### 0) Foreword

* I do not expect this to be relatable or interesting unless you are of a similar religious background and familiar with the theological nuances of Christianity.
* It is quite tragic and in poor taste to reduce anyone's story to a theological point.
* There is no point or lesson. The goal is an accurate retelling and introspection of my past.

### 1) Skepticism

We start the story in middle school. At this point I am skeptical and open-minded and I deeply identify with and value these personality traits.

I understood that there can be a distinction between what one believes to be true and what is actually true. A distinction between the subjective and the objective; between reality and the perception of that reality. A distinction between the object with color Blue and the terminology we assign it (Blue).

This fundamental mistrust about truth itself is not unique or necessarily related to Christianity or Christian-certainty; it is more fundamental.

This perspective would regularly get me in trouble. Instead of asserting “I didn’t steal the money.” I would phrase things as “I don’t think I stole the money”.

* I think; therefore I am
* I think I think; therefore I think I am.

In my head this accuracy was important and my conscience held myself to an absurdly strict rule-set of truth. We’ll revisit this theme later in the timeline.

This uncertainty in truth was also present in my Christian life. However the question was *never whether Christianity was true.*  The uncertainty was always on whether I was a Christian.

The greatest anguish for me during middle school and high school was confirmation of my salvation.

Christianity is completely all or nothing, black or white, heaven or hell. I understood this however there was no clear indicator for approval or rejection. I agonized and actively longed for a third party to validate me, often fantasizing of some magical button that I could press to seal in my future to a life of faithfulness to Christ. In reality, Christianity is not a single decision but a constant decision, continuing every single day for the rest of time.

While I understood it never would happen, the Bible set the miracle precedent and I would regularly pray and fantasize for miracles and make promises to God for them. I desired certainty and confirmation and supernatural events were my only hope for this validation.

The most common miracle in my mind that was feasible was the rapture. In the rapture, Christians would be missing from Earth and non-Chrsitians would remain. This would be a clear indication from an external source of my spiritual state. Everytime my parents were late or missing my mind would immediately go to the rapture and that I had been left behind.

### 2) Apologetics

We move forward with time's arrow and are in high school. In middle school and high school I engaged on YouTube and various Forums to debate common religious apologetics questions.

* What happens when someone doesn’t hear the gospel?
* Why is Christianity is true and all other religions are absurd?
* How can God be loving when there is so much suffering?

And the common philosophical questions

* Do we have Free Will?
* Can God make a rock so large He cannot move it?
* How does the First person of the Trinity satiate Himself with the Third person of the Trinity?

I was a young kid with terrible grammar who commented and discussed philosophy and religion with adults on the internet. While Richard Dawkings, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens were popular, I primarily engaged on Youtube comments of the less mainstream [CDK007](https://www.youtube.com/user/cdk007), [NonStampCollector](https://www.youtube.com/user/NonStampCollector), [TheraminTrees](https://www.youtube.com/user/TheraminTrees), etc. Despite all of my Youtube influences being completely secular, they were not a negative impact on my Christian belief. I do not believe anything stuck from this period and the comment wars ended with me becoming well-versed in Apologetics and the intellectual side of Christian belief.

In High School, I became a frequent reader of ChristianForums.com (CF). Most impactful to me were [Mallon](https://www.christianforums.com/members/mallon.141998/) and [Assyrian](https://www.christianforums.com/members/assyrian.144555/). Rereading my interactions with them brings great nostalgia. During this time I was introduced to the discussion on Theistic Evolution (TE).

While I was already aware of evolution, this forum allowed me to understand Christians who held alternative views that I had not previously considered or been exposed to. The orthodox belief is that evolution is false and the Earth is thousands of years old. However CF showed me that there were numerous Christians who believed that evolution is compatible with Christianity and it is valid that time could exist longer than thousands of years.

While the orthodox position asserts that Christianity is true and Science is false. Theistic Evolution asserted that Christianity is true AND Science is true. God reveals Himself through natural revelation and special revelation; Science is man’s fallible interpretation of general revelation and Christian Theology is man’s fallible interpretation of special revelation.

The common example is Genesis 1:16 which conflicts with our current understanding of astronomy. [John Calvin’s commentary](https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=clvn&b=1&c=1) admits this discrepancy -- Saturn is a greater light than the moon. However, John Calvin has no qualms over Moses' incorrect understanding of astronomy because Genesis is not a scientific book of truth.

With a multitude of other examples, my takeaway from TE was embracing that our interpretations can be wrong and any apparent contradiction was hermeneutical work to consider and resolve; there is never a problem in pursuing truth with genuine open-minded sincerity.

After years on the forum I ended with many questions and no answers. I was certain that Christianity was true and good. However I was not certain on the age of the earth, species evolution, whether Adam was a literal figure, whether the Tower of Babel was literal, whether the flood was worldwide for the day or actually the entire Earth, etc.

Going forward into college I decided to not discuss these things because it never ended well. The default interaction lacked nuance and charitability, typically focusing more on being correct or parroting answers and views they've inherited from someone else. In hindsight, I view this with much more charitability because it occurs with literally any controversial topic (ie. Kanye's speeches and opinions) because it's simpler to react than to be empathetic and contemplate another's worldview (irregardless of whether they are correct or not). However at this point in the timeline of my life bad faith questions and NPC dialogue trees extremely turned me off from discussing controversial theological topics with Christians.

I've performed deep introspection to determine whether these uncertainties led to my deconstruction.

They did not.

It is a common trope of deconversion to find holes in Christian apologetic arguments and therefore lose faith in the authoritative belief systems of childhood. While it is true I had these problems and no answers, these are not the ultimatum of my Christian belief. There was not a proof which convinced me to disconnect from Christianity. There was not a question which left me unsatisfied. From my point of view I believe, I set these questions to the side while I continued on my Christian journey. Perhaps one might argue that this indicates my root cause analysis is incomplete but I do not think that is the case. I think I genuinely disassociated these apologetic questions and was quite at peace with cognitive dissonance on the theoretical. I believe then, as I do now; truth -- in any system, Christian or otherwise -- is an unbroken circle of connections and necessitates circular or paradoxical reasoning[[1]](#footnote-0).

The conclusion of this section is that while I had theological uncertainties, at the core I held Christianity as true and nothing in this section convinced me otherwise. My deconstruction is not a result of intellectual adversity or theological ambiguity.

1. Closed systems are self-justifying. To question anything requires a conceptualization of an alternative for contrast.

   I know you’re tired but come, this is the way

   <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPsBFPX_yU4>

   Bon Iver - 8 (circle) [↑](#footnote-ref-0)