PAULO FREIRE: RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR

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An evaluation of Freire’s educational philosophy
and its significance for religious educators

A reader of Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed\(^1\) may easily miss an important aspect of the social and educational thought of this significant contemporary educator. This aspect is the deeply religious nature of Freire’s view of man, society and culture, politics and education. This dimension of Freire’s thought comes to the fore in this work in an explicit manner only in a couple of instances, though a closer examination of the work will reveal this dimension in clearer terms. If other writings by Freire are examined, works written both before and after Pedagogy, the classification of Freire as a religious educator is seen to be a most accurate one. This article will attempt to bring into perspective this religious dimension of the social and educational philosophy of Paulo Freire.

A Christian Humanist

Freire can with justification be termed a Christian humanist. He calls himself a humanist and refers to his philosophy as humanistic. He constantly refers throughout his writings to the vision of man, which is at the basis of his thought. Humanization is for Freire the goal of every enterprise in

which man is involved. It is opposed to the process of dehumanization which describes for Freire every action which is destructive of true human nature and dignity. Freire's clearest description of his pedagogical theory is presented in these words:

Our pedagogy cannot do without a vision of man and of this world. It formulates a scientific humanist conception which finds its expression in a dialogical praxis in which teachers and learners, together, in the act of analyzing a dehumanizing reality, denounce it while announcing its transformation in the name of the liberation of man.²

The roots of Freire's humanism are religious, or more specifically Christian and Catholic. Though he utilizes various traditions in developing his vision of man, the controlling concepts are religious. The central religious problem is that of man's relationship to a transcendent being. Freire affirms transcendent being, God, and speaks of man's relationship to this being as central to his view of man and the world. The relationship that man should have with others and the relationships that should exist in society are determined and modeled after the relationship that man has to his creator. Domination and oppression should not exist among men because this would not be true to what man is because of his relationship to his Creator. Freire describes this relationship in this way:

His [God's] transcendence over us is based on the fact of our knowledge of this finitude. For man is an incomplete being, and the completion of his incompleteness is encountered in his relationship with his Creator, a relationship which, by its very nature, can never be a relationship of domination or domestication, but is always a relationship of liberation. Thus religion (religare — to bind) which incarnates this transcendent relationship among men should never be an instrument of alienation. Precisely because he is a finite and indigent being, in this transcendence through love, man has his return to his source, who liberates him.³

The vision of man which Freire espouses is a vision which sees man as a reflective and free person who has been

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created by God to extend continually the potentialities of his being by living out relationships with God and other man. Man is essentially distinct from animals in his power of consciousness and freedom. The fact that some persons are oppressed by others is a sin not only against man but also against God. There should exist among men and women a spirit of fraternity characterized by loving relationships.

The sources of Freire's religious humanism are varied. He relies on the concepts of scholastic philosophy and existential phenomenology in describing man's consciousness as opposed to animal consciousness. When he speaks of the dialogue that could take place among men at every level, he echoes the words of Buber and Marcel. His key concept of "limit situation" is drawn from the German existentialist Karl Jaspers.

More recent theological trends in Latin America are even more influential in Freire's thought. A theology of liberation has developed in this part of the world which attempts to cast religion in the role of liberating man and societal institutions from oppressive elements. Theologians of this persuasion are keenly aware of the role that religion has played in Latin American countries in maintaining the existing oppressive political and social institutions. They have begun to draw on certain elements in the Hebrew and Christian tradition which point to a more liberating role for religion. This liberating role of religion has as one of its central ingredients a view of man as essentially free and active in combatting all forms of oppression.

A Christian Social Critic

The social criticism which Freire engages in is based in part, as was his vision of man, upon his religious and theological vision and his experience as a member of the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil. The particular perspective is again that of the theology of liberation developed by such theologians as Rubem Alves and Gustavo Gutierrez.

Freire's social criticism includes a criticism of the church as an institution. In earlier writings Freire did not include the church explicitly among the objects of his social criticism. More recent writings show him as concerned with the oppressive nature of church institutions. Freire's position as
an educational consultant with the World Council of Churches in Geneva has afforded him opportunity to examine this institution more carefully.

