

„Co-educational peace:“ the catholic dimension of Christian Education

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The metamorphosis of the whole creation

The gospel of Christ, the good annunciation of the Church, is the manifestation of the triadic God. God is a communion of freedom and love between three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The constitutive principle of this communion is a person, the Father, who freely and because of love, by nature and through his will, shares his very essence with two other persons, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And these two persons freely and because of love, do not withhold and usurp this essence, but give it back to the Father as a gift in return. Thus, life is the coexistence and coherence between the „I,“ the „you,“ the other, within the „we the one with the other, through the other, for the other. In this constant self-offering, the permanent self-surrender to the other, every person finds its authentic self. Thereat, in the triune communion otherness and unity coexist harmoniously. Otherness: each person is unique and unprecedented; in its communion with the other its complete otherness is recognized. Unity: each person fully participates in the life of others; the life of others is its life. Discreet persons, i.e. uniqueness, and simultaneously a common essence, i.e. consubstantiality: this is the way in which God exists¹. Therefore, each person is not just a part of the whole but a bearer of the catholic. Each person is the whole God.

The possibility of taking part in the triadic communion of freedom and love is offered to human beings by Christ. In the person of Christ divine nature as a whole is united with human nature as a whole. Divine nature as a whole: Christ is not the substantiation of an inferior or a deficient deity (for example Aryanism) but is the whole God, a God who can save and wants to save the human being. Human nature as a whole: Christ does not substantiate an inferior or deficient humanity (for example Apollinarism) but is the whole human being, a human being who can be saved and wishes to be saved by God. The reception, i.e. the substantiation of human nature as a whole in the person of Christ, and its communion with the divine nature as a whole denotes that the human beings can take part in the life of God². Through this participation they experience the two fundamental attributes of authentic life: personal otherness and immortality. The god-humanhood - the unconfused and undivided communion between God and the human being in the person of Christ - rejects both the homicidal God and the god-killing human being. God and human being are others and partners, who collaborate in order to achieve the perfection of creation. The grace of God meets with the human being's effort. Thus, Christ is the whole God and the whole human being.

The Triadological and Christological dimension of life is eminently experienced by human beings in the liturgical life. The unconfused and undivided communion between

¹ *Basil Great*, Epistles 362: PG 32, 1104 BC; *John of Damascus*, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, 8: PG 94, 829A.

² *Maximos Confessor*, Ambigua: PG 91, 1361A; *R. K. Martin*, The Incarnate Ground of Christian Faith, New York 1998, S. 325-328.

God and human beings is disclosed in the Divine Liturgy par excellence³. In the Divine Liturgy, all people of God – clergy and laity – through their charismas, interdependence and synergy of their services, constitute the Church as a whole. All participate in the gathering: men and women, black and white, the young and the old, the tall and the short, Canadians and Germans, Australians and Africans, the Mother of God and the angels, the near and the distant, the living and the dead. The role of all senses is emphasized: the faithful watch the ritualistic actions, listen to the hymns, smell incense, kiss icons, taste bread and wine. All arts contribute to the ritual: music, architecture, iconography. Everybody prays for everyone and everything: for the healing and the sick, the nurture of children, the pacification of nations, the fertility of the earth.

Above all, in this gathering everybody is in communion with everybody. The faithful take two elements from nature, wheat and grapes - which are gifts of divine love - and through their creative action transform them into bread and wine. These two elements, which are symbols of the things that sustain human life, are brought to the church in order to be offered back to God as a gift in return. And God, by a new gesture of love, transfigures them into the body and blood of Christ - the most necessary food. The faithful, in turn, by sharing the body and blood of Christ, experience the life as a partaking in God's love and as a sharing of it with everyone. In other words, life is the given and gift-receiving love, a love that is given and transmitted. Thus, the faithful empirically learn that their very existence is a gift of God's love. Therefore it is fulfilled only when donated to others. A human's very being and everything they possess is not perceived as an individual possession but it is offered to others. This is the new ethos of grace, the offered love, which is unconditional and limitless lasting and present everywhere. By experiencing life in the light of eucharist, a faithful becomes a unique and unprecedented person while s/he is, at the same time, in communion with everybody. Just as in the liturgical gathering the local Church is the catholic Church, within the eucharistic life, every human person is the whole humanity.

