

# On Becoming

A Collection of Meditations Curated by Art House Dallas



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FOREWORD BY ART HOUSE DALLAS

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## *Foreword*

*“For humans to have a responsible relationship to the world, they must imagine their places in it.”*

*—Wendell Berry*

Our places shape our loves and longings as well as our knowing and doing. Put simply, who we become is intimately related to how we imagine where we are. As the craftsmanship of God’s artistry, human beings are made for imaginative responsibility in community and creation. Though much is broken in the world and ourselves, the resurrection of Jesus Christ gives the transformed vision necessary to see the tangible facets of life woven into the fabric of becoming.

This collection of art is an invitation to the idea and reality of becoming, not individual self-actualization but a rich growth into the fullness of Christ. In Him, the particularities of life in creation become the raw materials for cultivation in community—this song, this painting, this meal, this prayer, this poem. The flesh and blood Word, who “moved into the neighborhood”, has called us to live with creative responsibility and become who we were always meant to be, God’s beloved children.

The anthology you hold before you is the loving creation of a community of friends in hope of transformation. Each chapter includes a text, poem, visual art, and scripture, along with questions for prayerful reflection to draw you further up and further in the journey of becoming. We hope you will find the authors, poets, and visual artists to be wise guides and friends as you enter into a companioned journey of becoming in Christ through the door of imagination and deeper to the heart. May this collection attune our senses to the sacred character of how we live and create in the particular place we find ourselves now. In all our searching for truth, justice, and beauty: to become fully, we must first be found in creation by the pursuing love of God, who asks, “Where are you?”

*—Art House Dallas*

# 1

## Becoming Through Christ

*“The Savior of us all, the Word of God, in His great love took to Himself a body and moved as Man among men, meeting their senses, so to speak, half way. He became Himself an object for the senses, so that those who were seeking God in sensible things might apprehend the Father through the works which He, the Word of God, did in the body. Human and human minded as men were, therefore, to whichever side they looked in the sensible world they found themselves taught the truth. Were they awe-stricken by creation? They beheld it confessing Christ as Lord. Did their minds tend to regard men as Gods? The uniqueness of the Savior’s works marked Him, alone of men, as Son of God.”*

—*St. Athanasius*

*On the Incarnation*

# Through and in Jesus Christ

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.

What does this mean? It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity.

First, the Christian is the man who no longer seeks his salvation, his deliverance, his justification in himself, but in Jesus Christ alone. He knows that God's Word in Jesus Christ pronounces him guilty, even when he does not feel his guilt, and God's Word in Jesus Christ pronounces him not guilty and righteous, even when he does not feel that he is righteous at all. The Christian no longer lives of himself, by his own claims and his own justification, but by God's claims and God's justification. He lives wholly by God's Word pronounced upon him, whether that Word declares him guilty or innocent.

The death and the life of the Christian is not determined by his own resources; rather he finds both only in the Word that comes to him from the outside, in God's Word to him. The Reformers expressed it this way: Our righteousness is an "alien righteousness," a righteousness that comes from outside of us (*extra nos*). They were saying that the Christian is dependent on the Word of God spoken to him. He is pointed outward, to the Word that comes to him. The Christian lives wholly by the truth of God's Word in Jesus Christ. If somebody asks him, Where is your salvation, your righteousness? he can never point to himself. He points to the Word of God in Jesus Christ, which assures him salvation and righteousness. He is as alert as possible to this Word. Because he daily hungers and thirsts for righteousness, he daily desires the redeeming Word. And it can come only from the outside. In himself he is destitute and dead. Help must come from the outside, and it has come and comes daily and anew in the Word of Jesus Christ, bringing redemption, righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

But God has put this Word into the mouth of men in order that it may be communicated to other men. When one person is struck by the Word, he speaks it to others. God has willed that we should seek and find His living Word in the witness of a brother, in the mouth of man. Therefore, the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged, for by himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth. He needs his brother man as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation. He needs his brother solely because of Jesus Christ. The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother's is sure.

And that also clarifies the goal of all Christian community: they meet one another as bringers of the message of salvation. As such, God permits them to meet together and gives them community. Their fellowship is founded solely upon Jesus Christ and this "alien righteousness." All we can say, therefore, is: the community of Christians springs solely from the Biblical and Reformation message of the justification of man through grace alone; this alone is the basis of the longing of Christians for one another.

Second, a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. Among men there is strife. "He is our peace," says Paul of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:14). Without Christ there is discord between God and man and between man and man. Christ became the Mediator and made peace with God and among men. Without Christ we should not know God, we could not call upon Him, nor come to Him. But without Christ we also would not know our brother, nor could we come to him. The way is blocked by our own ego. Christ opened up the way to God and to our brother. Now Christians can live with one another in peace; they can love and serve one another; they can become one. But they can continue to do so only by way of Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ are we one, only through him are we bound together. To eternity he remains the one Mediator.

