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Beauty at the Cross(roads): Quotations and Concepts

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Calvin Symposium on Worship 2011 Beauty at the Cross(roads)

Bruce Herman—Session B15
Quotations and Concepts

“The novelist with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural; and he may well be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to this hostile audience. When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use more normal ways of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock -- to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures.”

— Flannery O'Connor cf. *A Good Writer is Hard to Find*

"We no longer dare to believe in beauty and we make of it a mere appearance in order the more easily to dispose of it. Our situation today shows that beauty demands for itself at least as much courage and decision as do truth and goodness, and she will not allow herself to be separated and banned from her two sisters without taking them along with herself in an act of mysterious vengeance. We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name as if she were the ornament of a bourgeois past -- whether he admits it or not -- can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love."

— Hans Urs von Balthasar cf. *Seeing the Form*

Questions for discussion:

- What is beauty? Is it purely about what is pretty or attractive?
- Is beauty subjectively received/understood?
- Is there a Christian sense of the beautiful, and if so, what is its significance to worship, to the life of the covenant community, etc?