Accordingly, in the Divine Liturgy, the whole God is in communion with the whole humanity, unconfusingly and undividedly. Through this communion the entire life is being transfigured. For, the transfiguration of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ entails the transfiguration of human work, science, economy and every other human activity. Catholicity is thus recognized as the fundamental attribute of the Church⁴. Here, difference does not lead to division, but to unity⁵. Through their communion with God all beings can coexist harmoniously. All dimensions of life - the personal, the social, the spiritual, the mate-

³ J. Astley, The Role of Worship in Christian Learning, *Religious Education* 79: 2 (1984) 243-251; R. L. Browning and R. A. Reed, The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy: An Ecumenical Model, Birmingham, Alabama 1985, S. 26-35.

⁴ G. Florovsky, Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View, Nordland 1972, S. 40-41; J. D. Zizioulas, Being as Communion, New York 1985, S. 162. For the „catholic“ dimension of Church see: „Church is called Catholic because it extends over all the world, in every place of the whole earth; also because it teaches globally and completely one and all the doctrines which ought to come to human beings' knowledge, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; also because it brings into subjection to godliness the whole human race, rulers and citizens, learned and unlearned; also because it globally treats and heals all sins, which are committed by soul or body, and possesses in itself all virtues which are named, both in deeds and words, and in every kind of spiritual charismas.“ *Cyril of Jerusalem*, Catechetical Lectures, 18, 23: PG 33, 1044AB.

⁵ *Maximos Confessor*, Ambigua: PG 91, 1056C.

rial, the local and the universal - may harmoniously coexist within the life in Christ. Thus, the coherence and coexistence of difference and unity becomes the hermeneutical principle of existence⁶.

The metamorphosis of the whole human being

The communion between the whole God and the whole human being, the metamorphosis of the whole of nature and the whole life, is Church's proposition of life. This proposition is served by Christian Education. Therefore the existential targeting of Christian Education is the human being who is in a harmonious communion with God and, by extension, with themselves, their fellow humans, and nature. Knowledge of God and self-awareness, sociability and physical theory are the utmost goals of Christian Education.

Thus, Christian Education primarily promotes the harmonious communion of human beings with God. Before the God of freedom and love, a human being is called to similarly experience freedom and love. Freedom: a human being is not reducible either to a mere biological entity or a social entity, hence s/he can be self-determined just like God, s/he can freely choose its evaluative orientation. Love: a human being is called to love like God, i.e. to love everyone unconditionally and continuously. When human being answers positively to God's invitation of love, s/he become an image of Christ; accept and convey this kind of love towards everybody. Hence, freedom that loves and love which liberates characterize the life of a human being, who is in a harmonious coexistence with God.

Regarding one's relationship with themselves, Christian Education perceives the human being as an undivided and unconfused, psychosomatic unity⁷. A human being is neither a fleshless spirit nor a soulless body, but a body with a soul and a soul with a body, since one's entire soul is connected with his entire body⁸. This psychosomatic constitution of human nature entails the simultaneous and equal growth of its various parts⁹. Thereat, Christian Education cultivates both the soul - reason, emotion and will - and the body - the senses and the sense organs. Through their complete psychosomatic cultivation a human being is called to reach their existential destination. Through the sense organs, the senses communicate with the beings and the things, forming meanings in the mind. A combination of meanings in a logical sequence creates the theorems, i.e. the cause of the existence of beings. Then the mind communicates with God, referring the whole creation to him¹⁰. Thus a human being acquires the two general virtues: wisdom, i.e. the things that it is possible for them to know and they should know, and meekness - all they can do and they should do. Through the unification of these two virtues, the coupling of theory and praxis, love, the greatest virtue, is born. Love is a god-making virtue, since it drives all beings to a communion with God.

