently calls into question the relevance of our own educational efforts. Too often 'alienating blah' precludes the possibility of relevant dialogue.

"We must discover the words of the people, i.e. I have to understand their way of thinking which is expressed by their language..... in order to start the literacy process from that level and not my level."(3)

It may be that 'to discover the words of the people' should represent the prior aim of any curriculum development programme. When Paulo Freire's illiterates discovered that they could create words, they also discovered that they could create the world. Too much of our own education has been content with verbal narrative. The message of Paulo Freire is that we are too easily satisfied. Education does not end with the memorisation of words, it must challenge participants to discuss the significance of these words to replace opinions of reality by the logic of reality.

"Democracy and democratic education are founded on faith in men on the belief that they not only can, but should discuss the problems of their country, of their continent, their world, their work, the problems of democracy itself."(4)

Men are different from animals. If, for animals, orientation in the world means adaptation to the world, for man it means humanising the world by transforming it. The members of Freire's culture circles did not, initially, perceive that 'men's actions' as such, are creative and transforming. Freire had to counter this by engaging the learner in a process of literacy training which related 'speaking the word' to 'transforming reality'. His work is, in some ways, an indictment of our own educational practice, but also a powerful model for reform. If men are different from animals, if they have the power to reflect and to objectify that reflection, if all men have dignity and are capable of acting responsibly Freire's work is also "a powerful vote of confidence in what can be called the humanistic possibilities of correct methods of educational intervention into even the most degraded circumstances of false consciousness and social oppression".(5)

Freire's problem posing method hopefully affirms men as beings who transcend themselves.

Some men live in a dehumanised state. Recognition of this fact must imply a further recognition that some of our educational methods may, in the past, and may continue in the present, to contribute to the dehumanisation of men. Or, if not, their dehumanisation, at least a negation of the humanistic possibilities of men to be more. Clearly, certain educational practices contribute to the maintenance of a culture of silence and the denial of the right of every man to speak his own word. Freire calls for a rejection of such an approach and in a way coincides with the present disenchantment being experienced in some of our affluent industrialised societies. Some of our previous educational approaches through their essentially static way of problem solving and not problem posing have produced:

"the destruction of the environment and man himself. This is a long way from the Biblical notion of man as co-creator of man as one who gains his power by the 'Grace of God' and who is called not to domination..... but to the witness of God The Creator and Christ as Redeemer."(6)

Education must go beyond modernisation which only stimulates the mere appearance of voice. "Education for development must be education for freedom in whose process science and technology will be at the service of the humanisation of men."(7)

Where ordinary people have been crushed by the dehumanising actions of others, where human beings have been reduced to things, it is the task of education to facilitate their responsibility to become fully human - to restore their right to a voice.

Human existence is a task of praxis. So much educational work vaporises into abstract theorising. Freire advocates a dialectical unity of reflection and action which constitutes true praxis. One must not be sacrificed at the expense of the other. Any educational practice must make it possible for men to problematise their existential situation, through a unity of reflection and action. Only such a process as this, will enable men "to penetrate more deeply the prise de conscience which must develop in the action which transforms reality".(8)

Freire always speaks of historically situated human beings and not abstract ideas. The educational methods which emanate from such a view must, therefore, vary within a single society in relation to its historical situation. If there can be "no truth outside or beyond the concrete historical events in which men are involved as agents"(9), every educational endeavour must seek to adopt those strategies and methods suitably related to their own historical situation.

Men are unfinished and are capable of achieving freedom.

"Education must become the practice of freedom..... the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."(10)

Some educational practice operates on the "fear of freedom"(11) principle. Such education is constraining. It offers itself charitably to those who need it most - like some wonder-working medicine to cure a sick man "enabling him to return to the healthy structure from which he became separated".(12)

Education for freedom does not:

"constrain the fearful and subdued, the 'rejects of life' to extend their trembling hands. Real generosity lies in striving so that those hands - whether of individuals or entire peoples - need to be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and by working transform the world."(13)

Human hands can be free hands. We are engaged in a process that Carl Rogers has called 'learning to be free'. This type of learning is one that recognises man in a rapidly changing world.

"The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn, the man who has learned how to adapt and change, the man who has realised no knowledge is secure..... a reliance on process rather than static knowledge is the only thing that makes sense as a goal for education in the modern world."(14)

If men are capable of freedom, teachers must help create a "psychological climate in which the child will feel free to be curious....."(15)

No domesticating education can ever make the capacity of man to be a conscious being disappear. This is why education for freedom is a realistic possibility.

Men have a two fold ontological vocation to be subjects and to name the world.

"Our advanced technological society is rapidly making objects of most of us and subtly programming us into the conformity of the logic of its system. To the degree that this happens, we are also becoming submerged in a new "culture of silence..... The young perceive that their right to say their own word has been stolen from them and that few things are more important than the struggle to win it back."(16)

This study has already advised against any suggestion that Paulo Freire's methods should be copied wholesale outside Latin America. There are nevertheless parallels, as the above quotation indicates. Recognition of this fact brings with it recognition that the Paulo Freire vision of man has serious implications for our own education. There are valid ways of 'naming the world'. We need, through our educational practice, to stimulate a capacity for critical thinking in our learners, as knowing subjects, challenged by the object to be known.

"It is precisely the systematic experience of the relationship between the knower and the known that is important..... This relationship is precluded whenever the learner is made the mere passive recipient of the teacher's word. In this case the learner does not speak his or her word."(17)

The teacher who uses problem-posing methods must seek to create conditions whereby knowledge at the level of the 'doxa' is superseded by the knowledge at the level of the 'logos.

It is important that we seek to encourage students to apprehend, rather than memorise the word.

"When words are remembered for their sounds (i.e. for exam purposes) rather than for their meaning, they lose their authenticity."(18)

The successful teacher will be concerned with being more rather than having more. We must educate less to obtain jobs and more for the continuing process of 'being more fully human'. "Work is essentially humanising..... and has to do with the consciousness human beings have of their own efforts."(19) Productive

labour does not have to do with producing more goods but in the creation of 'new men and women' for if human beings cannot take part in the transformation of their world..... They are alienated.

In 1984 when 'education for leisure' and not so much for employment has become a key issue, Paulo Freire's words on the importance of 'being' instead of 'having' assume a significance for the development of a relevant curriculum.

"Men as conscious beings exist in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits and their own freedom. A philosophy imbued with faith in man is confident that education for liberation can enable man to bring about solutions to the contradictions reality continually reveals. Education should seek to pose those very problems and aim to possess the permanent state of unity which exists between the acts of denouncing and announcing, which give it life."
(20)

A Critical View of Freire's 'Vision of Man'

Criticism of Freire's vision of man have centred around the actual 'visionary' nature of the concept. Considered by some, to be simply the thoughts of an idealistic 'dreamer', the accusing finger of Utopianism is again pointed.

"Utopianism is, in my opinion, a problem in Freire's thought. It is evident in an uncritical tendency to regard his notion of literacy as the key to liberation and a life of praxis for all men. This is to say that he does not apparently take much note of the complexities much less the dark side of the notion of liberation itself."(21)

Does Freire take sufficient account of the problem of human laziness? Given the choice, there will always be those who spurn the offer of 'liberation' because it requires too much effort.

"Freire seems to place all his hopes on educational enlightenment about the true nature of human agency. Nowhere does he seem to consider the possibility that a significant proportion of people might come to reject such radical freedom in favour of benign authoritarianism and aesthetically-tinged mystification once they discovered that radical praxis meant hard work, unrationalized frustrations, and 'too many evenings'."(22)

Other critics of Freire have called attention to the declining faith in the view of progress. For those who have lived through two world wars and numerous ideologically inspired terrors, the call to revolution in the name of liberation is not totally convincing. The evidence of history does not make us confident about the "efficacy of Freire's 'revolutionary trust' in the people".(23)

If Freire's 'vision of man' is to have far-reaching educational implications, some of the above criticisms will, of necessity, be taken into account. It cannot be assumed that Freire's 'vision' will mean the same thing to educationalists everywhere. However, having noted some of the doubts, it is not the place, here, to develop any detailed argument for or against, as much of this has been undertaken in the earlier stages of this study. A more positive approach is offered here. Freire's main focus is the equality of human dignity and man's intrinsic worth. His main thesis is that men are important and that all merit active respect. Where education appears to be threatened by the advances in technology, the voice of Paulo Freire serves as a timely reminder. He calls us to refuse to capitulate in the wake of technological advance, to shun any Luddite type (24) attack on the computerised 80's and to redirect our educational practice.

"The answer does not lie in the rejection of the machine but rather in the humanisation of man."(25)

If we can rid our traditional curriculum of its wordiness and its lack of faith in pupils' power to discuss, work and create; if we can centre the curriculum on relevant words and not 'alienating blah'; if we can establish a connection between educational and existential demands and tie a tenuous knot between concrete activity and critical reflection, we may yet be on the road to sharing Paulo Freire's 'vision of man' and no-one quite knows where that will lead.

SECTION THREE

A NEW APPROACH

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE THOUGHT
OF PAULO FREIRE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

What new directions lie ahead for Religious Education in 1984 - the year made famous by the title of a famous book? 1984 - may or may not fulfill the gloomy portents so vividly portrayed by George Orwell, but, due in no small measure to the work of that author, it will, undoubtedly, be a year of questioning, questions about what is happening in our society, the way we are going and why, questions involving a long hard look at ourselves, our work, our land and our traditions. It would seem an apt time, then, to focus attention on one of those traditions - the teaching of Religious Education in British schools - and to ask 'where do we go from here'? Is there a new approach which will radically change our whole attitude to the subject if not revolutionise the application of it? It is the contention of this study that the work of Paulo Freire can, in some measure, offer a new perspective and point to the way ahead. It may be that the way is "narrow and few will find it" (1), or even too risky, but, for those who are willing to shun the 'broad way' which may yet lead to Orwellian 'destruction' it is a new and exciting road which can lead to liberation.

A brief survey of significant 'milestones' along the path of the development of Religious Education in British schools in recent years is now outlined in order to set this 'new direction' in context. An identification of major theological trends in relation to the main approaches to Religious Education is then offered as a natural precursor to thoughts on the possibility of a 'new way' for Religious Education in and beyond 1984.

