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Preface by Fr. Francis

ON WRITING A PERSONAL “CREDO”

In the first translation of the Novus Ordo missal in 1970, the Creed of Nicaea was translated in the first-person plural: “We believe . . .,” with the consistent attempt of post-Vatican II reforms to emphasize the idea of the church as the people of God on pilgrimage, on the move. As a “people” the church was to inculcate solidarity and a strong sense of community. Over the past sixty years, society has unfortunately moved in almost the opposite direction, with a strong thrust toward individualism, to the point of social pathology. Robert D. Putnam’s study of American society *Bowling Alone* showed that the disappearance of local, small-town, or neighborhood associations of all kinds has diminished the set of values that constitute “social capital,” which, among other things, holds a society together in stressful times.¹¹ I think it would be fair to say that many readers will agree that America needs more solidarity, friendlier associations, and less polarization. It must also be admitted that very little human energy seems to be available to revive just the kinds of activities that would solve the problem.



Article

THERE IS A GOD.

ILLUMINATION

The Being humans call God is the *Ground of Being*,¹³ continuously surging forth as the loving round dance of the Trinity—the “perichoresis”¹⁴—that teaches us that the Trinity is dynamic, eternal motion and not an unmoved mover. This way, we avoid the mistake of trying to find a “god” who never moves and is a completely dead Absolute.

God is *good*, in a mysterious way, since there is no opposition, no “dialectic” in God.

God is *creator*—a unique feature of the Absolute: unchanging and eternal, yet simultaneously within time and process, both enlightened and mingled with the fumbling about and perceptions of all that appears—of *all that is* (Logos=Sophia=Dharmakāya).¹⁵ All causes and conditions arise from the living blueprint of all that can and will appear; there is the eternal Sophia and her image in the mirror of the relative, created Sophia.

God is also *everywhere* and *in everything*—when I [Fr. Francis] fed the string bean plants their daily ration of radioactive orotic acid back in 1966 at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research in Yonkers, New York, I learned that God is feeding every living cell one by one, carefully, attentively. I was practicing the Ignatian Exercises every day on the bus taking me to the laboratory from my home in Eastchester. Jesus was teaching me personally, one step at a time, as I tended those plants in a luminous, dream-like greenhouse.



II. ON THE LOGOS



Crucifixion fresco (1847-1852) by Pietro Gagliardi, Church of San Girolamo dei Croati, Rome. Image: sedmak / iStock / Getty Images





Article

Through the Syriac mystics, these teachings may have served as the inspiration for spiritual explorations outside the visible boundaries of the church. There is some evidence for this in the early Dzogchen teachings, among others, in China and Central Asia.²¹ The Dzogchen teachings, also inspired light mysticism in Hinduism and early Buddhism, have led to remarkable manifestations of spiritual attainment, such as the rainbow body.²²

ILLUMINATION

We have been able to find a few Christian saints and others who may have experienced bodily dissolution even before the emergence of a rainbow body attainment among Dzogchen practitioners.²³

The Dzogchen masters evolved a special system of practice in order to manifest this form of the ideal of a bodhisattva.²⁴ Unlike other forms of Buddhist attainment, the rainbow body emphasizes the luminous nature of visible phenomena, including the human body. It also proposes that the very nature of reality is already enlightened and sends forth intense energies—*graces*—that make it possible for sentient beings to make spiritual progress, leaving negative karma behind.

The attainment of the rainbow body at the time of death is not unlike other saintly results, bodily modifications on a deep level arising in connection with spiritual-ascetic practices (like incorruptibility and similar phenomena, which are well-known signs of holiness in several branches of Christianity).²⁵



believes [already] has eternal life (John 6)...For some mystics, this is so real that they manifest light even while alive (St Seraphim of Sarov....) – others at death (St Hildegard, St Peter Celestine, St Francis....). And some disappear: Symeon the Holy Fool, and Abba Doulas, maybe others. Mary is assumed into heaven. Elijah. Enoch. Maybe Moses. And all the incorruptibles are only that because of the belief that they have to wait for the end of the world, but that is a relic and a sign that is only being partially understood...if they are already in God, their body appears only because it inspires faith, but it could just as well disappear. And we all disappear in any case, our atoms becoming part of some other living being, whereas the light of our eyes is the fruit of all that has ever been, and goes on to be the perennial recognition of Eternal Love, the Trinitarian dance. Theologically speaking, God did not create us so that we would be totally taken up with a scientifically limited knowledge of bodies, atoms, and cells. Now that we know more, we need to think more, meditate more, realize more.” See also Rev. Teodoro A. Cortezano, “Stirring the Pot,” St. John Baptist de La Salle & St. Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes Bulletin, August 6, 2023, 3, <https://container.parishesonline.com/bulletins/14/0550/20230806B.pdf>, where Cortezano notes: “In Tibetan Buddhism, there is a prevailing belief that attaining ‘rainbow body’ is the ultimate goal in life...So glorification of the physical body is possible if God wills it.” For the account of Saint Doulas, see Orthodox Church in America, “Saint Doulas, Passion-Bearer of Egypt,” lives of the saints, June 15, 2014, <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2014/06/15/101731-saint-doulas-passion-bearer-of-egypt>: “After three days they found the saint had departed to the Lord while kneeling at prayer. His body was locked in the cathedral, and burial was delayed...When everyone had gathered and gone into the church, the body of the innocent passion-bearer was not in the cathedral. Only his clothes and sandals remained.” See also Léontios de Néapolis, *Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, trans. and comm. André-Jean Festugière (Paris: Geuthner, 1974), 158–59, § 41, quoted in Francis V. Tiso, *Corps arc-en-ciel et résurrection: La dissolution du corps dans le dzogchen et le christianisme ancien* (Paris: Vues de l'esprit, 2024), 246–47: “Quand donc ils eurent ouvert la tombe, ils ne le trouvèrent plus. Le Seigneur en effet l'avait glorifié et fait passer ailleurs.” (translation by Gemini: “When they opened the tomb, they no longer found him there. The Lord had indeed glorified him and taken him elsewhere.”) This text refers to St. Symeon the Holy Fool, not to Christ.

³⁵ Fr. Francis Tiso, private communication with Rob Micheucci, March 26, 2023: “The normal will of God [as understood by the Church] is for people to enter into a saving relationship with Christ through the valid sacraments of the Catholic Church, but salvation is not limited only to the normal/normative offer of grace in the Church. This has been taught even before the Vatican II documents on the Church, the relationship of the Church to other religions, and on the dignity of the human conscience.”

³⁶ Georges Bernanos, *The Diary of a Country Priest*, trans. Michael Tobin (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2025), 288.