Through this catholic view of the human being, Christian Education surpasses every monistic or dualistic partiality. This is why it rejects both idealism and materialism. Idealism

⁶ *Maximos Confessor*, Ambigua: PG 91, 1189A.

⁷ *Maximos Confessor*, To Marinous: PG 91, 145B; *J. Rose*, Educating the Whole Person: An Orthodox Perspective, in: *Holistic Education: Resource Book*, ed. Peter Schreiner, Esther Baneu, Simon Oxley, München-Waxmann 2005, S. 69-71.

⁸ *John of Damascus*, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, 13: PG 94, 853A.

⁹ *Macarius Aegyptios*, Spiritual Homilies, 7, 8: PG 34, 528B; *V.B. Gillespie*, The Dynamics of Religious Conversion, Birmingham-Alabama 1991, S. 61-74.

¹⁰ *Maximos Confessor*, Ambigua: PG 91, 1112D-1113B; *T. D. Prete*, Thomas Merton and the Education of the Whole Person, Birmingham, Alabama 1990, S. 65-84.

sees the human being as a step of the spirit's self-realization, whereas materialism sees the human being as a product of physical evolution. In both cases, one's personal otherness is annihilated, since the human being is subordinated to an impersonal totality. All kinds of underestimation or overestimation of a certain part against another is also declined. For the hypertrophy of reason leads to intellectualism and its atrophy leads to absurdity; the hypertrophy of emotion leads to sentimentalism and its atrophy leads to superstition; the hypertrophy of will leads to fanaticism and its atrophy leads to stupidity. All the above result in the unidimensional growth of a human being and the problematic relationship with one's self.

However, the cultivation of one's psychosomatic dynamism is not performed for its own sake but for the sake of reaching their existential destination: the communion with God and the fellow human. For a human being communicates with others through their psychosomatic energies. Christian Education perceives the fellow human as a brother/sister and a friend regardless their religion, language, tribe, nationality, sex and certain features. Self-offering and self-sacrifice characterize an educated person, i.e. a person who offers themselves to others accordingly, each time¹¹. Only someone who is ready to die for others lives a true life. Consequently the social objective of Christian Education is a universal, fraternal community to which everyone is invited. Within this community, the uniqueness of one's personality and the consubstantiality of the community will coexist harmoniously¹².

Through this catholic approach of the fellow human, Christian Education rejects both individualism and the homogenizing, collectivistic perception of humanity. Every emphasis on difference at the expense of unity, every elevation of unity at the expense of difference can be transcended within the mentality of mutuality and coexistence. In this context, the usual false dilemmas regarding the relation between human beings and society, state and citizen, spirituality and sociability are surpassed. A human being is a part of the whole: of the family, the state, the universe – un-confusingly and undividedly. One is, at the same time, a sensitive wife/husband, parent, brother/sister, an active citizen, a lordly cosmopolitan. An educated human being has a catholic consciousness, is responsible for everybody and everything¹³.

Yet, the communion of human beings with God, themselves, and their fellow humans coexists with the harmonious relationship with nature. For Christian Education, nature is the great house in which the creations of God are hosted. So, on the one hand, a human being is called to discover the importance of each being and the role that it plays within the great cosmic function that is called life. On the other hand, one is called to respect the specificity of each being and to fully honor its dignity. In the previously described way all beings will coexist harmoniously¹⁴. With regards to certain things, those are fulfilled when serving the interpersonal relationships of love. This is when things are not conceived as neutral objects and consumable materials, but as precious heirlooms and keepsakes of loving experiences¹⁵. The more human beings love and are loved, the more the things which has served love remind of the beloved persons.

¹¹ *John Chrysostom*, On the Epistle to the Romans, 21: PG 60, 604.

¹² *Basil Great*, Ascetical Constitutions: PG 31,1381C.

¹³ *T. H. Groome*, Educating for Life, Allen 1998, S. 400-407, *M. A. Kelly*, Solidarity: A Foundational Educational Concern, *Religious Education* 93:1 (1988) 44-64.

¹⁴ *Basil Great*, In Hexaemeron, 2, 11: PG 29, 33A.