CHAPTER 1 - RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 1944-1984 (A BRIEF HISTORY)

The 1944 Education Act laid down certain prescriptions for Religious Education. These included instruction to begin each day with an act of Worship; Religious Instruction was to be in accordance with an agreed syllabus; conscience clauses were built in for both pupil and teacher. The act itself reflected a tension - Religious Instruction was a good idea, but provision was still made, nevertheless, for 'opting out'. The 1944 settlement gave statutory support to Religious Instruction in the county schools. The background to the period was, of course, the Second World War, fought, so it was believed, to preserve democracy, freedom and all that was counted worthy in the Western Christian tradition. Religious Education was considered to be an important factor in the re-building of British civilisation. The whole Act, often referred to as 'The Butler Act' - reflecting both his character and that of William Temple, regarded the 'religious issue' as an important one and consequently gave to the subject, careful and sympathetic study.

Religious Education was given fresh impetus by the 1944 Act.

However, in Primary Schools the subject was largely taught by a class teacher and although a few specialist teachers were available in secondary schools, most of the teaching was frequently undertaken by non-specialists - Christians who taught with sincerity but not necessarily, professional competence. The type of instruction given was largely biblical, adult dominated and based on the theology syllabuses of the universities. The prescriptions of the Act were chiefly interpreted as a mandate for the inculcation of Christianity. Although the people who framed the Act did not themselves interpret it in this way, this was the general interpretation linked to the view, widely held at the time, that religion operated as valuable underpinning of the democratic way of life - the religion referred to, in particular, was the Christian one. The general approach to the Religious teaching in schools was confessional, "The confessional approach is based on the view that traditional knowledge is true and spiritually binding. The idea is that a particular view is expressed and the Church is a model for this type of Religious Education - not much distinguishable from preaching"(1), and this confessional aim was largely dominant throughout the fifties.

In the decade following the 1944 Act, much valuable work was carried out by the Institute of Christian Education and in 1954, the Institute of Christian Education conducted a useful piece of research to assess the current state of religious education under the 1944 Act. The report revealed three main features:

- i) The majority of Local Education Authorities preferred to make use of an agreed syllabus drawn up by some other Local Education Authority than produce their own.
- ii) The number of pupils taking examinations in Religious Knowledge was still comparatively small.
- iii) There was a shortage of trained teachers - out of 674 grammar schools surveyed, 312 had no qualified Religious Education teacher.

The 1954 report made it clear that a persistent lack of qualified teachers was a most serious hindrance to the subject; the report of the Sheffield Institute of Education into Religious Education in secondary schools, in 1961, was even more bluntly expressed: "The standard of religious knowledge in the schools today, in so far as it has been revealed by the pupils who were tested in the University of Sheffield are, is clearly very poor..... It is believed that the results obtained are fairly representative of the state of affairs throughout the country."(2)

Eighteen years after the passing of the Education Act - all was not well - too few qualified teachers, too many syllabuses reflecting dated theological thought, no Local Education Authority with an adviser for Religious Education, many teachers confused in both aim and method.

The first real change in the approach to Religious Education in schools did not really come about until the sixties and in the early sixties "we believe it would be no exaggeration to say that a minor revolution has taken place in Religious Education".(3)

Teachers of Religious Education in the early sixties faced a problem - how to teach young people who were profoundly influenced by "the drag of contemporary cynicism and the materialist assumptions of a culture dominated by science and technology. Religion was seen as neither true nor false but merely irrelevant. Methods of teaching evolved in an earlier age, became more and more impracticable."(4)

Theological studies were affected. The publication of John Robinson's 'Honest to God' was something of a 'doctrinal bombshell'. Bishop Robinson appeared to be questioning many of the traditionally accepted beliefs. Some were encouraged by his contemporary approach - many were disconcerted. Moreover, the theological debate was carried on, not in the cloistered quarters of academic institutions, but in front of the television cameras. Churchgoers and non-churchgoers were bewildered.

With the 'New Theology' came the 'New Morality' - now even Christian ethics were being called into question.

In 1961, Harold Loukes had brought out a book entitled 'Teenage Religion', which was a survey of what teenagers thought about key issues. Richard Acland was also concerned with the attitudes and thoughts of young people. In his book, 'We Teach Them Wrong' (1963), he asserted that "we are confronted with a different kind of animal..... not one whose basic culture is settled, local and agricultural, but one whose basic culture is technological and scientific".(5) Acland stressed the need for new methods in Religious Education and supported Loukes' approach.

In 1964-65, the work of Ronald Goldman contributed to Primary Religious Education what Loukes had contributed to the secondary schools. Goldman was concerned with the problem of 'readiness' and pointed out that you could not just teach the Bible stories to children without recourse to their 'readiness for religion'. To do so could stunt a child's religious understanding and ensure that he/she would find response impossible, possibly for ever. In 'Readiness for Religion', Goldman suggested that: "..... it is an impossible task to teach the Bible as such to children before adolescence."(6)

Goldman's work provoked stormy controversy. His ideas were severely criticised, but his research certainly encouraged a great deal of experimental work in the primary school and greatly influenced the whole approach to the religious education of younger children. The content of Religious Education was drastically reduced in the 'Goldman era'. His life-theories of 'Bread', 'Sheep', etc did contain some Biblical evidence but essentially, these topics were explored in a very practical way. The approach was child-centred. Goldman had

revolutionised the Religious Education method and, as the sixties continued, not only the method, but the whole intention of Religious Education began to change.

Other writers also stressed the need for new methods. D S Hubery advocated an experiential approach to education in his book 'Teaching the Christian Faith Today'. The confessional approach, however, still had strong support. The 'official view' on Religious Education was still fairly positive. The Crowther Committee Report of 1959 had explicitly stated the importance of Religious Education. On Page 44 of the report it was clearly stated that:

"Teenagers..... need, perhaps before all else, to find a faith to live by."(7)

In 1963, the Newsom Committee had devoted chapter seven of their report to 'Spiritual and Moral Development' and later in the report stress was again placed on the value of Religious Education in schools:

"We have already made clear the importance which we attach to that part of Religious upbringing which falls to the schools."(8)

However, by 1967, the Plowden Committee reflected a slight change in emphasis. Whereas both Crowther and Newsom had been very explicit about the importance of Religious Education on the primary school curriculum, the Plowden Committee were not quite so unambiguous in their examination of the subject. The Durham report comments:

"Much positive information was expressed in a strangely negative way."(9) Significantly, a minority report was also included alongside the main Plowden one, opposing the Religious Education of young children chiefly on the grounds of the inherent unsuitability of the material.

In 1965 'New Ground in Christian Education' extended Harold Loukes' 1961 work into a more formal survey. Loukes advocated a new starting point. He focused on the real life problems of teenagers and suggested that any syllabus should in fact, be a 'problem syllabus'. Subjects for discussion included snobbery, belief, prayer etc. and not just teenage problems - anything could be considered as a starting point for religious discussion as long as it was life-centred.

The Loukes approach is sometimes called the 'personal quest for meaning' or the 'implicit' religion approach. Religion was buried in the problems to be analysed and was not explicit as in studying Temples, religious leaders etc. This approach is also referred to as the 'existentialist' approach - it was concerned with the problems of teenage existence.

The late sixties witnessed a period of great public debate. Many parents apparently wanted Religious Education for their children but humanities departments were springing up everywhere and Religious Education began to be integrated or even buried among the social sciences: the debate about replacing Religious Education with moral education began.

In 1970, the Durham Commission produced its report - 'The Fourth R'. This report represented a 'different view' of Religious Education. It was a Church document and represented the work of Christians who saw Britain as a Christian country - post ecclesiastical but not post-Christian.

"Let it be granted that there are those who assert that such phrases as a 'sense of the infinite' are empty, that religious claims are bogus and that all religious people, not only Christians, are utterly mistaken and self-deluded. But there would plainly at present be no case for developing a national education policy for the whole country on this assumption."(10)

The report was positively disposed toward Christian values and considered Christianity as a workable framework. It pointed out that an education system can not be value free and must be based on a model of man.

"Man is a creature who finds himself perplexed with the mystery of his existence..... From the start of recorded history he has sought to find answers to the enigma of his origin and destiny....."(11)

The report offered the Christian model as being the most acceptable emphasising the irreducible value of every child and offered the Christian faith as the main subject of study in Religious Education.

This was not the old confessional approach. The Fourth R offered an open way of teaching and was concerned with confrontation and engagement. It offered the view that life is a force to be engaged with. Religious Education, according to the Report wasn't

just information - giving but was concerned with the raising of ultimate questions. Religious Education then should provoke questions about meaning, purpose and value - 'conversion from a shallow view to an overall view of man'.

'Man is a phenomenon, a complex structure of physical, emotional and psychological characteristics.....'(12)

The report distinguished Religious Education from Moral Education.

The report did not seriously engage with the question of World Religions, and this aspect was left and developed later by The Schools Council Working Paper. Several significant factors contributed to this paper. Religious Education Teachers were finding it difficult to cope with immigrants - there was a dearth of material which acknowledged immigrant culture. There was a move toward 'Religion Observed' - you could observe empathically.

In 1969, Professor Ninian Smart was instrumental in the formation of the Shop Working Party on World Religions in Education and when in 1971 the working paper of the Lancaster University based project entitled 'Religious Education in Secondary Schools' was published, a new approach to Religious Education was advocated.(13)

Religious Education was not viewed as the product of churches - the language and assumptions of the report were those of education-
alists and its values were those of philosophers of education. The report stressed the need to reflect the full spectrum of beliefs in a pluralistic society - Britain was not now a mono-faith country - she was post Christian. The Report saw the churches role not as sponsors of activity but as objects of enquiry - churches' and vicars were resources. Religious Education was justified not in terms of aiding personal commitment, but as a means of developing an understanding of the universal phenomenon of religion. This phenomenon constituted a powerful one in our society, claimed the report, and therefore it merited study. The Schools Council Working Paper clearly recommended an objective, undogmatic approach expressed in phenomenological language. In a sense, it could be said that the report spawned the term "phenomenological" meant to indicate

- a) an engagement in the study of a phenomenon, and
- b) the need to bracket out the 'truth claims' of what is to be studied.

As a natural corollary to 'phenomenology' the term 'empathy' became

widely used to point to the possibility of 'standing in another's world view'. As a consequence, there was a revolution in Religious Education content. World Religions were deemed suitable for study at all levels and non-theistic themes such as humanism or Marxism could be included in the curriculum. Emphasis was no longer on belief, but on the many dimensions of religion.

