

## Robertson Making his own Deal with the Devil

Contributed by Byron Williams  
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Earlier this week I had lunch with Josh Stein, an intellectually curious and gifted sophomore attending Fresno State University. Stein's myriad interests include the intersection between religion and science.

A little known ritual observed by liberals, we must bash conservatives for 10 minutes before eating—it helps the digestive system process and absorb nutrients.

It was during this period of the lunch, when the tragedy of the recent earthquake that struck Haiti came up, I sarcastically quipped: "It's a matter of time before someone suggests that God caused the earthquake in Haiti as punishment for something."

Stein, quickly responded, "It has already happened, Pat Robertson said something to that effect this morning."

After lunch, clips of televangelist Robertson's theological utterances (and I use that term very loosely) on his 700 Club broadcast had already bombarded my email inbox.

As the number appeared below the screen for those who wanted to send money for earthquake relief, Robertson offered this dispassionate observation:

"Something happened a long time ago in Haiti, and the people might not want to talk about it. They were under the heel of the French. And they (Haitians) got together and swore a pact to the Devil. They said, 'we will serve you if you get us free from the French,' true story. And so the Devil said, 'Okay it's a deal!'"

What is it with televangelist and tragedy? I remember when Jerry Falwell, on the heels of 9/11 with Robertson playing the role of Ed McMahon stated:

I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way -- all of them who have tried to secularize America -- I point the finger in their face and say "you helped this happen."

It is always problematic when any type of religious discourse offers definitive answers to the complexities of the human condition.

The so-called deal with the Devil that Robertson refers is the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). If we momentarily suspend reality by granting Robertson's words a scintilla of legitimacy, is he suggesting the only way Haitians could act on the most basic instinct humans possess, which is the freedom guaranteed by self-determination, was to enter into agreement with Satan?

This leaves us to conclude that God was siding with the French and their desires to occupy and enslave a foreign land.

The U.S. has its own dubious relationship with Haiti. It overlooked the brutality administered by Haitian President Jean-Claude Duvalier (Papa Doc) against his own people as a Cold War price that had to be paid, given he was a staunch anti-communist.

Papa Doc and his son, Baby Doc, are on the short list of the most brutal dictators the U.S. tolerated in the Western Hemisphere during the Cold War era. Using Robertson's thinking, for the U.S. to be given a pass by God in its dealing with Haiti, would also suggest the almighty is a proponent of realpolitik.

It is this type of Neanderthal thinking as it relates to theology that justified Manifest Destiny, The Trail of Tears, African American chattel slavery, as well as other atrocities under the pseudonym progress.

But Robertson's comments raise another question: Why is it God's wrath is seemingly reserved for the poorest nations in the world?

How is it that Wall Street has been spared from floods as well as infestations of locust, frogs, livestock death, boils, darkness, and the death of its firstborn?

What does Robertson's remarks say about those who, long before this tragic earthquake occurred, consistently gave of themselves to provide aid to Haiti?

At the time of this writing, I personally know people who were in Haiti when the earthquake occurred and they have yet to

be in contact with their families in America. If the worst has indeed happened, why would God smite those whose only intent was to bring comfort to the least of these?

Haiti needs financial and physical resources not uninformed heretics offering irrational theological explanations to events requiring a scientific response. I'm quite certain it was a sudden release of energy from the Earth's crust creating seismic waves in 2010 that had more to do with the earthquake in Haiti than some alleged satanic pact in 1791.