¹⁵ *C. Yannaras*, Person and Eros, Brookline 2007, S. 184-190.

Through this catholic view on nature, Christian Education transcends both paganism and technocracy. On the one hand, nature does not contain the divine substance, thereat there is nothing within the creation which can be idolized. Therefore any kind of subjugation of the human being to nature is declined. On the contrary the human beings are called to humanize nature, to imprint the icon of God over it. On the other hand, nature is the „very good“ creation of God, therefore all things in the world are valuable. As a result, the subjugation of nature to the human being is rejected. On the contrary, the human being is called to literally embrace nature and walk with it towards the final metamorphosis. Hence, passing through the rocky straits of nature's worship and anthropomorphism, Christian Education promotes the liturgical relationship between the human being and nature¹⁶.

Thus the harmonious coexistence of the human being with God and, by extension, with themselves, their fellow humans and nature, is their salvation. As the etymology of the Greek word may show, salvation means that a human being is unharmed, i.e. whole, fulfilled; in an unconfused and undivided communion with everything: God, fellow humans, nature.

The metamorphosis of the whole life

Christian Education has as an objective the harmonious communion of the human being with God and, consequently, with one's self, their fellow humans, and nature. Through this it gives a catholic meaning to the entire human life with an emphasis on the unity of its dimensions.

Thus, Christian Education presumes that education ought to be applied everywhere and at all times, by everyone and everything. Hence all human beings are at the same time teachers and students¹⁷. Each one teaches everybody through their way of life and simultaneously takes lessons based on experience and deriving from the attitude of others¹⁸. In addition, there are other educational agents, such as the political parties, the Non Governmental Organizations, the Mass Media. Of course, family, school and state are the most important educational entities. Family is the first context in which one will be loved or rejected; realize their uniqueness, or experience the indifference of others. All aspects of the family environment, i.e. the quality of the relationship between its members, bring about a positive or negative impact on the children's education. Schools also offer education through their whole function. Interpersonal relationships between teachers, students and other people who work in a school, as well as the working conditions, the known and the invisible curriculum and the building's architecture are factors affecting the education of people. Students are not educated simply by what they do in class but also through their participation in the school's life. The experiences obtained during their time at school benefit their education accordingly. Education is also offered by the state through its total function. The values it advocates, the way in which it exercises politics, compliance with the law, the equality of citizens, the ethos and the style of those who govern constitute educational methods and approaches. Likewise,

¹⁶ R. Miller, Ecological Theology and Religious Education, in; *Theologies of Religious Education*, ed. R. Miller, Birmingham, Alabama 1995, S. 336-358.

¹⁷ *Amphilochius of Iconium*, Orationes, 1: PG 39, 44B; J. Boojamra, Foundations for Orthodox Christian Education, New York 1989, S. 166; J. Sadler, Learning Together: All-age Learning in the Church, in: *Learning in the Way*, ed. J. Astley, Leominster 2003, S. 113-124.

¹⁸ *John Chrysostom*, On the Gospel of Matthew, 30: PG 57, 364.

on the other hand, hegemonic masculinity, nationalistic pride and cultural provincialism bring about a similar way of life.

Family, schools and state are basic axes of catholic Christian Education¹⁹. The previous means that if these three entities do not serve the same educational targeting, then the catholic perception will not be realized. In this case fragmental approaches will occur and catholic education will not avoid doing what it had not aimed to do: it will be limited to certain parts while being indifferent towards all others. Christian Education reminds of the fact that catholic education serves a specific worldview, a particular proposition of life. It espouses a proposition of life, whose vision is the universal conciliation and reconciliation, the acquaintance and communion of human beings and people. This is a communion in which everybody is called to offer its gifts to everyone.