The Report virtually sanctioned 'anything' coming into the classroom. A Hindu Wedding or a pentecostal pastor - everything could be studied because the aim was to study as evidence with a view to understanding and not commitment.

"Young children have a deep sense of wonder and awe. Unless this side of a child's personality is respected and developed, his personality will be stunted in one direction. Similarly a genuine search for meaning in life is characteristic of older children..... Education should encourage and develop this search, making the pupil aware of the questions and the concerns of religion, and giving him experience of the methods of inquiry, the language and thought forms that belong to this form of discourse."(14)

The need for commitment to a faith on the part of teachers was not an a priori condition for teaching the subject. What was needed was a commitment to the study of religion.

There have been one or two significant developments since the publication of the Schools Council Working Paper 36. In 1975, the City of Birmingham Agreed Syllabus appeared. The important factor here was that a legal case resulted in the throwing out of the syllabus. It was really an extension of Paper 36 and included teaching on humanism and communism. Teachers were later instructed to return pages on Communism.

The Hampshire Agreed Syllabus of 1978 was almost the first syllabus to be couched in terms of concepts, skills and attitudes. A good many syllabuses since have taken up this approach. They are objective based.

The present day has seen something of a revival of the Jesus Themes. Curriculum Christianity is a central issue. The Cleveland Curriculum Review on Religious Education states:

"Although the implicit approach in Religious Education is generally accepted throughout the Primary School, the child in the upper junior

school is ready for more explicit teaching..... The 'Jesus themes', developed in some detail over the two final years in the junior school, are recommended as a substantial part of Religious Education in those years."(15)

Religious Education most definitely still has a place on the curriculum. The HMI/DES Curriculum 11-16 stresses the need for certain essential 'areas of experience' with which a child needs to be concerned during any period of compulsory schooling and lists these 'areas' alphabetically as :

The aesthetic and creative; the ethical; the linguistic; the mathematical; the physical; the scientific; the social and political; the spiritual.

Commenting on 'Religious Education and the Curriculum' the DES report states:

"Religious Education shares with other subjects the task of helping children to acquire the skills, knowledge and social competence necessary for their personal development and life in society. Consequently it shares with other subjects a concern for basic skills such as attention to evidence, careful reasoning, the communication of ideas through the written and spoken words, as well as providing opportunities for pupils to work independently, and display initiative."(16)

In 1984 there is a significant growth in the 'life-skill' industry. Careers, community studies, personal relationships and other aspects deemed necessary for 'coping with life' all bid for space on the school timetable and often it is that space traditionally held by Religious Education. What new directions are open to the development of Religious Education? Is there, in fact, a new direction available? It may be that the subject needs more than a new way. Some kind of new-birth may be involved, an Easter Experience, from which a 'new creature' will emerge, free from past restraints and liberated to the new.

CHAPTER 2 - THE HERMENEUTIC TRADITION AND VARIOUS APPROACHES IN
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THEOLOGY

This present study maintains the view that there is a relationship between various theological developments and differing approaches in Religious Education. In an article entitled: 'Dialogue and Emancipation: New Horizons in the development of Religious Education' published in the British Journal of Religious Education (1985), David Gooderham has attempted to show that:

"There are, in fact, theoretical perspectives which yield powerful analyses of these developments in theology. They are to be found in the hermeneutic tradition."(1)

The article seeks to show the way in which 'a cumulative series of types of 'hermeneutic theory' has developed, and uses these types of theory as a useful framework for an examination of the differing 'modes of mediation' which can in fact be seen to provide the underpinnings of various Religious Education approaches. Gooderham offers four types of theory for consideration - the objective, the existential, the dialogic and the emancipatory, and suggests that the last may well point to a significant way forward.

The article is open ended and this study will seek to use the arguments it puts forward in the following ways. Firstly, there follows a resumé of the first three theories for consideration; secondly and more importantly, this present chapter will take up issues raised, by offering the thought and work of Paulo Freire in its theological context, as a means of engaging an emancipatory framework for a new approach to Religious Education.

a) Objective Theory

The search for objectivity was the main thrust of nineteenth century hermeneutic. This type of theory emerged against the background of biblical criticism at a time when theologians were concerned to develop a conscious relationship with the natural sciences. The aim was to erase all traces of subjectivity so that study of the 'sacred texts' could be seen to be as 'objective' as the natural sciences. Enquiry was to be free from bias, prejudice and the subjective interests of the interpreter. Lesslie Newbigin, in 'The Other Side of 1984- questions for the churches', writes of the early nineteenth century:

"The European peoples were now the vanguard of history. They had mastered the secret of a true scientific method which would banish old superstition and lay bare the real nature of things as in the light of day."(2)

Things that had once been obscure were now being explained and the explanation more often than not was 'scientific'.

Objective theory still underpins various types of Religious Education work such as the traditional O and A-level examination work and biblical studies in centres of further education and the universities. Any attempt to offer information, at primary level, e.g. the land where Jesus lived in a 'non-confessional' manner, lends itself to 'methodical' study of, for example, Biblical texts in later school life.

b) Existential Theory

The work of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann both called into question the academic necessity and/or practical viability of 'objectivity'. Gooderham's article recalls "Bultmann's injunction that biblical texts 'should be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically, or better still, existentially'".(3)

In existential theory the emphasis shifted to the subjective/objective problem and that of the authentic/inauthentic. Religious understanding was to be considered in terms of personal encounter not objective criteria. Pre-understanding assumed a central importance. The context of past history was in this type of theory to be complemented by the existential:

"the object of interpretation can be established by interest in history as the sphere of life in which human existence moves, in which it attains its possibilities and develops them and in reflection upon which it attains understanding of itself and of its own particular possibility enquiry into 'human being' as one's own being."(4)

Reference has already been made to the 'existential' nature of the work of Harold Loukes. However such theories do not only underpin the work of Loukes. Wherever 'existential questions' are central the type of Religious Education undertaken will be characterised by open-enquiry and a critical approach. The existential approach can, therefore, underpin a variety of Religious Education work, be it specifically Christian-based or more humanistic. What is central is not the nature of the form of particular content but the centrality

of existential interests.

c) Dialogic Theory

This type of theory has close links with the existential, with this difference:

"whilst the existential conceives of the interpreter as a lone individual in encounter with the message of the text, the dialogic sees him rather as historically rooted with opportunity for dialogue with the text."(5)

The location of the interpreter within a particular language community is important.

"Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world, but on it depends the fact that man has a world at all."(6)

An individual's thoughts, ideas etc constitute his horizon. Gadamer speaks of the possibility of broadening the horizon, of incorporating other horizons. Thus the 'sacred texts' invite us to dialogue so that an extension or merging of horizons might take place.

Where Religious Education teaching has been underpinned by this approach, students have explored other faiths with the idea that 'something is to be learnt from them'. The study of world religions has seemed completely congruous with the 'dialogic' approach.

Reference has been made earlier to the phenomenological approach exemplified by the Schools Council Working Paper. The relationship between this and the dialogic theory here under examination is somewhat ambivalent. "The phenomenological method bypasses and indeed excludes attention to the subjectivity and historical rootedness of the enquirer - and in consequence, bypasses the prerequisites of dialogue."(7)

In what sense then can dialogic theory as put forward by Gadamer be said to have underpinned an approach to Religious Education? In this way. Although theoretically the phenomenological approach bypasses the need for dialogue, it has in practice had the effect of facilitating it. This can be accounted for by a variety of socio-historical factors. Strong pressures for the promotion of multi-cultural understanding have significantly moved the approach to a dialogical one.

"The Schools Council Ground Plan represents an important movement towards a reshaping of the phenomenological approach - or perhaps, more accurately, towards adumbrating a dialogical approach." (8)

The Groundplan seeks to complement understanding with evaluation and goes beyond the 'loosely conceived relationship of phenomenological and existential approaches advocated earlier in Working Paper 36." (9)

Religious Education work underpinned by dialogic theory acknowledges that all types of pre-understanding and tradition are the means of entering into religious dialogue.

Before outlining in more detail the fourth category of theories, it is perhaps opportune to reflect on the obvious Freirian echoes already encountered in the preceding categories. Attention has already been paid to the existential root in Freire's thought, (10), and Gadamer's words on the importance of language on which 'depends the fact that man has a world at all' cannot fail to recall the words of the peasant in Freire's culture circle: "... there would be no-one to say this is a world...." (11)

The 'fourth R' stressed the need for Religious Education to be based on a model of man. The temptation to recall Freire's words: "Every educational practice implies a concept of man and the world" is irresistible.

Man's ability to transcend his 'limit situations' finds happy corollation with Gadamer's horizon theory and the importance of dialogue as the essence of Freirian educational theory has been thoroughly delineated. What new approach can Freire offer? Have not all his theories already been taken up in the past and to some extent present Religious Education approaches. The answer to this and other related questions lies in the possibility of liberation. The theology of liberation has been a significant movement in our time. Any attempt to locate Paulo Freire in any one theological setting would be a foolish undertaking - attention has already been drawn to the multiple roots of his thought, the width of his vision and the richness of his ideas. However, sufficient regard having been paid to all this wealth of background, this study will endeavour to show that alongside the message of the theologians of liberation, Paulo Freire's 'cultural action for freedom' can offer an exciting way forward for the teaching of Religious Education in British Schools.



d) Emancipatory Theory

"Every interpretation of the texts which is offered to us, (whether as exegesis or as systematic or aesthetical interpretation) must be investigated in relation to the praxis out of which it comes." (12)

The concept of praxis assumes a central place in any emancipatory theory. Although, themes characteristic of previous theories reappear, e.g. historical rootedness, the need for dialogue etc., they are now radically transposed in a theological redefinition centred upon critical reflection on the situation. Liberation theologians, (13), rooted in the Latin American experience, see the subject of theology as the domain of a politically committed group rather than that of the individual theologian. The central objective of the theology has instituted 'praxis' and not 'thinking' as the core- the starting point is reality and not ideas. Liberation theology has rethought the role of instruments of theological reflection and given a sense of 'now' to the Word of God.

"theologians..... often have a barely idealist conception of history, they tend to regard the history of the church's kerugma and her dogma purely as a kind of history of ideas." (14)

In order to prevent a deterioration of Christian theology into a tradition of ideas, serving to endorse repressive social structures, these theologians have sought to involve both a critical and practical thrust to any examination of Biblical texts. Whereas dialogic theory is content to take account of the enquirer's historical rootedness as a necessary context, emancipatory theory draws attention to the power-relationships in which the enquirer stands.

