

EDITORIAL: God, Haiti & judgmental Christians

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Millions of Christians and Muslims debate whether adherents of the two faiths worship the same god. Lately, I've been wondering if I worship the same god as some other Christians. For example, take Pat Robertson. Please.

On his 700 Club television program, the broadcaster and onetime U.S. presidential candidate discussed the devastating earthquake that leveled much of Haiti, leaving tens of thousands of people dead and many more injured.

Editor Marv Knox

"Something happened a long time ago in Haiti, and people might not want to talk about," Robertson said. "They were under the heel of the French—you know Napoleon the third and whatever. And they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said, 'We will serve you if you will get us free from the prince.' True story. And so the devil said, 'OK, it's a deal.' And they kicked the French out. The Haitians revolted and got something—themselves free. But ever since, they have been cursed by one thing after another."

Here are historical facts: The Haitian Revolution, led by slaves, took place from 1791 to 1804. The region, Saint-Dominique, was a French colony. The rebellion broke out in the aftermath of the French Revolution, which advanced the philosophy that all human beings are endowed with God-given rights. As the slaves launched their revolt, some of them turned to the only god they knew, seeking blessings in a ceremony led by Dutty Boukman, a Voudo (voodoo) priest.

Implications of the Haitian Revolution were enormous. Raymond Joseph, the Haitian ambassador to the United States, [told MSNBC's Rachel Maddow](#): The revolt eliminated slavery on Hispaniola, the island where Haiti is located. Haiti became the first democracy in Latin America, and democracy spread throughout the region. The revolution even strengthened the United States, because it led to the Louisiana Purchase, through which our country bought what became 13 states west of the Mississippi River for \$15 million—or 3 cents per acre.

So, according to Robertson, God continues to “curse” Haitians in 2010 because their ancestors—impoverished slaves, yearning to breathe free—turned to the only god they knew anything about, leaning on beliefs that sprung from African animist folk religion. God drops buildings on children because of an event that took place 219 years ago. Oh, yeah, and back then, God took the side of slaveholders instead of slaves. And that same God plays favorites, allowing the United States to close the best real estate deal in history while punishing the Haitians for the very act that made the real estate deal possible.

That’s a god with which I’m not familiar.

Maybe Robertson worships a truncated version of the Old Testament God, remembering parts of verses, such as, “God stores up a man’s punishment for his sons,” (Job 21:19a) or “The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Ezekiel 18:2b). Those verses don’t even reflect the God of the Old Testament, who forsook the notion that people are punished for the sins of others (Jeremiah 31:30, Ezekiel 18:4).

But I—and millions of Christians like me—worship God who loves, suffers and weeps with the poor. And since Haitians are among the poorest on Earth, we’re confident God’s divine heart breaks for them, as do ours. This is not a god who directs natural disasters to afflict the innocent. This is not a god who holds 200-year-old grudges. This is the God whose wrath kindles

against the arrogance and mean judgmentalism of the proudly religious, like Robertson, but melts with the tears of Haitians.

Heaven only knows how much damage is done by the theological regurgitation of Robertson. But now, the rest of us must bestow Christ's love upon Haiti. Please join my wife and me in supporting [Texas Baptist Men](#) or the [Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger](#) to provide Haitian aid.

—*Marv Knox is editor of the Baptist Standard. Visit his [FaithWorks Blog](#).*