In recent articles Freire criticizes the churches for failing to exercise the true prophet function which is theirs. He urges the churches to work more actively against oppression, in whatever form it is found. The churches, he says, cannot be neutral because neutrality means supporting the status quo. Examples of oppression are class-determined societies, oppressing power elites, and capitalism. The true Gospel for Freire is prophetic, utopian, and revolutionary. It calls for believers to work for change, revolution and liberation. Jesus is presented by Freire as a person who worked for radical change. The religious revolutionary engages in living out the Passover or Easter through denouncing oppression and announcing liberation. Redemption is interpreted as the Christian’s willingness to undergo death by struggling for new life and freedom for oppressed peoples.

In these articles Freire expresses his belief that he is calling the churches back to the true message of the Gospel. His critique of the church is clear here. In attempting to remain neutral in political struggles, it has supported the existing oppressive regimes. The church has involved itself in bureaucratic paper-shuffling. It is dying of cold in the warm bosom of the bourgeoisies. Freire is not satisfied with the efforts of the churches which are attempting to reform themselves. These reforms are not radical enough. He criticizes the churches for merely talking about humanizing capitalism. He wants the churches to work to remove the capitalistic systems. He sees the modernizing efforts of the church as basically a conservative action, reforming only to maintain the status quo.

Freire’s view of God is influential in his social criticism. The symbol of God presented by him is not the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle or the Subsistent Being of Aquinas. It is rather the active and dynamic God of the Hebrews and the human person of Jesus. God is someone who acts to save men. He is creating man and the world with man’s cooperation. He delivers a people from bondage. Jesus

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is presented as the radical critic of oppressive institutions. In this view, the symbol of God as Savior refers not so much to individual salvation but to the process of bringing men and societies to true freedom. The task of the Christian is not to save his soul but to work with God in saving the world by combatting all forms of oppression. Original Sin is given a social interpretation as referring to all forces of evil which man and God struggle against and which prevent true freedom. The Resurrection and Future Life with God are concrete symbols of the new life which exists in the utopian Future.

A look at Freire's writing shows how this symbol is operative in Freire's thinking. God is a person who stands not for the domination of man but for his liberation. Freire asserts that man's transcendent relationship with God is an integral part of man's nature, and it is a relationship in which man's freedom is guaranteed. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed he attacks the "false view of God which fosters fatalism in oppressed peoples" (p. 162). This false view of God is based on the myth that rebellion is a sin against God (p. 136). In "A Letter to a Theology Student" Freire gives expression to the dynamic nature of the God symbol which underlies his social criticism:

. . . the Word of God is inviting me to recreate the world, not for my brothers' domination but for their liberation. . . . The Word of God is not some content to be poured into us as if we were mere static recipients for it. And because it (the Word of God) saves, the Word also liberates, but men have to accept it historically. They must make themselves subjects, agents of their salvation and liberation.

Freire's social philosophy is clearly based on Christian principles. The democratic society that Freire proposes in Education for Critical Consciousness is clearly to be founded on Christian principles of freedom, justice, equality and charity. References to Christian sources are not numerous but they are significant. Man's awareness of and his living out of his

5 Paulo Freire, Educacion Como Practica de la Libertad, p. 15.
relationship with his Creator is one of the important ingredients of the critical consciousness that is essential for the development of the New Man and the New Society (pp. 17-18). The education that Freire proposes to bring about this democratic society is described in religious terms that he borrows from Jaspers and Buber. Educational dialogue for Freire is

nourished by love, humility, hope, and trust. When the two poles of the dialogue are thus linked by love, hope, and mutual trust they can join in a critical search for something (p. 45).

The basic principles of a Christian social democratic philosophy also found in Pedagogy. Freire addresses his book to both Christians and Marxists, though he expects disagreements from both. He is sensitive to the point that revolutionaries may tend to dismiss him because of certain concepts in his writings. These concepts are those that obviously come from his religious vision: ontological vocation of man, love, dialogue, hope, humility and sympathy (p. 21). When he speaks of the necessity of violence or rebellion, these are always termed acts of love (pp. 41, 77). The fatalism of oppressed people is attributed to a false concept of God (p. 67). He rejects the concept that the oppressors are the defenders of Western civilization (p. 135). Elements of the Marxist critique of society are introduced into Pedagogy and this represents a change from the earlier social criticism of Freire. Yet these Marxist elements are integrated with the principles that underlie his Christian view of society.