"To place oneself in the perspective of the Kingdom means to participate in the struggle for the liberation of those oppressed by others." (15)

In Latin America, there has been a real attempt to come to terms with "a spirituality that is a concrete manner..... a definite way of living before the Lord in solidarity with all men....." (16)

Some Christians have, through their commitment to the 'process of liberation' begun to live this kind of 'spirituality'. The concept of liberation not only implies a liberation from the automatic acceptance of the ideas and values of the developed world but involves the possibility of developing alternative societies which aim at goals other than affluence and materialism.

"..... One of the most important aspects of conscientization..... is the realisation that life in the third world is characterised by dependence. Liberation from economic dependence is necessary before any development can take place.....

Through conscientization the myth of indebtedness to the capital is exposed and dependence is attacked."(17)

In the theologies of liberation several key terms acquire 'new' emphasis. The classical conception of truth has come to a crisis in emancipatory theory. Hugo Assman writes: "we reject any logos which is not the logos of a praxis."(18) Liberation theologians are thus saying that "there is no truth outside or beyond the concrete historical events in which men are involved as agents."(19)

The traditional view of truth has been to say that there "is an absolute Christian truth or Christian principles somehow enshrined in Scripture and/or in the pronouncements of the church. But then, there are more or less imperfect applications of the truth."(20)

In this view, truth is seen as pre-existent to, and independent of, its historical effectiveness. Its legitimacy is tested in relation to this abstract 'absolute heaven of truth'.

Liberation Theologians are not simply saying that truth must be applied or even that truth is related to its application. They are, in fact, saying that there is no truth outside or beyond concrete historical events in which men are involved as agents. Knowledge cannot be separated from action, in the process of transforming the world through participation in history.

"God's word is not understood as a conceptual communication but as a creative event..... Its truth does not consist in some correspondence to an idea but in its efficacy in carrying out God's promise or fulfilling his judgement."(21)

Faith is always concrete obedience. The idea of knowing and knowledge always has this active, participatory content.

"we think always out of a definite context of relations and action, out of a given praxis."(22)

The notion of freedom underlies much of the liberation argument: "you will know the truth and the truth will make you free."(23)

Cardinal Gutierrez writes "spirituality in the strict or profound sense of the word is the dominion of the spirit. If the truth will set you free, the Spirit will lead us to complete freedom..... It will lead us along the path of liberation because where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."(24)

Gutierrez and others see this 'complete freedom' as centered on a conversion to the neighbour - the oppressed person, the exploited social class, the despised race, the dominated country and furthermore outlines the conversion process as one affected by the "socio-economic political, cultural and human environment in which it occurs."(25)

Emancipatory theories represent a criticism of earlier hermeneutic theories largely characterized by Western theology. It is a criticism from within the Christian experience of Latin America, and its practical emphasis serves to link it with various types of Marxist theory. Marx' statement: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways: the point is to change it," finds happy acceptance in the theologies of liberation. The Marxist insistence on the complementarity of theory and practice is seen by them as a closer representation of the Biblical views of knowledge, than some forms of Christian epistemology. Emancipatory theories may well be revolutionary:

"To be responsible for history in a revolutionary fashion today means to find the unity of knowledge and action."(26)

In summary, emancipatory theories, largely represented by the Latin American theologies of Liberation "take as their starting point a particular sociological situation, state the view that theology involves not only the understanding of 'faith' but also a political commitment to change society.....

"It is not a theology about liberation, it is a theology for liberation."(27)

The theologies draw freely on Marxism and represent an existential starting point in an act of solidarity with the poor. Camilo Torres believed that it would be a sin for Christians to oppose change and wrote:

"I have said that as a Columbian, as a sociologist, as a Christian and as a priest, I am a revolutionary. I believe that the Communist Party consists of truly revolutionary elements and hence I cannot be anti-Communist either as a Columbian, a sociologist, a Christian or a priest."(28)

Liberation grew out of the failure of the idea of 'development', which had come to mean reformism, modernisation, a means of maintaining the status quo and expecting people to be grateful for it. "Liberation expressed the determination of oppressed peoples to take their destiny into their own hands, to become the 'subject' and no longer the passive object of history and so to shake off their oppressors."(29)

CHAPTER 3 - PAULO FREIRE AND EMANCIPATORY PEDAGOGY

If emancipatory theories are to be advanced as a possible way forward in the development of Religious Education and if the work of Paulo Freire is to make a significant contribution to the way ahead, an indication of some points of correlation between the two would seem a useful exercise.

"When I was a young man, I went to the people, to the workers, the peasants, motivated really by my Christian faith..... I talked with the people, the pronunciation, the words, the concepts. When I arrived with the people, the misery, the concreteness, you know. But also the beauty of the people, the openness, the ability to love which the people have, the friendship.....

The obstacles of this reality sent me to Marx. I started reading studying. It was beautiful because I found in Marx a lot of things the people had told me - without being literate. Marx was really a genius, BUT WHEN I MET MARX, I CONTINUED TO MEET CHRIST ON THE CORNERS OF THE STREET."(1)

Reference has already been made to the relationship between Emancipatory theories and Marxist analysis. Liberation theology represents an important phase in the Christian Marxist encounter. It borrowed from Marxism the tools of sociological analysis to discover levels of exploitation in order to unmask oppressors. Marxism is not discussed with much clarity by the theologians of liberation. Their use of Marxism is instrumental in some senses 'forced' upon them by the lack of any alternative analysis of society. Dom Elder Camara has written:

"I think we can avail ourselves of the Marxist method of analysis which is still valid, while leaving aside the materialistic conception of life."(2)

Bonino has commented:

"We move totally in the area of human rationality - in the realm where God has invited man to be on his own..... the only legitimate question is whether the analysis and projection do, in fact, correspond to the facts of human history..... if they do..... they become unavoidable historical mediation of Christian obedience."(3)

Gutierrez rejects a hasty synthesising of Christianity and Marxism and a group of Chilean Bishops in a paper called 'The Gospel, Politics and Socialism', made clear their opposition to 'doctrinaire Marxism' but they did assert that Christians could collaborate

with Marxists in building a more humane society.

Hebbleshwaite in his book 'The Christian-Marxist Dialogue' reminds his readers that in Spain "in the past a Christian who became a militant Marxist had to give up his faith..... this is no longer true today..... We start from the assumption that the contradiction between faith and Marxist commitment has not yet been overcome but it can be overcome in the struggle for liberation."(4)

Freire represents a very similar position to that of the Liberation Theologians. His own experience does not lead him to a simple combination of two points of view, i.e. Christianity and Marxism (c.f. Gutierrez). The problem of how a Christian can engage in Marxist revolutionary politics is largely a Western one. Freire can write quite legitimately:

"God led me to the people and the people led me to Marx."(5), whilst remaining a member of the staff of the World Council of Churches. In one sense liberation theologians have discarded the distinction between those who wear the Christian label and those who do not. Like many other Catholic Christians, Freire shared the view that the social reality around him, defended apparently by the church, was completely at odds with his Christian faith. Because of the extremes of wealth and poverty, power and powerlessness, he was impelled toward a social class understanding of society. Hence his interest in Marx and the correlation between his thought and that of theologians such as Gutierrez and his statements that: "Our conversion process is affected by the socio-economic, political, cultural and human environment in which it occurs. Without a change in these structures, there is no authentic conversion."(6)

Liberation grew out of the failure of the idea of 'development'. The development process had deteriorated into mere 'modernising' in many third world situations. Paulo Freire is insistent that: "while all development is modernisation, not all modernisation is development."(7) Liberation Theology implies liberation from the accepted ideas of the developed world and the possibility of developing alternative goals. Freire's 'education as the practice of freedom' has always been rooted in the historical process. His conscientizacao aims to demythologise the oppression often masked by forms of democratic freedom. If Latin American theologians are engaged in a theology for liberation, Freire's cultural action for freedom has precisely this aim:

"True education increases the permanent search for people together with others for their becoming more fully human in the world in which they exist."(8)

Emancipatory theories elevate praxis to a central position. The centrality of this concept for Freire has already been clearly defined:

"Critical consciousness is brought about not through an intellectual effort alone but through praxis - through the authentic union of action and reflection."(9)

Freire does not claim to be a theologian. He is an educationalist, born in Brazil and now working for the W.C.C. in Geneva.(10)

However, he unites in his person, educational and theological ideas. His central concerns of liberation and praxis find many parallels in the theologies of liberation. His view that the role of the Church must be the role of liberation and not the role of domestication help place him alongside his fellow countrymen who seek to develop the message of liberation in the Churches. Freire has said:

"..... I am more and more interested in working with theologians. In my point of view theology today has many things to do. That is, from my point of view theology is not something superfluous. No, on the contrary. But it is obvious I don't mean a false theology, not a theology of 'bla, bla, bla idealistic theology - but a theology which is part of anthropology, which is engaged historically in order to discuss for example, the word of God and our relations with the very word of God.....

Because of this I think that theology, such a theology, should be connected with education for liberation - and education for liberation with theology."(11)

Archbishop Romero, a conservative turned radical after the murder of a liberation priest, just weeks into his ministry, was himself also murdered. His name has since become synonymous with a commitment to the oppressed and his body was enshrined with the words: "the voice of those without a voice, the voice of the peasants of Latin America."

The connection between a theology of liberation and 'education as cultural action for freedom' is clearly drawn.

CHAPTER 4 - THE EFFICACY OF THE "FUNCTION" OF RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION - A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE THOUGHT OF
PAULO FREIRE

"Perfunctory and uninspired!" This phrase used by E. A. Butler in his book 'The Art of the Possible', was considered by that author to be an apt description of Religious Education in certain schools between the passing of his Education Act and the writing of his memoirs in 1971. Although by no means universally indicative of Religious Education practice in our British schools, there are, perhaps, those who would adhere to the view that this phrase can sadly still be applied in 1984. It must also be said that there will be those who hold that the current state of Religious Education cannot be so described and who are entirely happy with Religious Education as it is. If we are satisfied and feel that Religious Education properly fulfills its role in today's educational world, we have no need to heed the words of Paulo Freire. If, however, we are dissatisfied even in some small measure and sustain a desire for development, Freire's words will not fall on deaf ears, but will invite us to the possibilities of doing more. His words are simply that - an invitation - an invitation to a new vision, a different perspective from the thought of Paulo Freire.

