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978-0-521-77205-1 - Christianity, Art and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the Struggle for Justice

John W. De Gruchy

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CHRISTIANITY, ART AND TRANSFORMATION

Theological aesthetics in the struggle for justice

Christianity, Art and Transformation explores the historical and contemporary relationship between the arts and Christianity with reference to the transformation of society. Several major themes are discussed, among them the power of images, the relationship between aesthetics and ethics, the nature of beauty and its redemptive capacity, aesthetic existence and Christian discipleship, and the role of art in the public square and in the life of the church. The book is a contribution to the study of theological aesthetics today from both an ecumenical and a Reformed perspective, global in its scope yet rooted in the author's South African context.

JOHN W. DE GRUCHY is Robert Selby Taylor Professor of Christian Studies and Director of the Graduate School in Humanities at the University of Cape Town. His published works include *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (1979), *Liberating Reformed Theology* (1991), *Christianity and Democracy* (1995) and *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (1999). In August 2000, de Gruchy was awarded the Karl Barth Prize by the Evangelische Kirche der Union in Germany.

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*To Isobel
in celebration of forty years*

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Preface

Work on *Christianity, Art and Transformation* began in earnest during my research leave spent at the Universities of Cambridge and Durham in England from January to June 1998. At Cambridge I was honoured to be a Fellow of the Centre for the Advanced Study of Religion and Theology in the Faculty of Divinity, a Visiting Bye Fellow at Selwyn College and a recipient of a Chestnut Trust Sabbatical Scholarship at Westminster College. At Durham I was equally honoured to be the Richardson Fellow in the Department of Theology and a Visiting Fellow at Van Mildert College. My thanks are due to the University of Cape Town for granting me research leave, to my colleagues in the Department of Religious Studies who assumed extra duties and to those at Cambridge and Durham who ensured that my sabbatical was an enriching experience. I am particularly grateful to Professor David Ford and Dr Jeremy Begbie at Cambridge, to Professors David Brown and Ann Loades at Durham, to our gracious hosts Martin and Pamela Cressey in Cambridge and Judy Turner, Principal of Van Mildert College, in Durham.

Many friends, students and colleagues have contributed to the writing of this volume. First of all, I wish to express my gratitude to the students in my graduate seminar on 'Christianity, Art and Transformation' in 1997 and 1999, and especially to my teaching assistants Gillian Walters and Robert Steiner. Robert has also been of great help in the development of the research project on the same theme which is located in the Research Institute on Christianity in South Africa (RICSA) at the University of Cape Town. Several colleagues at the University have taken considerable care in reading and commenting on various drafts of the typescript. In particular I would like to mention Paul Taylor, Peggy Delpont, Pippa Skotnes, Sandra Klopper, Derek Japha and Julian Cooke, who was also

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instrumental in stimulating the original idea. Thanks also to Geoff Grundlingh for providing the necessary photographic expertise for reproducing the illustrations and the jacket photograph. A colleague from further afield, William Everett, Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Andover Newton Seminary in Boston, has likewise provided warm encouragement and critically constructive comment. Lyn Holness, my personal assistant, has been exceptional in her support and provided much helpful critical comment. My thanks are also due to Kevin Taylor, the religious studies editor at Cambridge University Press, for his confidence and professional support.

Christianity, Art and Transformation is dedicated to my wife, Isobel, who has also helpfully commented on the text and, above all, has shared in the journey which has led to its completion. As I am writing this on the thirty-ninth anniversary of our wedding, but knowing that in all likelihood publication of the book will be nearer our fortieth celebration, I offer it to her in part as an anniversary present.

JOHN DE GRUCHY