The religious element in Freire's social philosophy has become increasingly more explicit in later writings and speeches. He sees the Christian Gospel as proclaiming the radical reordering of society in which men are oppressed. He appeals not only to the Gospel but also to recent social encyclicals of Pope John and Pope Paul. At a talk in Rome he made these comments:

I am not yet completely a Catholic; I just keep on trying to be one more completely, day after day . . . I just feel passionately, corporately, physically, with all my being, that my stance is a Christian one because it is 100 percent revolutionary and human and liberating, and hence committed and utopian.8

When Freire expresses praise for democratic principles, he is clearly not praising Western Democracies. He rather sees true democratic principles realized best in places like Cuba and in Chile before the fall of the Allende government. For Freire, these countries were not merely modernizing but were developing, in the real sense of the word.9

*The Christian Revolutionary*

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a veritable handbook for revolutionary education. Freire contends that a liberating education is a necessary condition for bringing about the revolution. Pedagogy is a description of the type of education that must take place in order to initiate a revolution among oppressed peoples. What is not that clearly recognized about Freire, however, is that he himself has never participated in the type of revolutionary activity which he propounds in this book. He makes this clear in the preface to the book:

> It is possible that some may question my right to discuss revolutionary action, a subject of which I have no concrete experience. However, the fact that I have not personally participated in revolutionary action does not negate the possibility of my reflecting on this theme (p. 24).

Freire contends that in his experience as an educator, he has "accumulated a comparative wealth of material which challenged [him] to run the risk of making the affirmations contained in this work" (p. 24).

Freire is presently an advocate of political revolutions for oppressed peoples in the Third World. In proposing revolution he has been particularly sensitive to the question of whether or not political revolution, especially violent revolution, is justified according to Christian principles. This question has long been discussed especially in Catholic Leftist circles in Latin America. Freire puts himself in league with radical Christians who see justification for revolution, even violent revolution if necessary. In speaking of the myths which the oppressor society has imposed upon the oppressed, he points to two particular myths that bear on this issue: "the myth of the heroism of the oppressor classes as defenders of Western Christian civilization"

9 Paulo Freire, "Education, Liberation, and the Church, p. 42.
the myth that rebellion is a sin against God.\textsuperscript{10} The implication here, which is supported by other statements of Freire, is that rebellion and revolution are actions that can be in accordance with Christian and religious principles. Freire describes revolutionary violence in \textit{Pedagogy} in terms which have at least religious connotations surrounding them:

I am more and more convinced that true revolutionaries must perceive the revolution, because of its creative and liberating nature, as an act of love. For me, the revolution which is not possible without a theory of revolution — and therefore science — is not irreconcilable with love . . . (p. 77).

More recent writings show Freire even more explicit in his justification of Christian participation in revolutionary action. Freire has asserted that:

We as Christians have an enormous task to perform presuming that we are capable of setting aside our idealistic myths and in that way, sharing in the revolutionary transformation of society, instead of stubbornly denying the important contribution of Marx.\textsuperscript{11}

Freire affirms also that the Word of God demands a willingness to work for the liberation of man through a process that entails the challenging of the powerful of the earth.\textsuperscript{12}

The most explicit treatment that Freire gives of the religious justification for revolutionary action is found in his article, "The Educational Role of the Churches in Latin America."\textsuperscript{13} Freire repeats the treatment in "Education, Liberation, and the Church." The church, he contends, cannot remain opposed to transformation of social structures. He criticizes conservatives in the churches for "castrating the church's prophetic dimension and fearing the radical transformation of the unjust world" (p. 3). He has praise for the developing political theology of liberation which says something about the revolutionary transformation of the world. Within this prophetic theology there is room for those who recognize "revolution as the road to liberation for the oppressed classes, and the military coup as a revolutionary option" (p. 12).

Two other religious motivations are used by Freire in


\textsuperscript{11} Paulo Freire, "A Letter to a Theology Student," p. 7.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{13} Cf. ftm. 4. Freire repeats these same ideas in "Education, Liberation, and the Church."
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urging Christians to become involved in revolutionary activity. He refers a number of times to the revolution of the oppressed as a Passover or an Easter. These events entailed struggles of life and death. Redemption or liberation from oppression was achieved through active resistance and violent death. Christians who involve themselves in revolutionary action against oppression involve themselves in a New Passover, a New Easter. The revolutionaries "setting out is really a sort of Passover in which they will have to die as an oppressed class, in order to be reborn as a class that liberates itself."14

Another motivation that Freire utilizes in urging Latin American Christians into revolutionary activity lies in the example of Christ. The image of Christ is of one who is a radical, not satisfied with the status quo, anxious to move on, willing to die in order to bring out a continuous rebirth. Freire puts these words in the mouth of those who would counsel conservative activity on the part of Christians: "They say to Christ, 'Master, why push on, if everything is so beautiful here?'"15

A Religious Educator

Freire is an educational theorist who draws upon religion for some of his basic views on education. His most complete treatment of the relationship between religion and education is in "The Educational Role of the Church in Latin America" and in "Education, Liberation, and the Church."16 In these articles he develops three views of religion and compares them with the type of education that each view of religion would engender. The traditionalist view of religion stresses life in the world to come. It is a view that urges people to "reach transcendence without passing through worldliness." This type of religion fosters the closed society and is instrumental in maintaining the status quo even if it is a state of oppression. This religious view has concepts of the world, religion, human beings, and human destiny which promote an education which will inevitably be quietistic, alienated, and alienating.

