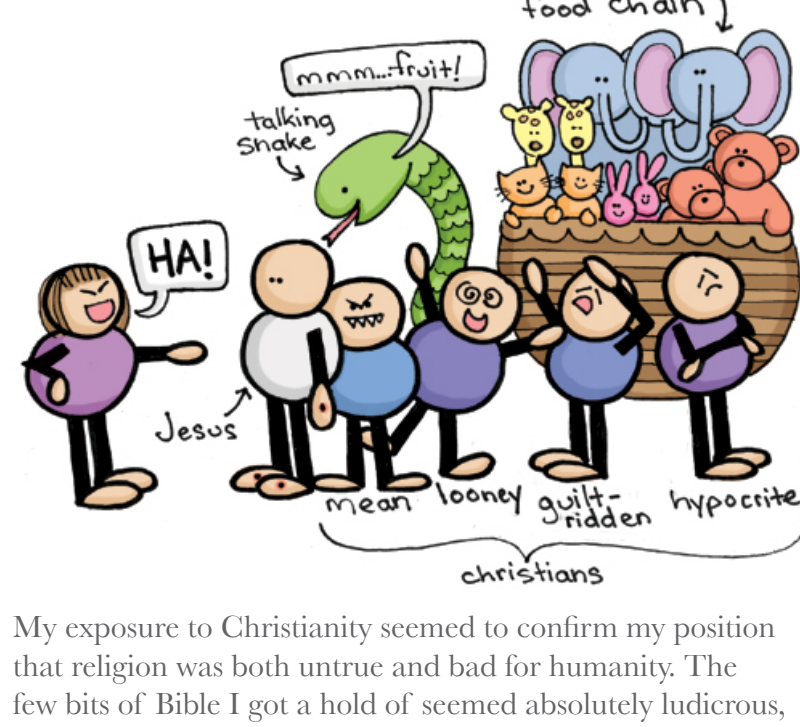


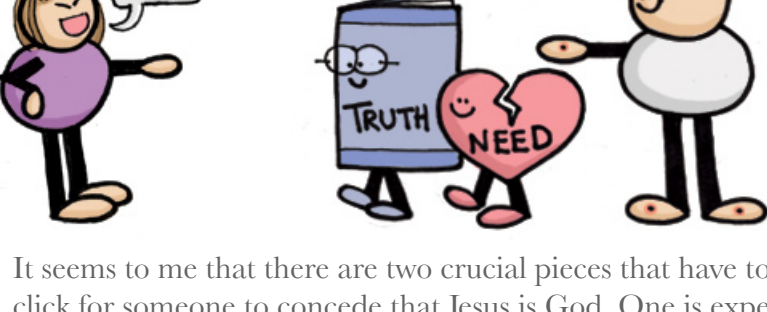
I WAS A SOLID ATHEIST.

As far back as I can remember, I was thoroughly confident that the God I frequently mocked was nothing more than a desperate invention of a people who couldn't handle that, after a cruel hard life, our eternal destiny was nothing more than merrily rotting in the ground.



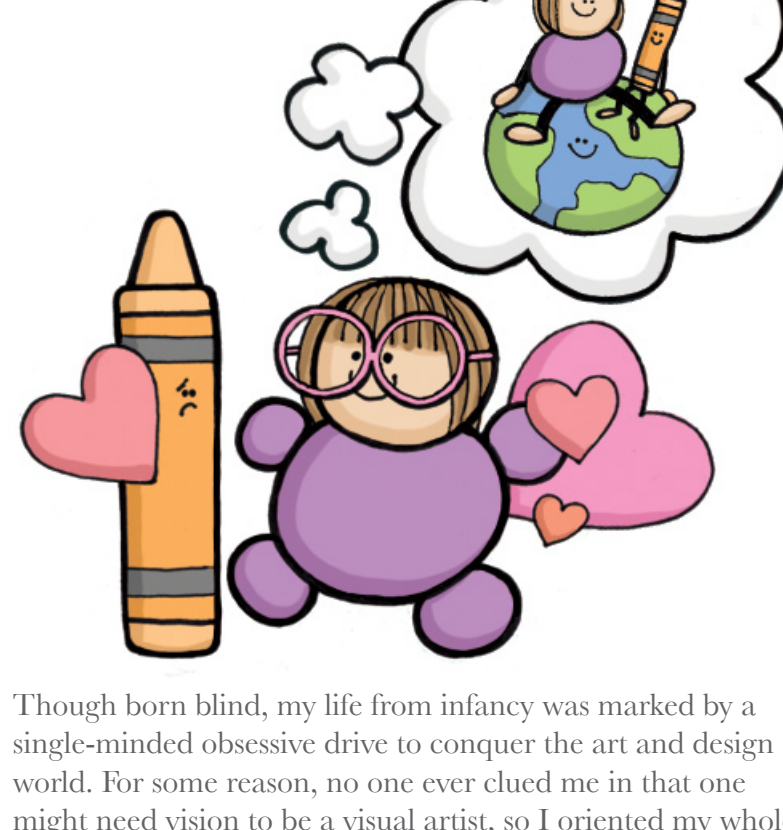
My exposure to Christianity seemed to confirm my position that religion was both untrue and bad for humanity. The few bits of Bible I got a hold of seemed absolutely ludicrous, and among the people I met that claimed to be Christians, it seemed glaringly apparent that the intensity of one's faith correlated directly with the degree to which one was a menace to society.