Having the above described standards, Christian Education puts forward some basic principles of holistic education. First of all holistic education includes all human beings with absolutely no exception²⁰. Here, none of the existing differences causes fear and entrenchment; on the contrary: a difference is a tangible evidence of the fact that the truth can be experienced and expressed in multiple ways. All human beings, in their own dissimilar way, can be open to the transcendent, meet with others, taste the beauty of life²¹. Consequently, beyond any biological and social discrimination, this education focuses on the recognition of the complete otherness of every human person. This entails that it is implemented through the appropriate interpersonal relationships. Therefore every sort of typology, every kind of utilitarian subdivision of human beings is rejected. For every kind of categorization entails the disregard of a person's uniqueness and the homogenization of it with others on the basis of a common characteristic. However every sort of standardization abolishes precisely the most personal, i.e. the most unique things. Thus Christian Education is against every impersonal system and opposite to the subjection of a human being to generalizations. Authentic education can be practiced only within the relationships of freedom and love, where one becomes unique and unprecedented – i.e. eponymous and irreplaceable – precisely because they love and are loved. Therefore one's value is equal to that of the whole world.

In addition, for Christian Education all human beings have charismas, which they ought to develop to the highest possible degree²². Education must point out the charismas of each human being, highlight and cultivate them. For each charisma has its own significance in the proper and smooth function of a society and contributes, in its own way, to the common good²³. Within a charismatic communion everybody communicates with everyone in order to honor and fulfill the whole of life. Consequently, none of the charismas is perceived as superior or inferior to another, but only as different²⁴. Each charisma includes other charismas and coexists with them, therefore each charisma encapsulates the whole²⁵.

¹⁹ G. Wainwright, *Doxology, The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life*, New York 1984, S. 8-10; S. Johnson, *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom*, Nashville 1989, S. 143-146.

²⁰ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica*: 32: PG 21, 1012AB.

²¹ John Chrysostom, *On Psalms*: PG 55, 637.

²² Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 18: PG 33, 1044B.

²³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies*, 10: PG 48, 784-785; Basil Great, *Short Rules*: PG 31, 932AB.

²⁴ John Chrysostom, *On the Epistle to the Romans*, 21: PG 60, 601.

²⁵ Macarius Aegyptius, *Spiritual Homilies*, 40, 1: PG 34, 764A.

It is obvious that this catholic anthropological view extends into the methodology of education. Hence the belief that there is only one method by which the educational objectives can be achieved is rejected. Depending on the specific data of each human being, or human beings, at the specific time and in the specific space, education is unfolding in the appropriate way, or ways²⁶. The absolutizing of a certain teaching method ignores the unpredictable character of human freedom and the uniqueness of a person²⁷. Hence discretion, i.e. to choose each time the method which promotes learning as well as fraternization, is what characterizes the catholic understanding of Christian Education.

Simultaneously, Christian Education is holistic when it enables human beings to participate in all aspects of life. Christian Education is not limited to the so called religious issues, but it deals with everything. Hence, it teaches the art of marital life, the upbringing of children, the caring of old age people. It also deals with social critic, the active occupation with citizenship matters, the creative aspect of work. It studies the meaning of life and death, the confrontation of mourning and worries about the great problems of the planet. It teaches that politics is not simply the management of social problems but the art of keeping people united within a state, of experiencing the collective identity. Therefore one learns that working is not a mere, unceasing process – the drudgery of survival –, but a creative act, an act which serves all the citizens of the state – the concept of „we“. It teaches that economy does not deal with the abstract, per capita income, but serves the particular needs of particular human beings. One also learns that marriage is not a mere social institution, but the erotic acquaintance between human persons who love one another, a psychosomatic participation. The recognition of the essential dimension of all aspects of life is a main characteristic of Christian Education²⁸.

This catholic approach discourages the psychical distance between human beings and the defiance of certain professions²⁹. For, everyone contributes to the social coexistence in its own way. This is why Christian Education recognizes a human being as being educated when they offer themselves to others. Thereat, a gardener is educated when decorates the world, a politician when unifies citizens, a doctor when is compassionate towards their patient. Each one through its distinctive contribution highlights the interdependence and solidarity between all human beings³⁰. Furthermore, the catholic dimension of Christian Education reminds that all cognitive subjects conduce to the self-consciousness of a human being³¹. Thus, for example, linguistics expresses the ethos of a certain society, history describes its culture and its pathology, geography reveals its interaction with nature, music praises its experiences, art depicts its worldview. Hence the various cognitive subjects are not fragmental information on a shattered material, but the reality itself as it is seen from various angles. By extension, subdivisions such as „theoretical“ or „practical“ lessons, „humanitarian“ or

²⁶ *Basil Great*, God is Not the Cause of Evil, 1: PG 31, 329A.

