Haiti after the Earthquake by Paul Farmer. Public Affairs, 431pp. $29.99
(\textit{also e-book}) Published on the 18 months anniversary of the 2010 earthquake, this book is hard to read and hard to put down. A powerful reminder of the day when a 7.2 earthquake killed a quarter of a million people, and left thousands under the rubble of the capital city of Port-au-Prince, it speaks vividly of the suffering and resilience of the people. With all the attention that disaster received and all the solemn commitments made by donors, it is shameful to realize how few of the promises have been kept. Once again, Haiti has fallen out of the news.

This is a personal book by Paul Farmer, co-founder of Partners in Health, with contributions by a number of his co-workers, friends and family. Remarkably moving, informative, restrained, even hopeful, it makes it clear how much remains to be done.

Why was the quake such a disaster, why has the cleanup been so slow, and followed by a horrendous cholera epidemic? Farmer, physician and teacher, answers with a brief “history of the present illness,” with Haiti the patient. Haiti’s history starts with slavery and a revolution that brought it independence and fear to the other slaveholding societies. The roots of Haiti’s problematic economic, social and political structure lie in this history. “Natural” disasters are not independent of human activities: before the earthquake, Port-au-Prince was crowded beyond its capacity, mountains were deforested. Soil erosion caused massive landslides at every hurricane. Cholera, brought by UN Peacekeepers,
themselves without symptoms, was spread by an unsanitary water system.

Farmer and his co-workers help us to understand the intricate systemic interconnection.

Much has been achieved but much more remains to be done. Providing Haitians with the means to rebuild their country and their society is essential.

*Erika Bourguignon