SO WHAT GOT ME PLAYING FOR TEAM CHRIST?

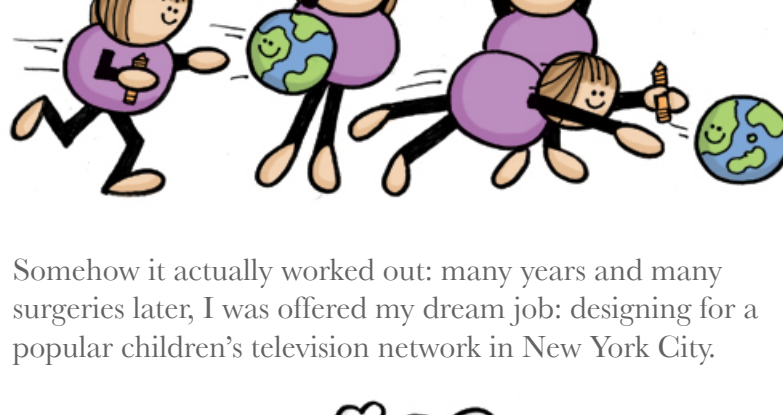


It seems to me that there are two crucial pieces that have to click for someone to concede that Jesus is God. One is experiencing a need to investigate the existence a god-savior, and the other is being able to affirm that it is likely objectively true that such a thing does indeed exist, and it is Jesus. Access to a life-sustaining relationship with him is granted by recognizing one's need for his forgiveness and asking for his pardon and rule.

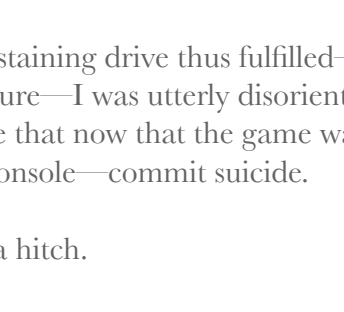
ESTABLISHING THE NEED:



Though born blind, my life from infancy was marked by a single-minded obsessive drive to conquer the art and design world. For some reason, no one ever clued me in that one might need vision to be a visual artist, so I oriented my whole life to that end.



Somehow it actually worked out: many years and many surgeries later, I was offered my dream job: designing for a popular children's television network in New York City.

