

The Dark Side of Spirituality: Conspiracy Theories and Religion

January 26th, 2024

Georgian Triangle Lifelong Learning Institute

Section 1: Defining conspiracy theories. In this section we will learn how conspiracy theories are much more than our vision of someone in a tinfoil hat, or images of lizard people ruling our nation. The importance of the convergence of religion, politics, the occult, and distrust will be addressed.

Section 2 – How conspiracy theories mobilize. Here we will learn how those who believe in conspiracy theories can adopt a persona of a social hero, someone who knows the “truth” and will mobilize to save the nation, or the world. This comes at a cost to their social and professional standing, a price they are willing to pay to be the hero, the nation needs.

Section 3 – Apocalyptic thought and the interconnectedness to conspiracy theories. How belief in the end times can be similar and promote beliefs in conspiracy theories. Here we will also explore how religious language can be an effective tool for social movements and mobilization.

Section 4 – Here we will look at our first example of religion, politics, and conspiracy theories, with the Patriot Church Movement in America. Using their posts and language we will see how conspiracy is linked to the political and the religious, and how tools of fear, end times, and Christian nationalism are evoked to mobilize.

Section 5 – We will look at a movement closer to home, in Canada with the self-proclaimed “Queen of Canada” Romana Didulo. Her movement is linked to QAnon, but has a distinctly Canadian perspective. Didulo uses religion and conspiracy in her movement, but a religious movement from the 1940s, The I AM Movement to forward her political movement.

Recommended Reading:

Bader, Christopher D., Joseph O. Baker, L. Edward Day, Ann Gordon. *Fear Itself: The Causes and Consequences of Fear in America*. New York University Press.

Barkun, Michael. *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*. Vol. 15. University of California Press, 2013.

Fenster, Mark. *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Uscinski, Joseph E. *Conspiracy Theories and the People who Believe Them*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2018.