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Pat Robertson's Theological Pundritry

Ken Briggs | Jan. 14, 2010 NCR Today

Pat Robertson has taken the "blame the victim" mentality to a new level.

Robertson's geo-religio-political analysis of the Haitian disaster is that it's their own damned fault. He contends that the island's slaves enlisted the devil to overthrow their French colonial oppressors in 1805 and have been punished ever since.

The television preacher has played on this grandiose stage before, once famously claiming to have turned the course of a hurricane.

That episode became the stuff of stand-up comedy, but there's nothing funny about this one. If anything, it suggests that the "pact with the devil" is more a projection of his own consorting with evil. So in an odd way he may be on to something.

Robertson may still be smarting from his rebuff as a candidate for the Republican nomination. He once fancied himself the guardian of the nation's "family values" crusade when restoration of morality was all the rage. But he had to return to his 700 club sanctuary in defeat. His brain stock, and he has plenty, seems to have been invested in greater nuttiness ever since.

His cruel attack on people who deserve our every ounce of compassion is insufferable. It probably stems from his twisted notions about Haitians and voodoo that threaten his church-based dualism, the grand battle between good and evil.

Wherever it came from, however, it is a strain in American religion that may go beyond a narrow fringe. There remains in some quarters a readiness to accuse the poor, the non-Christian, the anti-capitalist and the non-white of bringing calamity on themselves because they failed to believe as "we" do in "our" politics, economics, morality and religion.

If Robertson is a lone wolf, he will quickly be shouted off the stage as a man howler. If he fans wider flames, however, the damage will have been done.

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