16 Cf. Fn. 4.
The second view of religion, of which Freire is also critical, is the modernizing perspective. Freire believes that religion in Latin America is manifesting this tendency. It is changing some of its practices, restating some of its doctrinal positions, getting more involved in problems of a social, economic or political nature. But the measures taken are only halfway and do not bring about the truly radical changes that are necessary. Modernizing religion has its own perspective on education. It speaks of a liberating education, but in doing this it stresses a change in technique, a change in individuals rather than the drastic changes that are needed. The form of education fostered by this type of religion means no more than liberating the pupils from their blackboards, from passive classes and bookish curricula; it means just providing slide projectors and other visual aids, dynamic class plans and technico-professional instruction.  

Freire's view of religion is the prophetic one. It commits itself to the dominated classes and seeks to transform society radically. It refuses to separate concerns for this world from concerns about transcendence. It defines salvation in more worldly terms. For many, this view means the recognition of the necessity of violent political revolution. Education according to this religious view "will always . . . be a mode of action meant to change things, a political program for the permanent liberation of man." Freire makes this statement about the nature of the prophetic view of education.

From the prophetic point of view, the specific subject matter of education is of little importance: whatever the subject matter, education is always an effort to understand better something that is concrete. As they focus on it together, the educator-educatee and the educatee-educator will be joined in creative, active presence, in a clarifying praxis that, as it unveils the reality of awareness, will help to unveil the reality of reality, too. Freire is careful to point out that this type of education must include a political program for bringing about objective and radical changes in the structures of society.

Freire's present position with the World Council of Churches has afforded him the opportunity of developing

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17 Paulo Freire, "The Educational Role of the Church in Latin America," p. 11.
more carefully the relationships that exist between his theological and educational views. In an interview held in 1970 he spoke of his desires to work with theologians to explore the relationships between a theology for liberations and an education for liberation.  

Freire’s call to revolution is made in the name of Freedom. For Freire man’s freedom is a gift of God; it is God who empowers man to liberate himself. Freire criticizes the education which he terms “banking education” for its failure to respect the true freedom of man. He opposes his libertarian education to this banking education. In this type of education, students are on equal terms with their teachers in developing the problems which are to be investigated, and they are free during the entire educational process.

Cultural action for freedom is the expression that Freire uses to designate the educational process itself. This action is one in which a group of people, through dialogue, come to realize the concrete circumstances in which they exist, the reasons for these circumstances, and the possible solutions for them. In order for this to be authentic action, the participants must be free to create the problems or the curriculum along with the teacher.

Freire’s call to revolution is also made in the name of equality. He proposes an egalitarian ideal for society and is severely critical of the great disparities that exist in modern societies in the areas of wealth, power, and status. For Freire, it is the domesticating nature of education that prevents people from seeing the true social reality of their lives and thus forces them to accept the inegalitarian society in which they exist. The school as presently constituted is the institution of society which prevents the classless society which Freire proposes. Freire proposes his liberating pedagogy as an instrument for achieving the revolution that would bring about the classless society. His position can be assimilated to the views of social reconstructionists in education. His views differ from these thinkers in that his major focus is not upon the schools but more properly upon adult or community education.

Freire’s call to revolution is made in the name of fraternity. Fraternity is used here to embrace the quality of rela-

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tionship that should exist among men in society. It is held to represent a certain quality of social esteem, the absence of manners of deference and servility, a sense of civic friendship and social solidarity. The ideal of fraternity involves bonds of sentiments and feeling. True fraternity exists in society when the institutions of society enrich the personal and social lives of its citizens. Freire sees present educational arrangements as militating against the existence of true fraternity in society.

