

Every crisis becomes a religion if it lasts long enough.

One factor in that transformation is the Beautiful Theory phenomenon: the power elite insists its remedies are logical and politically correct so they must work, even if the actual evidence shows they obviously don't.

When Beautiful Theories crash into hard, cold reality and shatter, faith is the glue used by the elites to put their precious ideas back together. They need militant faith to get the job done: true believers eager to crush doubt and compel obedience by making war on the infidels.

Some are swept into the faith because they desperately crave a sense of control over the crisis. They need to believe Something Can Be Done, and they'd rather invest their faith in debunked Beautiful Theories than have no faith at all. Faith is a coin that demands to be spent.

Some crave social approval, and the purveyors of Beautiful Theories have immense political, economic, and cultural power to make their faith seem fashionable. Virtue signaling is such a plague in modern society because the signals are pre-packaged and made very easy to send.

Some aren't even hoping they can assert control over a crisis by converting to its religion. They'll settle for just having some meaning, some simplicity, a sense that the righteous will fare better than the unbelievers, that virtue will be rewarded while sin is punished.

That's a very common impulse with the Church of Covid, since the Beautiful Theories were so very obviously wrong. There isn't much left of the faith except the visceral communal satisfaction of hoping unbelievers will be punished for their blasphemies with sickness and death.

That sort of thing happens with all of the crisis religions, although not usually as quickly and obviously as with the Church of Covid. Look at the endless stream of movies about how the world became an apocalyptic hellscape because people didn't believe in global warming.

The last resort of every crisis religion, the last thing that puts asses in the pews, is that addiction to misery porn, the collective hope that unbelievers will suffer someday, and everyone will admit the True Faith was right all along as Judgment Day crashes down upon them.

The elite will never have the humility to admit they were wrong, and they'll never give up on politically or financially profitable "solutions" even when they obviously don't solve the problem. Founding a crisis religion means they never have to say they're sorry.

That applies to some very longstanding crises, like the War on Poverty, whose nostrums long ago transformed into fantastically expensive articles of religious faith even as mountains of data accumulated that proved they were utter failures, and often made the problems worse.

You can look for some telltale signs of a crisis transforming into a religion. The most obvious one is when the high priests tell you the "war" you've been drafted into will never end. They become

very angry when asked to define success or failure, or lay out exit strategies.

Watch for the moment when you're told "science" means not asking questions, defying dogma, or challenging "consensus." That is the literal definition of faith, not science.

Always keep an eye out for Moving Goalposts, which are the signature miracle of crisis religions, their version of parting the waters or loaves and fishes. Crisis religions work very hard to make their faith unfalsifiable by constantly changing the standards of evidence.

Check to see if certain people are accumulating huge amounts of money and power from a crisis. That's a pretty good sign it's turning into a religion. A crisis should be solved as quickly and efficiently as possible. Don't let it fester long enough to become a special interest.

Above all, look for the whiff of arrogance to develop around a crisis. Wise religions and effective crisis managers have something in common: a sense of humility. Crisis religions are militant faiths that quickly become arrogant, smug, and totalitarian.

Dedicated people who truly want to solve a problem will look for evidence their analysis is wrong, or their policies aren't working, and make adjustments as quickly as possible, no matter the cost or embarrassment to themselves. This is humility.

Crisis religions are arrogant. They reject criticism, insist their Beautiful Theories must be right because they're ideologically pure - they fit snugly into a worldview that must not be challenged. Their plans only fail because their commands were disobeyed or sabotaged.

The high priests of a crisis religion see devils everywhere, leering at them from the rubble of every failure. Only sin can explain why their Beautiful Theories are tarnished. Failure is never their fault, so it must be yours. They find your lack of faith disturbing.

And you know what? A lot of people want to see the world that way, including a great many self-described atheists. They hunger for the comfort of faith and the vibrant energy of militancy. They want to be right, and they want the wrong to suffer for their folly.

Conservatives think religious faith in the State is terrifying and wonder why so many embrace it. It's because uncertainty is much more frightening. A simple false story is better than a complex true one, and with enough faith, maybe we can force the simple story to be true.