

Preface

Men anpil, chaj pa lou: the Haitian proverb declares, “with many hands, the burden is not heavy.” Though writing can be a solitary enterprise, every author knows the inestimable value of the support of family, friends, and institutions. Above all, I thank Mary Ellen for her patience and encouragement over the years it has taken to bring this project to fruition. I owe thanks also to faculty colleagues at Metropolitan State University and to clergy colleagues in the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota for the confidence they expressed in awarding research grants to support my work.

Though the interpretation of Romans I present on the following pages is distinctive, the tremendous debts I owe to the insights and labors of the “great cloud” of New Testament scholars will be obvious throughout. Given the wealth of other scholarly resources on Romans available today, notably the long-awaited and richly rewarding Hermeneia commentary by Robert Jewett (*Romans* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006]), I have made no attempt here to represent comprehensively the views of other scholars. For encouraging conversation and challenging questions, I thank especially Dick Horsley, Pamela Eisenbaum, Amy-Jill Levine, Mark D. Nanos, Christopher P. Stanley, and the members and participants in the Paul and Politics Section and the Seminar on Paul’s Use of Scripture of the Society of Biblical Literature, who have helped to shape the argument here in important ways; though of course, they are not responsible for my construal of Romans. I am grateful for the confidence shown in this work by Scott Tunseth and Michael West at Fortress Press, for the capable and considerate efforts of Marshall Johnson, James Korsmo, Tim Larson, Josh Messner, Laurie Ingram, and Susan Johnson, and for the skill and talent of Leslie Rubin, Chuck John, and Jeska Horgan-Kobelski.

I studied Paul as a graduate student at Princeton Theological Seminary under the deft and passionate guidance of J. Christiaan Beker, who had drunk deeply at the spring of Karl Barth’s *Sachkritik* and who had come in his own work to understand the “inner dialectic of the matter” in Romans as “the coming cosmic triumph of God.” It was Chris Beker whom I first heard voice disquiet that discussions of Paul’s apocalyptic thought had usually neglected the question of Roman imperial eschatology as expressed, for example, in Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue*. That question, as much as Chris’s wide-ranging theological imagination, scholarly erudition, and passionate commitment to the triumph of God from which it sprang, set me on the path that has led to this book. I remember him with affection and gratitude.



Women merchants wait in line at a savings and loan office near Thiotte, Haiti. Such small business women, ti machann, are the mainstay of Haiti's informal economy. Image © Gideon Mendel/CORBIS.