Michael Grimmit has suggested that the contribution of developments in modern theology "may be even greater in terms of approach than in terms of content".(1)

Liberation Theology has had to reflect on the relationship of Christian faith to the contemporary situation and in so doing, has pointed to the necessity of examining and critically evaluating the socio-economic, cultural factors, which condition all expressions of faith. A consequence of this has been a reversal of the old order in theology : the starting point for Liberation Theologians has been reality and not ideas. Freire's starting point was the reality of poverty in the slums of Recife. It is from there and the consequent realities of his own experience in various parts of the world that he invites us to share his thoughts. The invitation is to join with him in a mutual Easter Experience, in order that together we may, perhaps, begin again with fresh insight, to set about establishing new models for an alternative approach to Religious Education.

Elie Wiesel in *Messengers of God?* (New York 1970) has written:
"According to Jewish tradition, creation did not end with man,
it began with him. When he created man, God gave him a secret and
that secret was not how to begin, but how to begin again."⁽²⁾

Liberation Theologians have begun again; they do not only raise
questions from the standpoint of faith, but from the reality of
their situation. Paulo Freire does not claim to be a theologian,
but he does raise questions from both his Christian faith and the
genuineness of his experience. If we wish to begin again in
Religious Education, then Paulo Freire has something to say to us
from the perspective of his Latin American faith. His ideas,
rooted in the 'education for liberation' principle are truly
emancipatory and essentially Christian. There will be those who
decide that they do not want his ideas, but he invites us to
listen to them just the same.

REMARKS

If we are to begin again we need to reflect seriously on what we are trying to achieve in Religious Education. Alternatively, what sort of learner do we hope will emerge from the type of Religious Education on offer? It seems clear that the approach will be neither confessional nor non-confessional. Such arguments are peripheral in the Freire method. The approach is an educational one. In Liberation Theology, faith is concerned with an educative process. This type of theology is conscious of a future replacement "being concerned not only with present ideologies, but also with laying the ground for the future ideologies".(3)

Education is not at the level of handing out prepacked knowledge. The aim of this type of Religious Education must be "the autonomous learner".(4) Edwin Cox has written:

"It has sometimes been thought that an educated man is a walking encyclopaedia..... But an educated man is more than a well stuffed memory."(5)

From the Freirian perspective, the well-stuffed memory has no place, being rejected as the product of a 'negative, banking approach' to education: the autonomous learner is on the other hand, the product of 'education for liberation'. This learner will have some information about religion, but:

"He will not know everything but he will know enough to be able to think about the subject and he will know where to acquire further knowledge when he needs it."(6)

If the autonomous learner is the end product of a meaningful Religious Education, conscientization must be a paramount priority from the Freirian viewpoint. How can conscientization take place in Religious Education?

For Freire, true education serves to realise man's humanity to its fullest extent, through conscientization. In the culture circles of his literacy programme Freire set about the task of passing from a 'primary consciousness' to a 'critical consciousness' by means of his generative words. His work was with adults in volunteer, non-institutional-groups. If the goal of Religious Education is to be conscientization, how can young people in schools and universities become socially and politically aware?

It is interesting to note that adjudicator J. 'The British Writing Competition' commenting on the 1983 entries, noted "a great upsurge of interest in problems of a social or political nature".

"The evidence of increased social awareness is clearly due in part to the determination of many English teachers to encourage children to understand what is going on around them."(7)

Freire thinks it possible to challenge young people to understand the mechanisms of how the society works:

"Individually I think that we could have some kind of experience, in islands of challenging the young people, concerning political questions by studying mathematics, for example, geography or history..... no problem."(8)

Presumably, politics could also be discussed through Religious Education, although Freire does not specifically say so. However, it is my view that 'conscientization' as an aim in Religious Education means more than 'discussing politics' in Religious Education lessons. The answer to the question of conscientization lies in the idea of the autonomous learner. Freire's theoretic content was his culture circles:

"In the theoretic context, holding the concrete off at arms length we seek the *raison d'être* of the facts."(9)

Freire's view is that in the concrete context, where the facts are "we so often find ourselves enveloped by the real but without necessarily comprehending in a critical way why the facts are what they are."(10)

Young people too are 'enveloped by the real'. Our aim in Religious Education is to offer a theoretic context where there is an opportunity to emerge from daily life conditions in order to discover 'reasons'.

"There has furthermore, been an awareness of the need for education to give learners not only knowledge, but a vision of the overall purpose of life and a consciousness of what values are underlying life styles."(11)

The circles of culture in Latin America also sought to find ways in each locality, by which each could be transformed into a 'center for political action'. Here is the danger of adopting the

Freire's total wholeness. I see in no sense divorcing classrooms as centres for political action. This would not take into account the needs of the precise context of our individual schools. I do not think that in any way is what Freire means us to understand by "some kind of experience in islands". Conscientization is inextricably linked with the concept of the critical student. Our aim in Religious Education must be to produce the student who maintains a characteristic, vigilant attitude, one who is not satisfied with misleading appearances, but who has exchanged the doxa of appearances for the logos of reality. In short:

"the critical student wants 'the truth of reality and not the submission of reality to his own truth.'"(12)

The reality of life in British Inner Cities was suddenly and starkly revealed in the early years of this present decade. Riots spilled into the streets of Toxteth, Leeds, Brixton and other urban areas. The report of the inquiry led by Lord Scarman, entitled 'The Brixton Disorders' (1981), recalled findings of the Kerner Report into the United States 1960's riots. The Kerner Report had listed long-standing grievances, which were held to underlie the violence in the streets. The Scarman Report echoed many of these, including that of 'inadequate education'. There is a widespread feeling in the 1980's that somehow we have failed. The long-held grievance of inadequate education still causes those in our inner cities to "clamour with urgent questions".(13) Birgit Rodhe, a city councillor from Malmo, Sweden, in an article 'New Educational Perspectives' has written:

"In the last few years I think we have all experienced a vivid illustration of what to me appears mainly as positive failure in education. We did not aim at educating our young generation for protest, revolt and revolution. Yet, in revolting against the society that we helped build, against the educational institutions that were to train them for future roles in this society, they questioned the whole basis of our systems and opened up fruitful new lines of thought and action towards the future."(14)

Significantly Rodhe's words were written a whole decade before the Brixton and Toxteth Riots. It is a persistent grievance among those involved in a variety of commissions of inquiry that their findings pass unheeded. The Scarman Report recalled words of an earlier report. If we are to reflect on the relationship of the Christian faith to the contemporary situation, we will need to

take note of the recommendations and findings of current reports and not simply to reflect on those findings but to unite reflection and action in continuous praxis. It is a sad truth that many of our school leavers never emerge from naïveté in order to know their world better and leave school unable to interact critically. This is symptomatic of the 'inadequate education' referred to by Lord Scarman.

Religious Education as part of the whole curriculum must take on some of the criticism meted out to education in general. Let it be made clear, however, at this stage that I am not trying to directly connect the riots of Toxteth, Brixton or in fact any urban disruption to inadequate Religious Education. Such an attempt would be simplistic in the extreme. Neither am I arguing the case for similarity between our present situation in British Inner Cities and that of the more easily defined oppressor/oppressed relationship in Latin America. The natural outcome of such an argument would be to suggest that because we can now more easily observe a conflict situation here in Britain, the ideas of Paulo Freire will assume greater relevance. Although it is interesting to note that the signs of tension are increasingly recognisable, this is not the point at issue. What I am advocating here is a serious consideration of conscientization. Young people in our inner cities are indeed 'enveloped in the real' and I should like to offer for consideration the view that Religious Education, although in many ways similar to other subjects on the curriculum, (it is an examination subject with academic status), has something distinctive to offer. Concerned as it is with the 'wholeness' of human beings, the subject offers great scope for the exploration of ideas and provides a ready-made arena for comprehending in a critical way, why the facts are what they are. (15)

In Religious Education, can we not offer our young people the opportunity to stand back awhile in order that through reading the context they may rewrite their world? Cannot Religious Education take a lead and, taking advantage of the 'opening' referred to by Birgit Rodhe, "fruitful new lines of thought and action towards the future"(16), may be revealed?

Religious Education from the Freire perspective must offer an opportunity for its participants to 'name the world'.

Overall Religious Education should have liberation as an aim. Again this is inextricably linked to the concept of the autonomous learner. 'Education for freedom' as the opposite of 'the banking concept' affirms the capacity of people to decide for themselves. Having accepted the concrete situation as a challenge, we aim to offer an opportunity for students to 'come alive' in their specific situations.

"Liberation theology appears when people in the context of oppression demand that their real experiences and stories be heard and affirmed and find within the Gospel, the declaration and achievement of their freedom."(17)

'Good' Religious Education offers students the opportunity to 'tell their own stories' and thus enables them to change their situation. Religious Education must not be content to discover reasons for what we do already; it must seek to set students into forward-looking action which will, in turn, lead to a re-examination of a new context. This is the problem-posing method. Religious Education does not assume answers, it does not presume to curtail the freedom of its students to be 'considerers of the world'. Religious Education as education for freedom encourages its students to consider the past as a means of understanding more clearly, who they are in order to build a new future. If that future is one where the work ethic is receding and education for leisure is a greater priority, then Religious Education should be concerned with that future orientation. Religious Education is, thus, an on-going process, it is open-ended. It is not concerned with cliches and set responses, but is concerned to enable the student to develop new responses. "When the student has reached the level of learning to learn, he or she may be termed an autonomous learner."(18)

The Banking Style of Religious Education operates on Fromm's 'fear of freedom' principle. The type of Religious Education offered by the Freire perspective will not result in students leaving school as 'uncritical cogs' in a machine, but will enable young people, through liberating praxis, to be more rather than have more.

Our aim is to produce young people who can become genuine participants in society "shaping history' or being present in history rather than merely represented."(19)

The Aims of Religious Education outlined so far comprise conscientization and liberation as a means of producing the autonomous learner. Any implementation of these aims must be linked to a concept of praxis. Our thinking about Religious Education, be it approach, aims, content, must be done through praxis. Religious Education will, therefore, be characterised by due attention to the social, economic and political. Religious Education must go beyond mere reflection in order to avoid becoming 'alienating blah'. The practical implications of this will be dealt with in a later section, sufficient to say, at this stage, that Liberation Theology holds the view that "there is no truth except in a given praxis"(20). As a consequence, liberation theology has developed the critical tools to examine the poverty in Latin America. Religious Education needs to show that it too is capable of developing critical tools to examine the existential situation. It needs to engage students not as spectators of some 'ecclesiastical worship', but as performers in the concrete situation.

