

## PREFACE

While teaching a course on C. S. Lewis in the spring of 2001, it occurred to me that Lewis had a fairly easy job of apologetics in *Mere Christianity*. His moral argument for the existence of God depended upon reasonable people recognizing the experience of evil. He argued that evil only makes sense in comparison with something else that we call “good.” Of course, his great advantage was a man named Adolf Hitler and a war that had brought bombing raids to the streets of Britain. People had no trouble recognizing the problem of evil.

In the spring of 2001 I published a little book called *Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*. In the comfortable luxury of the booming economy, the American people had allowed their sensibilities to grow numb to such value judgments as good and evil, right and wrong, true and false. The postmodern world turned out to be the monster that Lewis had predicted fifty years earlier in *The Abolition of Man*.

As I was pondering these matters, Dr. Jim Weaver, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Springfield, Virginia, invited me to lead the annual fall Bible conference at his church. I decided to use the occasion to explore the problem of sin and evil in a postmodern world. Over the summer, as I collected my thoughts, I preached several sermons on this theme as the guest preacher at Second Baptist Church of Memphis, Tennessee, and at Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Just before it was time for the Bible conference to convene, a group of terrorists took over four jetliners, crashed them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the Pennsylvania countryside. Immediately raising the problem of evil again.

While preparing to complete the manuscript for this book after many delays, I was engaged in planning the C. S. Lewis Summer Institute in Oxford and Cambridge, for which I serve as program chair. Our theme for 2005 is "The Good, the True, and the Beautiful." Many stimulating conversations took place among the members of the planning committee that relate directly to the issues explored in this text. I am grateful to Stan Mattson, Gayne Anacker, Todd Pickett, and Nigel Goodwin for their keen insights and reflections on the tragedy that is contemporary culture.

I know two Jim Weavers. The other Jim Weaver is the academic acquisitions editor for Kregel Publications. I deeply appreciate all his efforts to bring this project to fruition. I am also most grateful to Steve Barclift and Moriah Sharp for their efforts at editing my final manuscript.

Dr. David Dockery, president of Union University, has provided me with an opportunity to pursue projects of this sort through the Charles Colson Chair of Faith and Culture, for which I am most grateful. The generous support and encouragement of Charles Colson and the board of Prison Fellowship have enabled me to engage issues of this sort. I have also benefited from the support and encouragement of my colleagues within the Christian Studies Department, with whom I have had a continuing conversation about the subjects raised in this book. I particularly appreciate the stimulation I receive from Drs. Randall Bush, Greg Thornbury, and Brad Green. Because of their encyclopedic knowledge, I need never consult a library! I am most grateful to Marjorie Richard and Autumn Alcott Ridenour, who helped prepare this manuscript. As with all my projects, Mary Anne Poe was of invaluable help as reader and critic of the manuscript. The advantages of having a wife who is a colleague in theology and ministry cannot be overstated.