Third, when God's Son took on flesh, he truly and bodily took on, out of pure grace, our being, our nature, ourselves. This was the eternal counsel of the triune God. Now we are in him. Where he is, there we are too, in the incarnation, on the Cross, and in his resurrection. We belong to him because we are in him. That is why the Scriptures call us the Body of Christ. But if, before we could know and wish it, we have been chosen and accepted with the whole Church in Jesus Christ, then we also belong to him in eternity with one another. We who live here in fellowship with him will one day be with him in eternal fellowship. He who looks upon his brother should know that he will be eternally united with him in Jesus Christ.

Christian community means community through and in Jesus Christ. On this presupposition rests everything that the Scriptures provide in the way of directions and precepts for the communal life of Christians.

“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another .... but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more” (I Thess. 4:9,10). God Himself has undertaken to teach brotherly love; all that men can add to it is to remember this divine instruction and the admonition to excel in it more and more. When God was merciful, when He revealed Jesus Christ to us as our Brother, when He won our hearts by His love, this was the beginning of our instruction in divine love. When God was merciful to us, we learned to be merciful with our brethren. When we received forgiveness instead of judgment, we, too, were made ready to forgive our brethren. What God did to us, we then owed to others. The more we received, the more we were able to give; and the more meager our brotherly love, the less were we living by God’s mercy and love. Thus God Himself taught us to meet one another as God has met us in Christ. “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Rom. 1 5:7).

In this wise does one, whom God has placed in common life with other Christians, learn what it means to have brothers. “Brethren in the Lord,” Paul calls his congregation (Phil. 1:14). One is a brother to another only through Jesus Christ. I am a brother to another person through what Jesus Christ did for me and to me; the other person has become a brother to me through what Jesus Christ did for him. This fact that we are brethren only through Jesus Christ is of immeasurable significance. Not only the other person who is earnest and devout, who comes to me seeking brotherhood, must I deal with in fellowship. My brother is rather that other person who has been redeemed by Christ, delivered from his sin, and called to faith and eternal life. Not what a man is in himself as a Christian, his spirituality and piety, constitutes the basis of our community. What determines our brotherhood is what that man is by reason of Christ. Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us. This is true not merely at the beginning, as though in the course of time something else were to be added to our community; it remains so for all the future and to all eternity. I have community with others and I shall continue to have it only through Jesus Christ. The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us. We have one another only through Christ, but through Christ we do have one another, wholly, and for all eternity.

That dismisses once and for all every clamorous desire for something more. One who wants more than what Christ has established does not want Christian brotherhood. He is looking for some extraordinary social experience which he has not found elsewhere; he is bringing muddled and impure desires into Christian brotherhood. Just at this point Christian brotherhood is threatened most often at the very start by the greatest danger of all, the danger of being poisoned at its root, the danger of confusing Christian brotherhood with some wishful idea of religious fellowship, of confounding the natural desire of the devout heart for community with the spiritual reality of Christian brotherhood. In Christian brotherhood everything depends upon its being clear right from the beginning, *first, that Christian brotherhood is not an ideal, but a divine reality. Second, that Christian brotherhood is a spiritual and not a psychic reality.*





*Casey by Catherine Prescott*  
*Oil on panel*  
*9" x 6"*  
*2014*

## Ordinary Saints

by Malcolm Guite

The ordinary saints, the ones we know,  
Our too-familiar family and friends,  
When shall we see them? Who can truly show  
Whilst still rough-hewn, the God who shapes our ends?  
Who will unveil the presence, glimpse the gold  
That is and always was our common ground,  
Stretch out a finger, feel, along the fold  
To find the flaw, to touch and search that wound  
From which the light we never noticed fell  
Into our lives? Remember how we turned  
To look at them, and they looked back? That full-  
-eyed love unserved us, and we turned around,  
Unready for the wrench and reach of grace.  
But one day we will see them face to face.

## Colossians 1:15–23

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

## An Invitation to Respond: Prayer of Examen

- *Become aware of God's presence.* Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.
- *Review the day with gratitude.* Walk through your day and note its joys and delights. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. Pay attention to small things.
- *Pay attention to your emotions.* We detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day.
- *Make note of shortcomings.* Could a feeling of frustration mean that God wants you to consider a new direction?
- *Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.* Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.



Art House Dallas is a 501(c)(3) non-profit which works to cultivate creativity for the common good in order to inspire everyone to live more imaginative, meaningful lives. We accomplish our mission by fostering community amongst individuals, believing that their rich artistic expression will serve to bring a greater sense of belonging to our city. Our programming reaches individuals across many genres of the arts including music, writing, visual art, spiritual formation, and more.

Learn more at [www.arthousedallas.com](http://www.arthousedallas.com)

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