At the beginning of this section the point was anticipated that there will be those who, satisfied with Religious Education as it is, will not want to have as an aim 'the autonomous learner' or even wish to accept that 'conscientization and liberation' are even desirable. There will be those who will fear for the future of the subject should such aims be taken on board. The 'fear of freedom' will result in a continuance of the 'banking method' as a means to stability and in some senses an 'easier' method to engage. The choice is there. The aims Freire offers and which I have attempted to apply to the teaching of Religious Education must never be imposed for to do so would be a negation of the Freire educational method. They are offered as an alternative and as such may be rejected.

New Aims? Not entirely - some have surfaced already. Rather, a whole new emphasis on a Religious Education which does not separate reflection from action, consciousness from the world and which aims to develop critical students, free to approach their everyday lives with an awakened sense of curiosity as subjects in their own historical reality. The Religious Education student will truly be able to 'name the world'.

CHAPTER 5 - A FEW WORDS ABOUT 'JUSTIFICATION'

Arguments about the 'justification' of Religious Education have twisted and turned throughout the years in an often desperate attempt to achieve status for the subject by linking it to accepted values.

Lord Blake, in a debate about Religious Education, in the House of Lords in May 1977 said:

"It is my view that education that excludes Religion altogether is surely not education. If children are taught nothing about one of the greatest forces which have shaped the world they live in and one of the aspects of human culture which has affected people in one form or another for thousands of years, they are missing something profoundly important."

Blake's view fairly summarises that body of argument which seeks to justify Religious Education on the grounds of Cultural Heritage. Religion is held to underpin the development of society so the value of teaching it is justified. Similar views are expressed in the notion of a 'specific ethos' or 'common culture' and the need for roots.

A further group of arguments rests on the Moral Education value - children should be morally educated and Religious Education can contribute to this. In recent years, emphasis has been on religion as a significant human activity. If Religious Education is part of the proper study of mankind and you can't study man without religion, its teaching is justified by attachment to an important value - religion itself. This is really the view of the Schools Council Working Paper (36). A natural corollary of the 'Religion as a significant human activity' argument is that centred on 'meaning making'. Religion is held to be a way in which men make sense of the world and therefore should be part of education. Religion in this argument is claimed to be one of a variety of ways of structuring the world. Other forms of knowledge include maths/logic and philosophy, science, ethics, aesthetics, personal instruction and human sciences. The curriculum of a school should reflect all the 'ways of knowing' and therefore Religious Education has a place.

"A program for the curriculum of general education in schools may then be conceived as providing for instruction in all six of the fundamental types of meaning....."

... Finally, it could be given a thorough grounding in history and a basic understanding of religious commitment and philosophic interpretation."(1)

Finally Religious Education is justified in terms of humanisation and personal development:

"The question now arises whether autonomy is a desirable quality. Unless it is, my attempt to justify Religious Education in terms of it will fail..... In short, autonomy is part of what it means to be a person....."(2)

Religious Education, justified on these grounds, is said to make people more human and produce a reflective caste of mind. At the same time, it will involve the production of those who are critical of society.

Where does Freire fit in? Although his philosophy is multi-rooted, Freire is essentially Christian and any consideration of the development of Religious Education from his perspective must unite both his liberating educational philosophy and his Christian commitment. The justification of Religious Education must consequently be in terms of autonomy as a desirable quality and furthermore grounds for such a claim need to be shown to be theologically sound in terms of Christian doctrine. Can this open-approach to Christian Religious Education be justified?

It would be difficult to make a case for such openness, if the point under discussion was, for example, an Islamic approach to Religious Education. There are religions where only an authoritarian approach can be theologically justified. It is my view that Christianity demands an emancipatory approach. In the doctrine of the Incarnation we have the embodiment of the idea that Christ, abandoning his 'authoritative' position was willing to offer his followers a new way, through humble leadership.

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."(3)

The vertical relationship became horizontal. In the Incarnation, God demonstrated the principle of working with men, in partnership and not for them. The Word willingly became flesh and dwelt among us. The Christian gospel confirms at its outset, the freedom of

men to accept or reject. Christ's authority was not imposed. There were those who received him and "to them, gave He the power to become the sons of God", but equally important:

"He came unto his own and his own received Him not."(4)

The Apostle Paul constantly reminded his hearers that Christianity was a life of freedom:

"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."(5)

The Banking concept of Education, so often referred to by Freire, has, as its goal, the domestication of men - men "shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed". Conversely, the approach characterised by Cultural Action for Freedom has as its goal the liberation of men - men "open to the faith, which should afterward be revealed". The pages of the New Testament would appear to offer substantial grounds for a theological justification of Religious Education underpinned by emancipatory theory. As St Paul reminded the Galatians, they had not been free under the law but in Christ:

"We are no longer under a schoolmaster, for we are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus..... we are not children of the bond woman, but of the free....."(6)

As 'children of the free', St John was able to urge his readers to think for themselves, weigh information, reflect inwardly and act accordingly:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God....."(7)

Paul emphasised repeatedly that Christians were called unto liberty. He was concerned that having been made free from sin, the early church should:

"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."(8)

The possibility of knowing the truth and the truth setting a man free is an integral part of Christianity. The gospel, however, is not simply concerned with the past connotations of liberty, but with the possibilities of man's freedom. In this sense Freire finds common ground with those who seek to justify Religious Education

as a means of personal development, that through liberty men may come to completeness.

Again and again Christ's followers exhorted him to show them a sign:

"Master we should see a sign from thee." (9)

It seems that there is a preference among people of all ages in history for the 'authoritarian' approach. This preference is a recourse to the 'fear of freedom principle.' How much simpler it is to be given specific codes of conduct, answers to questions and methods of procedure in given situations. Christ refused to give a sign. He chose to point the way, rather than map it out, to lead men to the crossroads and no further, to travel the road alongside and leave each man to decide his own way forward. No doubt, in the early church there were those who preferred the 'safety' of the law and could not cope with the responsibility of their new-found Christian freedom. Paul's letters to the Corinthians are full of problems brought about by a confusion over freedom and license. He had to remind the young churches that with freedom comes responsibility. Liberation is a risk and Religious Education from an emancipatory point of view does not claim to be easy, but from a Christian standpoint, it is our responsibility to attempt it. Indeed Christianity demands that we make the effort but can offer no guarantees and promises no certain sign of success.

If Religious Education, from the Freire perspective can be justified theologically, what other grounds exist for its justification?

"When education is oriented toward 'cultural preservation', which can be explained with exactness as the perpetuation of the values of the dominating classes who organise education and determine its aims..... it is obvious that its task is to adapt new generations to the social system, it serves which can and must be reformed and modernised but which will never be radically transformed." (10)

Again, the temptation here is to use Freire prophetically as a means of revealing the conflict and tension hidden in our education, philosophies aimed at maintaining the status quo. Justification in terms of the oppressor/oppressed syndrome is not the contention here. Rather, the inference is this. If we are to justify the teaching of Religious Education from the perspective of Paulo Freire, less attention will be given to those arguments that centre around 'cultural heritage' and more emphasis will be placed on the humanisation

of man and his ability to be more. Religious Education, from an emancipatory viewpoint needs to have a forward-looking emphasis. This is not to say that matters of cultural and historical interest will have no place, rather a recognition that, although we can learn from the past we can never return to it. We need a new vision. Unfortunately, the tendency has too often been to examine the way we used to live, for insight into how we should live in the future. More and more, the role of education in society is changing and the issue at stake is the relationship of education to the society of the future. The possibilities of man to 'be more' and his ontological vocation to be a subject who can name the world means that we will no longer seek to justify Religious Education chiefly on the grounds of cultural heritage, but in terms of its possibilities for the future.

"If the emphasis is no longer on transmitting a cultural heritage, surely there must be a major change in the content if young people are to be prepared for the future."(11)

The intention of these 'few words about justification' has not been to negate other grounds for the justification of Religious Education by offering an alternative. The purpose has been simply to press for a re-emphasis - a more forward-looking approach. If this new emphasis necessitates a major change in the content, then so be it, but Freire is more concerned with approach. Freire's education for liberation and his fellow compatriots' theologies of liberation offer a challenge. Can Religious Education take a lead? If its aim is the autonomous learner, then Religious Education will produce those capable of critical thought better able to evaluate issues in an ever-changing society. The autonomous learner will comprehend more than the immediate reasons which explain a particular event and will grasp the relationship between the event and the total picture in which he participates. Religious Education can help its students to a fuller grasp of the 'total' picture. It is to do with wholeness and as such will include reference to the social, economic and political. It will not ignore the protest element in Religious Education material and will not seek to justify itself simply as a 'great art' part of our cultural heritage, but will seek a more forward-looking justification in terms of its emancipatory potential concerned with the struggle of men in their efforts to transform the world.

CHAPTER 6 - A NEW RELATIONSHIP

From the Freire Perspective, the Religious Education Teacher will be one who has undergone the 'Easter Experience':

"Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth."⁽¹⁾

This does not mean that all Religious Education teachers must be 'born again Christians', although some may well be. Commitment to dogma or creed is not the issue here but commitment to the possibility that man can be more is paramount. The key to the success of Freire's culture circles was the 'co-ordinator' who did not 'teach' but tried to promote self-discovery through the exploration of the projected pictures. Co-ordinator and group participant were both cognitive subjects in the learning process. Successful Religious Education teaching depends to a large extent on the attitude of the teacher. In order that the student-teacher relationship be totally redefined, teachers must be willing to be re-educated not in 'skills' training, but in attitude. In his psychotherapy and counselling work in America, Carl Rogers found that the most important issue was not the particular school of psychiatry to which the therapist belonged but whether or not he or she had certain personal attitudes and values. Rogers emphasised the need for facilitators to be real persons in their own right, genuinely showing care in a non-possessive way and able to demonstrate an empathetic understanding of the others point of view. Freire's co-ordinators needed to undergo the 'Easter Experience' in order to emerge from their former paternalistic attitudes in an attitude of love, humility and faith in the people. What sort of Religious Education teacher will emerge?