For Freire the concept of fraternity has obvious religious roots and overtones. He often speaks of the “communion” which should exist among men in society. For him fraternal solidarity is essential for religious, political, and educational solidarity or liberation. He makes this parallel himself:

> Men free themselves only in concert, in communion, collaborating on something wrong which they want to correct. There is an interesting theological parallel to this: no one saves another, no one saves himself all along, because only in communion can we save ourselves or not save ourselves.\(^2\)

Freire’s depiction of banking education is controlled by the ideal of fraternity which he espouses. Banking education offends true fraternity, because according to Freire, the teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the students are mere objects.\(^2\) It is the teacher who teaches, knows everything, disciplines, chooses, and has authority. The pupil is in a position of subservience and must pay deference to the teacher. The student is not admitted to true partnership in learning in this form of education. No solidarity exists between teacher and pupils where there is not true communication upon which solidarity is based. This type of education “stimulates the credulity of students, with ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression.”\(^2\) To the banking form of education, Freire opposes his problem-solving education which is based upon respect, communication and solidarity. This type of education promotes that spirit


\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 65.
of fraternity which is essential for truly democratic education in a democratic society.

*Education as Conscientization*

In the past ten years Freire has been associated with the term "conscientization." He did not create the term but he has used it as the key concept in his educational philosophy. Freire speaks of conscientization as the development of critical awareness achieved through dialogical educational programs associated with social and political responsibilities. The purpose of this process is to bring about critical attitudes in people. These critical attitudes are to lead to a transformation of the world. Freire terms his education democratic education, for it is founded on faith in man, on the belief that men cannot only discuss the problems of their country but that they also have the power to solve these problems. Conscientization includes exchange of ideas, debates, discussions, working *with* students and not *on* them.

Freire's religious philosophy is implicit in his description of conscientization. This process is the only type of educational process that respects the true nature of man. Man's God-given freedom is respected in a situation where ideas are not imposed on students but result from the open discussion of ideas. This type of education respects the basic equality that should exist among men in society. The fraternity or community of men is fostered by a type of education in which students and teachers face each other on an equal basis. The prophetic religion that Freire espouses finds as its logical educational component a process in which the ultimate purpose of education is a radical transformation of oppressive social, political and economic structures.

Crucial to an understanding of Freire's concept of conscientization is his theory of the various levels of consciousness. The lowest level of consciousness he calls *intransitive consciousness*. Men at this level are preoccupied with meeting their most elementary needs. They are characterized by the near absence of historical consciousness. Persons at this level are almost impervious to problems beyond the bio-

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logical sphere. They are immersed in a time which is experienced as a one-dimensional oppressive present. The relationships which they have entered have shaped their socio-cultural situation and cannot be comprehended by them.

*Semi-intransitivity* or *magical consciousness* is the second level of consciousness. This type of consciousness is prevalent in the emerging societies of the Third World. It is the prevailing consciousness of closed societies, of the culture of silence. Persons at this level take the facts of their sociological situations as "givens." This form of consciousness is characterized by a fatalistic mentality, which views all of life as related to destiny or fortune, forces beyond the control of man. Self-depreciation is a most common attribute of this level of consciousness, for the people have internalized the negative values that the dominant culture ascribes to them. This level of consciousness is also marked by excessive emotional dependence. To be is to be under someone, to depend on him. This type of consciousness often expresses itself in defensive and therapeutic magic.

*Naive* or *semitransitive* consciousness is the third level of consciousness. Freire also terms this level *popular consciousness*. Silence is not the characteristic of this level. A serious questioning of the situation begins, but at a naive and primitive level. This consciousness is more likely to see the cultural situation as determined by men. Populism is the characteristic at this level of consciousness. People begin to sense that they have some control over their lives; but the danger of manipulative populist leadership is very great at this level.

The highest level of consciousness for Freire is *critical consciousness*. This level is achieved through the process of conscientization. This level is marked by depth in the interpretation of problems, self-confidence in discussions, receptiveness, refusal to shirk responsibilities. The quality of discourse here is dialogical. At this level the person scrutinizes his own thoughts; he sees the proper causal and circumstantial correlations. For Freire, conscientization means a radical denunciation of dehumanizing structures, accompanied by the announcing of a new reality to be created by men. It entails a rigorous and rational critique of the ideology that supports these structures. Critical consciousness is brought about not through intellectual efforts alone but through praxis, the authentic union of action and reflection.
Having discussed Freire's treatment of consciousness, it is now possible to see what his theory of human learning is. Learning for him is the process by which one moves from one level of consciousness to another. The content of this consciousness is the view that one has of one's existence in the social world and the power that one has to determine one's destiny. Learning begins with the present level of consciousness as this is manifest in the language, self concept, world view, present living conditions. Learning is becoming aware of the contingency of social reality. Its basis is that there is an essential difference between the given-ness of the natural world and the contingency of the social world. The contingent world lies within the power of man to change. Learning is thus the process of challenging and being challenged by the given-ness of one's life situation, of the sociocultural reality in which one lives.28

