

A Soul-searching Dialogue with Self about Religion

William G. McArthur – June 20, 2005

SO, WHY ARE YOU QUITTING FROM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

Actually, I've already quit. The immediate cause was the election of a hard-line Pope when the social needs of the Church demanded a lot of changes. But I've had many other reasons over the years.

WHAT CHANGES DO YOU THINK ARE NEEDED?

There are so many: the role of women, attitude toward the abuse of children by priests, encouragement of family planning, ending the hypocrisy of a celibate priesthood by permitting married priests, and the control of the Church at all levels by the laity.

DO YOU KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THE CHURCH TO MAKE THIS KIND OF JUDGMENT?

First, and most important, I'm a cultural Catholic who had mostly Catholic friends growing up. I was a regular churchgoer for many decades in churches in different regions of the country. I took theology courses in all of my 8 semesters at Villanova and additionally took several philosophy courses there that had a Catholic theological slant, especially Epistemology, Metaphysics, and Philosophy of Science. I taught high school students in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) program for 15 years. I was a member of a Parish Council for several years. I studied the Vatican II documents and the Catechetical Directory, which is the foundation for the teaching of Catholic doctrine. I think that I could hold my own with most priests in a discussion of Church history and theology.

WHY DON'T YOU JUST FOLLOW MARTIN LUTHER OUT THE DOOR?

Certainly the Protestant churches have taken care of a lot of the problems of the Catholic Church, but I still have problems with those churches. Recently, I reread the beginning parts of Michener's book, *Hawaii*, and was once again disturbed by the actions of the missionaries as personified by Abner Hale. The negativity and reliance on fear and guilt as weapons for conversion have had horrible effects throughout history. I know that I can't find what I'm looking for there.

AHA! SO WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

That was the subject of my thinking on a recent jog. I decided that I was looking for a religion that:

- Believes in an intelligent design for the universe
- Celebrates liturgies outdoors in Nature
- Treats women and men as equals
- Emphasizes peace and nonviolence
- Is open to any other positive beliefs that don't contradict the above

Later, I recalled my deep interest in Zen Buddhism, especially the idea of the interconnectedness and oneness of the universe. The concept of the immortality of the soul is a consequence of those ideas. I have felt for a long time that the best way to worship God is to worship Nature, so I'm looking for a religion that not only celebrates outdoors, but celebrates "outdoors".

OK, SO HOW DO YOU GET ALL OF THAT?

It's pretty easy. My heritage consists of the peoples of Ireland, Scotland, and Germany, the Celts. The natural religion before the Christians invaded had the properties I want. A modern form which seems close enough is called *Druidry*.

YOU'RE PRETTY OLD TO BE DANCING AROUND NAKED IN THE WOODS. ARE YOU GOING TO FLY A BROOM TOO?

A good explanation that fits well with my expectations is found at the website

<http://www.druidsofalbion.org/FactsDruids.html>

What I intend to do tomorrow is to celebrate the Summer Solstice as I always do, but this time I will be celebrating one of the 8 high holy days of my new religion.