The teacher will recognise that he is not the one with all the answers. In education for liberation there is no complete knowledge. In Religious Education we have too often been witness to the transfer of knowledge and not the search for knowledge. The 'good' Religious Education teacher is aware that:

"the educator is not he who knows, but he who knows how little he knows and because of this, seeks to know more together with the educatee, who, in turn, knows that starting from his little knowledge he can come to know more."⁽²⁾

Secondly, the 'good' Religious Education teacher will recognise the impossibility of neutrality. Commenting on Peace Studies, Sir Keith Joseph recently said:

"A teacher has a special responsibility. When he is dealing with his pupils in or out of the classroom he cannot allow his political views to influence his presentation."(3)

From the Freire viewpoint, the Religious Education teacher should recognise that his political/religious views will influence his presentation and through dialogue will attempt to uncover and examine his pre-suppositions.

"The teachers must really experience their own 'Easter die as elitists.

Such a process implies a renunciation of myths which are dear to them: the myth of their superiority, of their purity of soul, of their virtues, their wisdom, the myth that they 'save the poor'..... the myth of the neutrality of the church, of theology education..... the myth of their own impartiality - from which grow the other myths of the inferiority of other people..... and the myth of the absolute ignorance of the oppressed."(4)

This is a hard teaching indeed. The emphasis on the 'conversion' requirement for teachers in the Freire sense, does place an enormous burden on the Religious Education teacher. Thomas Sanders has commented on the permanent problem of insufficient change on the part of co-ordinators in the culture circles:

"I myself feel, after observing several classes, that they do intend to dominate the situation too much, though this does not inhibit many fine contributions by the participants."(5)

Will Religious Education teachers of the 'right mentality' be in short supply? The question cannot be answered yet - perhaps we will know the answer in the years to come, if and when there are those who are willing to 'do in history' what they feel possible. However, the question does point to the need for specialist Religious Education teachers - those able to use the tools of critical investigation - perhaps what Freire has termed a 'different kind of intellectual'. "I have known the problems and the difficulties. I have in my life to die as this intellectual I have been in order to be born again as a different one. And it is not so easy. It is easier to create a new intellectual than to reshape the old intellectual." (6)

Freire invites Religious Education teachers to engage in this 'reshaping'. Each teacher may choose to accept or reject the process. For those who choose 'the Easter Experience' the process will be painful, but who can tell what the positive results might be?

What type of student will emerge from this new relationship? It might be useful to reflect on the type of student which emerges from a vertical student/teacher relationship, commensurate with the 'banking' approach.

"The good educatee, in this type of education,..... is he who repeats, who refuses to think critically, who adapts to models, who finds it nice to be a rhinoceros."(7)

If we are satisfied with this as the end-product, we need no re-examination. However, if our aim is the 'autonomous learner' and if we are concerned to produce adolescents who leave the school with a balanced and informed view of Religious Education, able to critically assess "attitudes and beliefs and the effects of believing".(8)

Then we may do well to redefine the student/teacher relationship in terms of partnership.

"The Paulo Freire method makes of literacy training a critical, active process through which habits of resignation are overcome. The critical capacity of the pupils grows out of dialogue about meaningful situations in their life."(9)

If we can only overcome 'habits of resignation', Religious Education will have made a major contribution to the emergence of a 'new' school leaver.

A New Commitment

"Education must have the character of commitment."(10)

Up to the 1960's Religious Education was about 'a faith by which to live'. The real goal was commitment. In recent years steps have been made to place Religious Education on 'neutral ground' as a basis for its acceptability. Paulo Freire has insisted on the impossibility of neutrality and in his literacy method has not separated literacy from commitment.

As has been pointed out earlier, Religious Education teaching was in its early days dealt with by 'sincere' people who considered themselves 'committed christians'. Is Freire advocating a return to this position? On the contrary - reference was made in the

previous section to the necessity for 'commitment to the dignity of man'. A little further amplification may be helpful here.

At a meeting sponsored by the Department of Education of the U.C.C. an "expert educator" (11) disagreed with Paulo Freire's statement that education cannot be neutral by insisting that it was the Christian responsibility to find a third term and not to polarise the situation between liberation and domestication. Freire replied to the charge by saying that the 'expert' educator was continually trying to reduce his (Freire's) thought to his own one-dimensional, lineal mentality. However, Freire's answer does little to bring us any nearer to a clear understanding of the role of commitment in a 'Freirian' type approach to Religious Education. Religion is, by its very nature, concerned with commitment. If we are to be committed to faith in man "we cannot be content with saying that they are human persons while doing nothing concrete to enable them to exist as such."(12)

Commitment must be total - recognising that educational structures are not neutral, that even the stories from Jesus and the Gospels, from the Bible and Christian tradition may well have been used as supports for the values of the establishment, and must seek a renewed understanding of the real situation through constant critical reflection/action.

"Neutral education cannot, in fact, exist. It is fundamental for us to know that when we work on the content of the education curriculum when we plan, when we draw up educational policies, we are engaged in political acts, which imply an ideological choice..... We do not either stop at the level of recognising the fact that education cannot be neutral - we must penetrate into the reality of that fact."(13)

Religious Education is committed to penetrating reality. It must take the world seriously, believing in the possibility that man can change it.

STABLE ? - THE DANGERS OF ENTHUSIASM FOR THE CURRICULUM

I have purposely chosen to speak of 'developing' the Religious Education curriculum and not of modernising it. Freire has written: "while all development is modernisation, not all modernisation is development."(1)

In an article entitled 'Education, Liberation and The Church', Freire has written:

"Liberating education for the modernising church is finally reduced to liberating the students from blackboards, static classes and text-book curricula and offering them projectors and other audio-visual accessories, more dynamic and a new technico-professional teaching."(2)

Is this why we are dissatisfied with some of our Religious Education? Have we mistakenly taken modernisation for development? Modern versions of the Bible, the use of film strips, 'trendy' text-books which use cartoon-style illustrations and even courses on 'The Use of the Computer in Religious Education' have simply concealed rather than revealed the real problem.

Writing about the dangers of jumping onto every new theological bandwagon, John Vincent has written:

"We have assumed that we needed as Christians, more and more knowledge, more and more expertise, more and more insight based on the latest information, statistics, investigations, research and computers. Thus, at the very 'springs' of our calling as disciples, we have been constantly open to every new thing...."(3)

No-one is suggesting that we persist with out-dated material and ignore the variety of teaching aids newly available, but what is needed is not simple modernisation but a revolution in thinking so that, through critical awareness, we may more meaningfully speak of 'developing' the Religious Education Curriculum.

"The organisation of the curriculum requires the investigation of what we usually term the 'thematic universe of the educatees'. Taken as the point of departure of the process, the investigation of the 'thematic universe' not only reveals to us the pre-occupations of the educatee, but also their state of perception of the world."(4)

The starting point is crucial. We begin from 'reality' and not ideas. Before setting up any of his culture circles, Freire insisted that his co-ordinators spent time 'investigating' the locality in order to discover a 'minimum core' of vocabulary. No culture circle

could possibly be successful without this pre-investigation of the context. Writing about beginning again in our inner-city churches, John Vincent has commented:

"What is needed is a self-conscious and orchestrated revival of basic Christianity and Christian Theology in the first world, as significant as that which has occurred in the third world. Only such a revival can deal with the realities of the urban scene." (5)

Recognising that Vincent is addressing specifically Christian issues, he nevertheless touches on the key to successful development in the urban church and for the development of Religious Education. This is the need to 'deal with the realities' in his case 'of the urban scene' in the case of the school the realities of the 'thematic universe of the educatees'. The Theologies of Liberation recognise that for too long the 'suburban' version of the gospel has claimed a monopoly. As a consequence Latin American theologians have attempted to formulate a kind of 'grass-roots' theology whose starting point is the common need of the people. Our schools do not only serve urban localities - Religious Education is taught in the schools of suburbia - what is needed then before any curriculum policy or strategy can be developed is an attempt to take the context seriously. A careful analysis of the specific situation in which Religious Education teaching is to take place paying due attention to historical, sociological, economic and cultural roots is necessary.

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire relates the story of how one of his investigators showed a group of tenement residents a picture of a drunken man walking on the street and three young men conversing on a street corner. Having considered the picture for a while the group said:

"The only one there who is productive and useful is the souse who is returning home after working all day for low wages and is worried about his family, because he can't take care of their needs. He is a decent worker. The other three are good-for-nothings, lazing away their time." (6)

The ensuing conversation was about low wages, social justice and exploitation. The investigator had hoped to initiate a discussion on 'aspects of alcoholism'.

This story must sound a sympathetic chord for every Religious Education Teacher who has ever planned a very 'up to the minute' 'on the ball' discussion for his class on such controversial topics as 'drugs'

man', 'homosexuality', only to find that either his students weren't interested or that the discussion did not turn out as he planned.

What can Freire teach us here? Firstly, the story indicates the absolute necessity of carrying out a serious investigation of the 'thematic universe' in order to reveal the levels of perception of the students. Obviously the perception of the group participants in Santiago was different to that of the investigator who hoped to discuss 'drunkenness'. How can the Religious Education teacher hope to overcome this discrepancy between his own and his pupils' level of perception? One way, as already indicated, is to 'investigate the thematic universe' of the students, but this cannot be only one-way investigation. If educator/educatee are co-subjects in the educational act, the educator will no longer have the right or even the desire to establish the curriculum content. He will recognise that it does not belong exclusively to him. Students must be involved at the initial stages of developing the curriculum. Freire's teams consistently rejected the conventional primers in their literacy programmes. They preferred to make their own, based on the rich vocabulary of the group participants who, above all, had 'the school of the world'. Our Religious Education students have this too. Before any Religious Education curriculum is developed the Religious Education teacher needs to listen, notice and act, in communion with the student, on the realities of their own culture and situation. Perhaps it is our lack of attention to this 'pre-investigation' that has brought about so much 'perfunctory' and 'uninspired' Religious Education work. Freire calls us to a 'new vision'. If we heed his call, criticism such as that which follows will decrease:

"Reports and surveys on multicultural education produced by the Whites cannot bring constructive changes because they have not lived in Brixton, Hackney, Toxteth, Southall, but in Cambridge and Oxford."