²⁷ *John Chrysostom*, On the Epistle to Titus, 3: PG 62, 678.

²⁸ *N. P. Wolterstorff*, Educating for Life, Grand Rapids, Michingan 2002, S. 253-283.

²⁹ *John Chrysostom*, On the First Epistle to the Corinthians: PG 61, 47; *John Chrysostom*, To Priscilla and Akilas: PG 51, 193.

³⁰ *Basil Great*, Homily on the Words Give Heed to Thyself: PG 31, 205BC; *J. Gorman*, There's Got to Be More! Transformational Learning, *Christian Education Journal* 5:1 (2001) 23-51.

³¹ *T. A. Lines*, Systemic Religious Education, Birmingham, Alabama 1987, S. 92-93.

„applied“ sciences are obsolete³². Philosophy and physics, biology and art, history and music, chemistry and law are connected within a unified whole. Specialization needs to go along with the overview of things. Thus any apportionment of knowledge and any boundaryzation of science will cease to exist.

Finally, the holistic understanding of Christian Education puts forward an analogous understanding of knowledge. Knowledge is not the mental information, the cerebral comprehension. This kind of knowledge favors sovereignty; it is the knowledge of how to possess an object. True knowledge comes when the participants in a dialogue are perceived as persons. For, one meets a person when the person is revealed, when it is freely opened to the other in order to share life. This occurs only when the other person does not ask for subjugation and usurpation. By giving and receiving, humans enrich others and in turn are enriched. Hence, knowledge is ultimately the participation in the life of others, the community of life³³. In this interpersonal and mutual participation the senses, the mind and the heart, reason, emotion and will, insight and intuition co-learn, thus demonstrating the diversity of cognitive paths. Emotion causes one's dynamic escape from selfishness, while will serves the struggle for the catholic metamorphosis. At the same time reason turns experience into thought, mind is united with one's heart and thus the whole human being experiences the loving communion with God, the fellow human, and nature. Thoughts, words and actions express the fulfilled human being³⁴.

In the above described way, Church teaches human beings how to transcend the downward mentality of polarization and dualism (the mentality of the fallen human being) and adopt the triadic mentality of coherence and commonality. In order to make human beings familiar with this unifying attitude, Christian Education uses expressions which, although originally seem to be antithetical, may promote the catholic view of the truth, if one considers them in depth. Thus it is stated, that God is the „supra-divine deity;“ his knowledge is „intangible participation;“ Christ is a „God-human;“ the Most Holy Mother of God is a „mother-virgin“ and the human being is „material-spiritual.“ In this way the triadic way of thinking teaches that truth has many aspects and none of them is opposite to another. The mentality of „the one or the other“ is replaced by the mentality of „both the one and the other“ – always in truth. Consequently, absolutizing an aspect of the truth, as well as any polarized perception of it, constitute a heresy. In this case one chooses, i.e. selects a part of the truth, which they absolutize at the expense of the other parts. On the contrary, the triadic approach promotes the harmonious coexistence of all things in God, beyond any conflictual comprehension of the relationship between beings and things. Difference and unity, undividedly and un-confusingly is again the hermeneutical key to the discovery of the whole truth and the experience of the whole life.

³² *Gregory Theologian*, Oraciones, 4: PG 35, 649B; *Maximos Confessor*, To Thalassious, 58: PG 90, 596A.

³³ *Maximos Confessor*, Ambigua: PG 91, 1073C-1076A; S. Warner, An Epistemology of Participating Consiousness, *Religious Education* 93:2 (1988) S. 189-205; M. K. Martin and R. M. de Pison, From Knowledge to Wisdom, *Religious Education* 100:2 (2005) S. 157-173.

