

Going down with the ship: In for the long haul

by [Gordon Atkinson](#)

April 14, 2005

*I will go down with this ship. And I won't put my hands up and surrender.
There will be no white flag above my door. (Dido)*

We will all go down on one ship or another because we have no idea how we came to be on this ball of feverish algae and germs that endlessly circles the star we call Sol. We have no idea why Sol exists in a spiral arm of the galaxy we call the Milky Way. And we don't know enough to even phrase the questions in meaningful ways.

So you will go down with your ship. You will ride your ship of belief until it disappears beneath the waves. For a time there will be ripples on the surface of the water, your legacy and memory, but those ripples will eventually spread and disappear. After that it will be as if you never existed.

And this ship will not be some fancy ocean liner with a famous name like "Christianity" or "agnosticism" or "Buddhism" or "Generic American Political and Social God-ism." No, your ship will be the small vessel that you are creating with your own hands, and those of a few sailing buddies who are a part of your convoy.

This is what faith in Christ means to me. It is the ship I will go down with. My church is a small collection of rowboats, rafts, dinghies and canoes that make up a precious convoy of friends heading for the open sea. I have journeyed with these sea-faring pilgrims for many years now. Our skin is dark and weathered, and some people say we look more like pirates than sailors.

I intend to take my ship straight to the horizon, full steam ahead with my eyes on the setting sun. Don't speak to me of danger or choices or what might have been. Don't tell me that I might take on water. Damn it, man, I *intend* to take on water. I intend to sail straight and true until the water covers my deck and I can go no further. Then my friends will slow their ships, and come alongside to give me a final

salute. And when I go under I will still be facing the horizon with both hands on the wheel.

I will face whatever lies in the darkness over the sea and in the lands from which no mortal has ever returned save the one our story speaks of. In those last moments, with my sailing buddies giving me a somber nod, I will pit my frail vessel and our story against the secrets of the universe.

What I seek, what I want, what I need and must have is a way to face the darkness. What I seek, what I want, what I need and must have is the courage to believe in the light.

I hope it will be said that I stood for goodness. I hope it will be said that I was faithful and true to this course. And I hope the last slick I leave on the surface of the water will be an encouragement to my daughters and my friends, and that they will turn their own sails into the wind for the final run.

This is the deal I have with God. I will go down on his ship. I will not raise my arms and surrender. There will be no white flag upon my bow. This is faith, and I'm in it for the long haul.