"So in preparing a multi-ethnic curriculum, it is essential that particular groups should prepare it on behalf of their respective groups to get the legitimate involvement, sharing and integration with a view to building up the identity of persons in the catchment area for creating unity in diversity, harmonious integration and replacement of racial disadvantage."(7)

Freire requires that we develop a curriculum with and not for our students. He is confident about the results:

"When the curriculum whose structure is based on the themes investigated becomes for the educatees a series of problems to be investigated, education for liberation takes the form of the permanent unity existing between the investigation of the thematic universe and its presentation as a problem."(8)

Once the curriculum has been organised in this way, the method by which we proceed must be dialogue. What if the students reject the dialogue? Religious Education teachers are often thwarted by the 'seeming' unwillingness of their students to 'join in discussions'. If material is presented problematically and if the content of the Religious Education curriculum has sprung from the pupils themselves, and their relations with the world, we will have gone a long way towards solving this problem. However, there is another side to the issue. Critical perception cannot be imposed. The Religious Education teacher, as professional, must be aware of the danger of what Freire calls 'Cultural Invasion'..

"Because the answers peasants give to natural challenges are cultural, they cannot be replaced by superimposing the equally cultural responses (ours) that we 'extend' to them."(9)

Cultural invasion is anti-dialogue:

"The invader thinks at most, about the invaded, never with them."(10)

As Religious Education teachers, we should be ever vigilant to avoid the characteristics of an invader. This will mean that 'failure' cannot be assessed in terms of the 'shiftlessness' or 'inferiority' of students. The aim should be one of cultural synthesis. This can be aptly illustrated in the British context by reference to the S.P.A. school. The school in such an area must build on the cultural background of the children and not set up a conflict situation between the values of school and the values of home. In Religious Education we can avoid this conflict through a willingness to offer opportunities for pupils to 'tell their own tales'.

David Sheppard has written:

"At the Mayflower Family Centre we encouraged adults and teenagers to join small groups, where they could talk about issues of life. We always began on subjects which were within people's experience. No-one was made to feel silly or ignorant. On that sort of basis, some confidence building can begin. Other inner city parishes tell

me that they do a lot of story-telling. People who would sit silently while abstract ideas were being discussed grow in confidence when they are asked to tell their story, and when their story is clearly valued.

It should be of the nature of the Church, in which the wisdom of God in all its varied forms is shown, that we give a hearing to the many different stories our members and those around the edges of our company, have to tell.

Understanding what young people feel their needs to be involves careful listening."(11)

We need to offer our pupils the opportunity of submitting their own distinctive hopes and stories and recognise the powerful potential and alternative models such existential experiences can offer. This may mean a re-evaluation of theological terminology, a glorying in the secular, contemporary or temporal. It will mean what Freire meant when he "continued to meet Christ at the corner of the street".(12)

Finally, an unwillingness to participate in dialogue can also be explained in terms of the Culture of Silence. Where the right to a voice has been denied, people live in the Culture of Silence. This is not simply a Third World phenomenon. In the preface to Cultural Action for Freedom, Jao de Veiga Coutinho writes:

"Freire invites the hitherto silent sectors of the affluent world..... to a rediscovery of the world in which they live and of their own vocation in that world, in dialogue with its pariahs."(13)

Freire was not unacquainted with the idea of 'unwillingness' to dialogue in his own culture circles. He did, however, offer this explanation which may be of help to Religious Education teachers struggling with 'unco-operative' participants in discussion groups: "..... peasants do not refuse to dialogue because they are by nature opposed to dialogue. There are historical-sociological, cultural and structural reasons for their refusal.....

This is the consciousness of the oppressed with no experience of dialogue, with no experience of participation, the oppressed are often unsure of themselves. They have consistently been denied their right to have their say, having historically had the duty to only listen and obey."(14)

like heart, refusal may only be lack of experience. Mistrust also plays a part:

"It is normal that they almost always maintain an attitude of mistrust towards those who attempt to dialogue with them. Actually this distrustful attitude is directed also towards themselves. They are not sure of their own ability. They are influenced by the myth of their own ignorance."(15)

A Religious Education teacher attempting to develop the curriculum from the perspective of Paulo Freire, must be patient. Change will be slow, but change will be rewarding if he maintains: "trust in the people..... faith in men and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love."(16)

New ways to develop the Religious Education Curriculum? Investigate the thematic universe of the pupils, try to reveal the levels of perception present, involve the pupils in the organisation, proceed by means of dialogue, drawing on the distinctive tales of the pupils, be careful not to invade their culture and above all, offer them the opportunity of an 'apprenticeship in naming the world'.

CHAPTER 8 - RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT THE CROSSROADS
THE WAY AHEAD - DOMESTICATION OR LIBERATION?

The final section of this present study has offered the thought and work of Paulo Freire in its theological context as a means of engaging an 'emancipatory' framework for a new approach to Religious Education. An approach from the Freire perspective has a positive contribution to make in terms of new aims, a new commitment, a redefined teacher/student relationship and new ways in which to develop the curriculum. In 1984, education stands at the crossroads. Lesslie Newbigin has written:

"..... we are at a point in history of the 'modern' world at which the accepted framework of understanding has become inadequate and a new framework is called for....."(1)

Bishop Newbigin offers Polanyi's fiduciary framework as the starting point:

"We must now recognise belief once more as the source of all knowledge.....

No intelligence, however critical or original, can operate outside such a fiduciary framework."(2)

In many ways Freire offers us a 'fiduciary' framework based on his own Latin American Christian Faith, and on his continuing faith in man. He also offers us a choice. At the crossroads of 1984, Religious Education can be either for domestication or liberation. Some may opt for the 'broad way' which leads to domestication.

"In that..... education for liberation implies a constant risk which we do not always want to run, since we are tempted by the stability we 'fear to lose'."(3)

Liberation cannot be imposed. The Latin American Bishops at their conference at Medellin, declared a 'preferential option for the poor' and Liberation Theology provided them with the means of confirming that option. Paulo Freire has offered us some unusual ideas on education, born of his own 'bias to the poor', in the slums of Brazil. For us, here in Britain, the voice of Paulo Freire may go unheeded- we may still choose the other way at the crossroads. Thinking in the Freire way involves commitment and does require of us a greater risk, but:

"In the long run, in preferring stability, immobility, self-censure conspirational silence, all we do is renounce liberty, because we are afraid of it."(4)

The prophetic church in Latin America accepts, says Freire "becoming in order to be. It does not try to be neutral, it does not hide its choice."(5)

Liberation Theologians in Latin America have travelled the hard road of experience from ideas to reality. They see reality as a process and not a given fact. They recognise that reality is full of contradictions and demand a critical analysis of the social structures in which conflict takes place. If Religious Education is to develop and not simply be modernised, it will not 'hide its choice'. Freire has offered us a whole new stance and made it possible for us to choose 'Cultural Action for Freedom'. Religious Education as the Practice of Freedom is prophetic, it demands a forward looking approach - accepting becoming in order to be. Like the prophetic church in Latin America, its:

"must move forward constantly forever dying and forever being reborn."(6)

Freire never claims that this will be easy, but suggests it will be worth doing. Such a view of Religious Education will mean that it will be part and parcel of a continuous education. If good citizens produce good education, then good Religious Education will produce good citizens (good rebels). Religious Education with 'the school of the world' will truly be community education. Freire worked with adults. If we say that his thought cannot apply to children we divorce the school from the community and isolate the school as an institution. Freire is not against the 'institution', unlike Ivan Illich he would not advise teachers to leave the school, but would encourage us to "do in history what is historically possible".(7) If children are to be educated as part of the community, what applies to adults must also apply to them.

We cannot transplant Freire neither can we ignore him because he speaks from a different situation.

"For us as readers of Pedagogy of the Oppressed..... we can't assume we share Freire's culture and mentality, we can only grapple with Freire on his own dialectical and dialogical ground....."(8)

From a Latin American perspective Freire asks whether we are willing to risk freedom as educators. The theologies of liberation and Freire's education for liberation offer us useful parallels.

Reverend Dr C J Wright, Secretary of the Australian Council of Churches Commission on Christian Education has commented:

"I believe that the study of Freire's complex and profound understanding of education is demanding and important, but even more important than reading the books is action/reflection, reflection/action on the Australian situation by Australians in a world perspective."(9)

If Paulo Freire's emancipatory theory is to make any contribution to the development of Religious Education in British Schools, British Religious Education teachers must also be willing to act/reflect, reflect/act on their particular British situation or else they will be guilty of all the attributes of a noisy gong or clanging cymbal with their constant 'be-bi-bo-bu'."(10)

We need a fresh vision of our own situation:

"Europeans and North Americans, with their technological societies have no need to go to Latin America in order to become prophetic. They need only to go to the outskirts of their big cities without naïveté or shrewdness and there they will find sufficient stimulus to do some fresh thinking for themselves. They will find themselves confronted with various expressions of the third world. They can begin to understand the concern which gives rise to the prophetic position in Latin America."(11)

President Nyerere commenting on the education programme in his country has said:

"While some countries aim at the moon, we are aiming at the village."
(12)

Perhaps this could be an indictment of our own Religious Education teaching - we have aimed at the moon ^{inside} of the city.....town..... housing estate? Paulo Freire's philosophy and the theories of liberation come to us from the 'village' way of thinking. From the emancipatory viewpoint our aim must always be the village, as opposed to the moon for:

".....it makes little difference in what specific area education happens, it will always be an effort to clarify the concrete context in which teacher-students and student-teachers are educated and are united by their presence in action. It will always be a demythologising praxis."(13)

In an article entitled 'The Limitations of Paulo Freire', Ian Lister has commented that:

"Billed (educational) reformers are celebrated as saints on the international circuit (educational Zorbas who have engineered 'magnificent failures') and reformers all too often end up in exile in multi-national educational corporations (UNESCO and The W.C.C.)."(14)

This study has not attempted to conceal some of Freire's limitations and has not tried to advocate Freire as a cure for all educational ills, least of all those to be found in Religious Education. It has tried to have a new outlook rather than a series of methods, games or even gimmicks. Above all, this study is a plea that we listen to the voice of Paulo Freire. As a scholar and as a fellow human being whose compassion for those 'who struggle for a voice cannot be denied', he deserves a hearing. We may deny the value of Freire, we may refute the possibility of a world wherein it will be easier to love, we may reject his challenge and refuse his liberating approach in preference to security and stability, but we can at least listen, step back awhile and reflect. Who knows we may yet come to say:

"This is what Religious Education is like and we never knew it."(15)

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