Implications for Religious Educators

Freire provides, in the first place, a new theological basis for religious education by wedding his educational philosophy to the theology of liberation which has been developed primarily by Latin American theologians. This theological basis brings to the fore the social and political dimensions of education. It also entails an emphasis on the dynamic aspects of the great religious symbols. Change rather than stability is clearly seen to be the primary aspect of human life. Involvement in the world rather than flight from it is a predominant thrust in this form of education.

Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed can give to religious education an interesting philosophical basis for their educational thought. Freire is clearly an eclectic in his theoretical approach to philosophy of education. One finds in him elements from existential phenomenology: the analysis of dialogue, the description of human consciousness, the limit situation, the encounter. Pragmatic thought is found in Freire's description of democratic education through inquiry and problem solving. The Marxist elements in Freire's thinking have become increasingly pronounced: his analysis of oppression, his viewing society in terms of infrastructure.

and suprastructure, his description of revolution and change. Though it cannot be stated that Freire has organized these various strands of thinking into a consistent whole, his eclecticism is a valuable contribution to the discipline of philosophy of education which has traditionally broken itself down into opposing schools.

Freire's educational philosophy contributes to the discussion of the aims of religious education. His emphasis is on the social and political dimension of religious education. Though he sees freedom as a primary concern in education, he tends to place more emphasis on the task of education in changing social structures that are oppressive. His thinking here parallels the thinking of Gabriel Moran, who has written:

I would maintain that the starting point for an educational anthropology is the question of freedom and social organization. I will take up this issue first. Only then will I try to analyze the human capacities for learning. They are to be understood in relation to changing the social structure for the increase of freedom. Thus, I move from the social to the individual and back to the social.29

In Freire's writings one can find many implications bearing on the content of religious education. The content is to be drawn primarily from the life of the people: their concerns, problems, fears, myths. The educator must be careful not to impose ideas on the learners. The content of education is less found in books than in the real life problems of the people. Freire used no primers in his adult education program because such books would impose a world view on the students. Such a practice as applied to religious education would certainly throw both students and teachers alike back on their own resources.

Freire obviously has an important contribution to make to the use of methods in religious education. Though there is little in Freire's methods that cannot be found in other educators', the obvious success of his use of these methods in both Brazil and Chile has commended him to educators the world over. He recommends a thorough search into the life situation of the students; the choice of themes for discussion from the life situation of the people; a graphic representation of these themes; open discussion by all concerned on these themes; a

commitment to action on the part of both students and teacher as a result of the discussions.

Discussions on the role of the teacher in religious education can benefit by reflection on Freire's description of the coordinators of the culture circles. He is to have the greatest respect for all persons in the group. He is to be deeply committed to dialogical learning. The coordinator is to view his role as someone who brings clarity to the ideas which the students hold in a confused manner. The relationship between students and teachers is one of equality. There is to be no imposition of ideas. If religious education is to be true education and not a form of indoctrination, the role of the teacher must be thought out in terms similar to those described by Freire in his descriptions of the coordinator of the culture circles.

The final implication of Freire's pedagogy bears on the subjects of education. Freire is totally committed to the education of adults. There is little in his writings bearing on the education of children, though many of his basic principles can be applied in this type of education. Freire sees the hope for change in society as resting in the education of adult members of the community. His thinking and practice in this area go contrary to the common practices in religious education in this country. Although there has been an upsurge in adult religious education in recent years in many denominations, this educational effort is still considerably less than the effort at the education of children and adolescents.

Conclusion
One would do a great disservice to the pedagogy of Paulo Freire and to the field of religious education if one were to think that his method is some kind of a magic formula for solving our problems. Freire's greatest value for religious educators lies in his example of how an educator should go about his task. We should look to what he has done for himself and for the people for whom he worked. He was obviously in touch with himself and with his people. The task of the religious educator in trying to find benefit in Freire's pedagogy lies not in a slavish imitation of his methods but rather in the attempt to come to grips with his own experience and with those of his people in order to work out ways to better understand this experience and to work for the transformation of structures which impede the true humanization of man.
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