

## **Hey a-nonny, a-nonny: Q-anon, the Q Continuum and Quackery**

*Hey, nonny, nonny: “a nonsense refrain popular in English music during the Elizabethan era.” (sung in Shakespeare’s “Much Ado About Nothing”)*

One of my favorite Sci-Fi shows was (and I admit, still is) *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (STNG). A crew of explorers consisting of diverse species from many worlds warping through galaxies on adventures “where no one has gone before.” STNG presents some very compelling stories. One recurring character is “Q,” played by John de Lancie, who happens to be a real-life atheist. Q is a member of the “Continuum,” a council of god-like beings, and he’s driven by an insatiable curiosity, especially about the human species. Q makes surprise appearances now and then, usually in moments of crisis, to question and challenge the crew of the Enterprise by means of childish chaos and playful pranks to flaunt his omnipotence.

Now, in our time, on our planet, we just said good-bye (i.e. good riddance) to a spacey president who, in his childish chaos, made up something he called the “Space Force” with a logo stolen from Star Trek. And in his *nonny-nonny* nonsense the Quack-in-Chief encouraged some of the most wacky conspiracy movements since the dawn of religions. And now, in our truth-challenged culture, one of the weirdest nonny-nonnies is Q-anon.

With the demise and dethronement of the Mad King, Deplorable Don, his spaced-out force of followers are now in a free-fall. The cult wanders the web wondering what to believe, who to have confidence in now that their Con-in-Chief has flown up and away.

On his departure, if you could stomach to watch, the deluded king said he would be back “in some form.” Cryptic, silly and nutty as expected, and perhaps a dangerous threat of some kind. Messing with our heads is his modus operandi.

This all reminds me of a bumper sticker I pasted on my 1964 Dodge Dart convertible (with push-button transmission!) back in high school. It shouted “Jesus is Coming!” I stuck it right next to a colorful “Wise Men Still Seek Him.” (wise women apparently avoided him).

Our youthful crew of Jesus People, with our long hair, guitars and pocket bibles, loved stickers and buttons and little paper tracts we could leave in classrooms and bathrooms. Ah, those nonny-nonny days!

I’ll get straight to the parallel point here. We believed—no, we knew—our best buddy Jesus was coming back and coming back *Very Soon* ... “in some form.” He was returning at any moment to pick up all of us holy hitchhikers (maybe in a sticker-

covered VW bus) and take us “home.” We couldn’t wait. So, while we were waiting we did all we could to fill the bus—we stickered the world (mostly on lockers, lapels and lavatories) with the “good news.” “He’s coming back” (and yes, He’s pissed and will drive over unbelievers, but “He really Loves You!”).

The best way to get more passengers on the Evangel Express was to cause the most holy chaos we could by sermonizing, singing and stickering every brain with one powerful image: Q in the Clouds. This was our cue, our clue what faith was all about —imagining, waiting, praying and praising our way to something better—there has to be something better, somewhere. *Someone please show us the way!*

Sad indeed. Teens who couldn’t wait to die. Youthful years lost to a dream. Young people who felt “homeless,” drawn to any voices offering a way, a truth, a life (or a lie). Those of us who fervently and feverishly believed our Savior was soon to arrive to take us out of this dark-web world of sin, we can perhaps relate to some Q-anon believers who find their cult collapsing, left staring into the sky after an Air Force One helicopter soaring off to the Sunshine State—heaven?). That may sound quite *nonny*, but we can sense the disappointment and disillusionment, because an illusion it all is—a demented and dangerous one. And like the disciples in Acts who stood watching the Ascension of their Master, we once stood in worrisome wonder holding nothing but a conspiracy called faith.

Like those caught in the Q-anonymous web, those who once believed Someone would save them, find themselves standing, waiting, asking: “What now?” We stood trembling with troubled hearts and tears. “What happens now?” When the Master is gone, the slaves must rediscover their freedom, freewill and freethinking. Whether our Savior was violently sacrificed or voted out of office, it is our responsibility to move forward, to save ourselves.

On a continuum of questioning, the liberated cult-mind fights back to sanity. The “Q,” in any form, messes with your mind, loves the chaotic and thrives on the psychotic. The disruption of a fracturing faith can lead some to desperation as they grope and grasp for another anchor—another Reality Showman, or Un-reality website. For others, when their illusions are shattered, shown for what they are in the light of day, they become determined never to be dumbed-down or duped again.

For some of us who found the exit from Christ-anon, the bus never came. So, we left the bus-stop (Church, faith, or both). The stickers faded and fell from the bumpers of our beliefs. We knew we had to be *aware to beware* the cons and conspiracies from politics or pulpits. Today’s obstacles to the exit are formidable especially given the *tsunami of nonny* on the internet. Those with no inner compass or basic common sense (or decency) will be lost to the next faith-flavor of the month.

As I say, what now? Like Captain Picard and his starship crew, we have to stand up to Captains of Chaos and numbskulls of nonsense; we must speak out with a strong, united voice of Reason and Truth. This is no time for anonymity. Our “calling,” our “good news,” is fairly clear and must be clearly presented. No one is descending from a helicopter or heaven to save us. Liberated from our own stuck-ness, we have a new sticker to stick on sticky minds: **Reason is Coming!**

In STNG, Q usually learns something valuable about humanity, and himself—God gets educated, and exposed for the *nonny nonny*. I find that a refreshing thought, don’t you?

**Chris Highland**

**On the 21st day of the 21st year of the 21st Century**

(this essay was originally published on “Rational Doubt,” the former blog for non-theists on Patheos)