

## Preface

**E**VEN THOUGH THE EDICT of the Roman emperor Claudius, as reported by Suetonius, features as a critical point in the reconstruction of the historical exigency and exegesis of Paul's letter to the Romans, the pervasive ideology of imperial Rome and the subordination of conquered nations, the appointment of vassal leaders, and the conflict with external religions or *superstitiones*, (among which Judaism was reckoned) have not received significant consideration in the exegesis of the letter. This book seeks to demonstrate that by subjecting the language and argument used in the exordium of Paul's letter to the Romans to the critique of ideological strategies used by the dominant and subordinate groups in establishing their worldview, and to the strategies of resistance found in subordinate groups, we gain fresh insight into the potential crises within which the Judaeo-Christian community in Rome, and to the content and purpose of the letter. We are able to reconstruct these crises within the context of ongoing conflict with the dominant Roman imperial ideology, and the measures taken by the latter to suppress subordinate ideologies in the interest of the security of the state.

The thesis is that Romans may be seen as an attempt by a subordinate group to redress actual and potential issues of confrontation, and to offer hope even in the crisis of facing death. Our analysis of the exordium demonstrates that the letter is focused on strengthening the faith of the Christ-believers in Rome in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, a member of Israel and Son of God whose universal rule stands in contrast to the claims of the Roman Empire. The universal Lordship of Jesus Christ brought about through his resurrection from death imposed by Roman crucifixion demonstrates that God's power is at work in Israel and in the nations of the world, as it was depicted in significant events in the history of the people of Israel; and that ultimately, despite its glory, Rome's dominance is but temporary. The short-lived glory of the several empires that were unwittingly instruments of God's wrath for the purpose of the unfolding of salvation history according to the prophecies of God is testimony to this. It is this truth that resides in the unfolding of Paul's gospel. Paul demonstrates that it is God's peace and not Rome's peace that is important; that loyalty to the exalted Jesus as Lord and to the kingdom of God, not Jupiter and Rome, leads to salvation; that grace flows from Jesus as Christ and Lord and not from the benefactions of the Emperor. If the resurrection of Jesus, the crucified criminal of the Roman Empire, demonstrates God's power over the universe and death, the very instrument of Roman control, then the Christ-believer is encouraged to face suffering and death in the hope of salvation through this power. Paul's theology emerges from and is inextricably bound to the politics of his

*Preface*

day, to imperial Rome, to the Scriptures of his people, and to the critical fact that the God who is one and Lord of all is still in charge of the world.

SAMPLE