³⁴ *Clement of Alexandria*, Protrepticus, 12: PG 8, 245AB; M. L. Peterson, With All Your Mind, Notre Dame, Indiana 2001, S. 212-220.

Metamorphosed and metamorphosing Church

Through its catholic approach, Christian Education infuses the entire life with meaning. All things may coexist harmoniously within their communion with God. This means that whatever opposes this communion is criticized by Christian Education. Thus, it is the duty of Christian Education to criticize any alienation of human beings and society. Any suppressive mentality and structure must be pointed out and condemned. Any subjugation of a certain group of people to another and any kind of exploitation must come to an end. Any educational process which reproduces dualistic contradictions and suppressive classifications has to be replaced by equality at all levels. The task of Christian Education is to fight for everybody's liberation – esoteric and exoteric. A human being must cease to be a passive observer and an irresolute receiver of superimposed or outside imperatives and be transformed into a responsible person, who knows and does things that promote one's freedom and the freedom of others³⁵.

Nevertheless opposition is not enough. Christian Education is primarily a stance, an attitude, a specific way of life. This way of life ought to be offered by Christian Education to any one who freely attends it. This presupposes the existence of Church communities, the parishes of the Church, in which the worshiping ethos is embodied, so that - through experiencing an applied proposition of life - one may be convinced of the truth. If in the Church communities one experiences cooperation instead of competition, sharing instead of possession, consensus instead of dichotomy; if, in those communities, shared joy is increased whilst shared sadness is lessened; if there is an abundance of goodness, affection and tenderness, then Christian Education may connect theory to praxis. Beyond any kind of messianism and passivity, the Church ought to offer a foretaste of the new world of God.

This foretaste of the new world of God also gives an answer to the problem of death. For, along with other challenges, a human being is called to confront suffering which derives from the loss of beloved persons, as well as their personal anxiety before death. Education which is indifferent and abashed before death is not catholic, since it does not throw a bridge across the worldly and the transcendental. On the contrary, Christian Education preaches the victory over death³⁶. Through their communion with God human beings may live eternal life. A human being may have a taste of this transcendence of corruption and death in their everyday life, when experiencing relationships of freedom and love, when they freely receive and give love.

The holistic approach of Christian Education is exquisitely summarized in a text by Saint Maximus the Confessor³⁷. According to Maximus, in their route toward the full communion with God, a human being is called to unite five bipoles, which the mentality of the Fall perceives as antithetical. The human being has the duty of uniting man to woman, the heaven with the universe, the sky with the earth, the sensible things with the intelligible things and, finally, the whole creation with God. In other words, at first, a human being should surpass the sexist rivalry between genders and move toward the passionless, personal unity. One ought to reconcile with their most intimate fellow human being. Then, they must unify heaven with the universe, which entails the coupling of the familiar things with the unfamiliar.

³⁵ D. S. Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology*, Birmingham, Alabama 1988, S. 210-260.

³⁶ *John Chrysostom*, Epistles, 63: PG 52, 643.

³⁷ *Maximos Confessor*, Ambigua: PG 91, 1301B-1304C.

iar. Here, any coiling into individual happiness and indifference toward the fellow human being are rejected. The whole world has to become a heaven and this requires a struggle for the sake of all humanity. After that, a human being has to unite the sky to the earth; create a linkage between time and eternity, space and infinity, so that space-time does not divide but only unite. Moreover, a human being will unite the perceptible things with the intelligible things, which means to acquire a knowledge of God equal to that of angels. Finally the human being will be completely united with God, the full communion of the created things with the Uncreated will be realized, unconfusingly and undividedly. Unconfusingly: each being will experience its full otherness. Undividedly: each being will fully participate in the life of others. This is the telos of the Christian Education: the 'co-educational peace,'³⁸ the communion of all things in Christ, where the faithful will „wholly cohere as a whole into the whole God“³⁹.

³⁸ *Dionysios Areopagites*, *The Divine Names*, 13: PG 3, 948D.

³⁹ *Maximos Confessor*, *To Marinous*: PG 91, 69B.