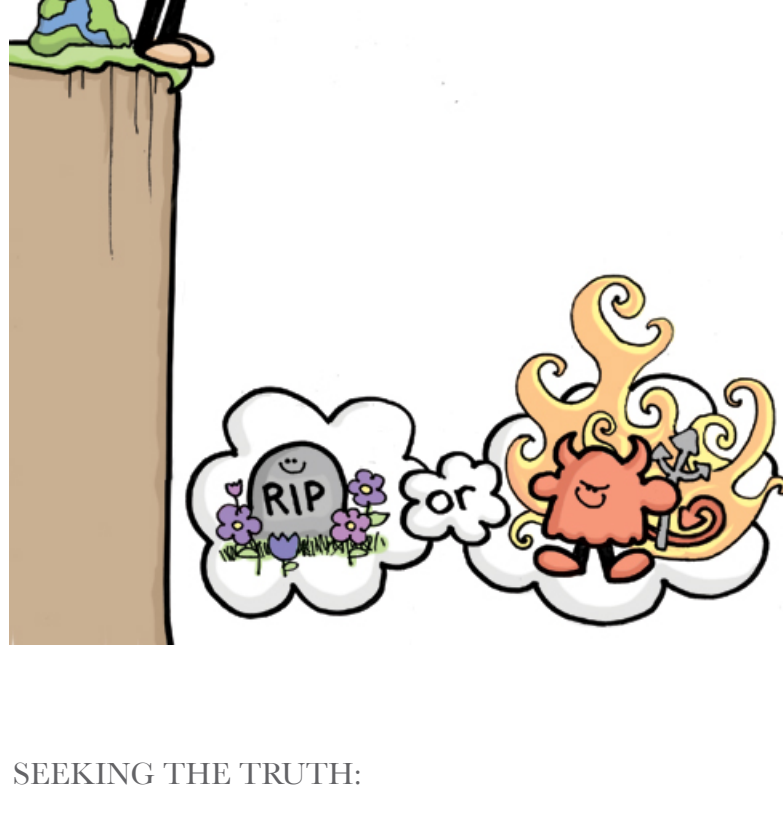


With my life-sustaining drive thus fulfilled—without a hope to direct my future—I was utterly disoriented and devastated. It seemed to me that now that the game was over, it was time to unplug the console—commit suicide.

But there was a hitch.

Around that time, one of my college professors invited me to church with her, and I obliged out of curiosity. The sermon and service didn't impress me, but she did. Here was an inexplicable outlier: someone who was thoughtful, intelligent, kind, and respectable—and she believed this crazy stuff? That threw a wrench in the whole suicide thing. What if this Christian god, he'd clearly said I was both a non-believer and a selfish jerk, he'd clearly send me straight to hell should I jump off the ledge—and it would be incredibly stupid to escape life just to wind up stuck somewhere worse for eternity.

Unfortunately this whole god-business had to be investigated.



SEEKING THE TRUTH:

And thus began almost two years of reading, grumbling, rude-question asking, note-taking, arguing, uncomfortable church-going, and semi-hostile bible studies.

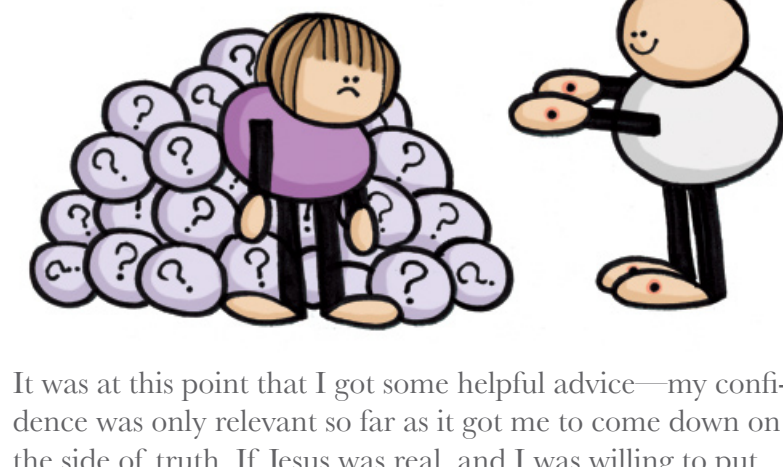


"OK," I demanded much-less-than-politely of every Christian and book on the subject that I met, "if you think this invisible character with a claim on my soul is floating around out there, prove it."

As I read and studied, I kept a sketchbook of arguments for Christianity that I couldn't successfully refute. As they began to pile up, I slowly began to realize what they meant—though the pro-god camp couldn't prove their side, I couldn't prove mine either.



Now what? I'd have to bet my eternity on something. Christianity was seeming more and more plausible, but I found myself stuck. How confident did I have to be, that God was real for it to count? Sure, Jesus was reaching out, offering the forgiveness I needed for failing to love God and people, but only if I had faith that he was actually God and had the authority to do so.



It was at this point that I got some helpful advice—my confidence was only relevant so far as it got me to come down on the side of truth. If Jesus was real, and I was willing to put my bet on him—re-orient my life and ask for forgiveness—he would have me on his team.

There were no voices. No emotional altar call, no hallelujah choir. There was no perfect little prayer like the one in the back of every church bulletin, and there was no sense or experience of divine presence. I sat down with a pile of notes and sketches and decided that the odds seemed to lean in favor of Jesus' deity, and thus set off in his direction. Two and a half years later, despite still having some questions and objections, I continue to follow him along because it still seems that direction is both necessary and true.

And the guy I'm following? It turns out that despite the difficulty of some of his bible, the raggedness of those of us traipsing along behind him, and the talking snake, Jesus is a pretty cool dude.

