

# Is Haiti Under Divine Curse?

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## Introduction

It is not an exaggeration to say that Haiti is going through the darkest hour of its history at this time. Certainly, things have always been hard in that island nation of nine million souls. Indeed, for generations Haiti has been reputed for the condition of socio-economic deprivation that has prevailed within its borders. But today, the index of human misery has been elevated to a new and unprecedented level. In recent times, a series of catastrophic events have shaken the country to its very core. Everyone knows of the massive earthquake of January 12, 2010, that virtually destroyed Port-au-Prince and several adjacent cities. But, although the giant tremor was the most spectacular and horrific of the country's misfortunes, it is by no means the only misery-producing calamity that has been unleashed on that land. It shares the blame with many other plagues, including political turmoil, punishing economic sanctions, devastating hurricanes, disastrous economic policies, and a growing cholera outbreak which has already killed hundreds and threatens the lives of thousands more.



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Dr. Dieumeme Noelliste (Ph.D., Northwestern University; M.Div., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) joined the Denver Seminary faculty as professor of theological ethics and director of the Grounds Institute for Public Ethics in 2007. Before coming to Denver, Colorado, Dr. Noelliste served in a variety of theological organizations and schools in the Caribbean.

Crushed by the heavy weight of these sundry misfortunes, a suffering and weary people understandably cries, “How long, O Lord! How long!” In uttering this lament, the sufferers wish for the hastening of the day of redemption, when, at last, the lifting of the burdens that today inhibit and crush life will usher in an era characterized by human flourishing. But to some it appears that such an aspiration and hope is futile because it is considered ill-founded. To their minds, this land, which was once known as the Pearl of the Antilles because of its stunning beauty, and which supplied colonial France with the lion’s share of its wealth, and which courageously lit the torch of freedom in the Americas, resulting in the dismantling of the slavery regime in the whole continent—this land should not aspire for the return of its former days. Why?

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*Many people think that Haiti’s calamities are God’s punishment meted out to a people steeped in the observance of the superstitious practices of their African forebears.*

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Because allegedly it is under curse—divine curse! The calamities that have visited it are said to be God’s punishment meted out to a people steeped in the observance of the superstitious practices of their African forebears.

Such is the judgment of American televangelist Pat Robertson. Soon after the January 12 earthquake, while Haitians were in the throes of their pain, and while the world was singing in unison a chorus of solidarity and sympathy in support of the suffering Haitians, Robertson put forth the view that the mighty tremor was God’s just judgment provoked by an alleged covenant or pact that the founders of the Haitian nation supposedly made with the devil in exchange for its independence.<sup>1</sup> In the view of people such as Robertson (and, curiously, including many Haitian Christians), the earthquake was the outworking of God’s curse against the Haitian

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<sup>1</sup> Charisma, “Pat Robertson Under Fire for Haiti Remarks,” <http://www.charismamag.com/index.php/news/25955-pat-robertson-under-fire-for-haiti-remarks>, January 14, 2010.