

Dear friends,

I received the following letter from a publisher of Christian religious materials regarding Truths of God, and my response to him follows. As a publisher he only read three pages before providing his critiques, and since his comments and my response asking him to finish seemed applicable to a general audience, I'm going ahead and forwarding it to my reader list and posting it on my Facebook page. My response also includes a supportive letter I received over the weekend from a Catholic bishop. As always, please feel free to get back to me with comments.

Bob.

Dear Bob:

Thank you for sending me your manuscript Truths of God.

I wasn't sure whether you were sending it to me as a submission for publication or just for my edification, but here is my response in each case.

As a submission for publication, I read the first few pages (Chapter 1) and did not find the material compelling enough to warrant further reading. I think your ideas are very solid, but your presentation seemed a bit pedestrian. Why did I not read beyond that? The fact is that the reader standing in the bookstore (or reading a sample of the book online) will not read more than that before deciding whether to purchase it or not. As the classic writing texts say, "You have to grab the reader in the first five pages." So, perhaps, in your revision, that is where you might want to focus your efforts. The discussion of "knowledge" in terms of darkness and light didn't seem to offer any new insights.

To read farther than that, however, even for my own edification, was not possible. With the number of other things I need to read at this point and late work to catch up on, I simply don't have the time.

I wish you luck with the project, however. Thank you for considering Zondervan and for allowing me to take a quick glimpse. I apologize for not being able to spend more time on it.

*Sincerely,
Bob Hudson
Senior Editor-at-Large
Zondervan*

February 15, 2011

Mr. Bob Hudson
Senior Editor-at-Large
Zondervan
5300 Patterson Avenue, SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530

Dear Mr. Hudson,

Thank you for your December 20th response to Truths of God. My apology that it has taken me so long to get back to you.

I tried to make my intentions clear in the cover letter that you received, the foremost of which being that the recipient read Truths of God, but your letter prompts me to provide further encouragement particular to your perspective. Truths of God was sent to you not as a book publisher but simply as a person, and by your occupation I would presume you to be a person of faith. We've sent out over a thousand hard copies of Truths of God over the past several months, and while I do want everyone who receives it to feel special, I don't have time to write a personalized cover letter to every recipient. So the cover letter you received was also written to church leaders, scholars, writers and celebrity activists of many faiths, as well as other people who's names came up while doing research.

My immediate intention with Truths of God is that it be read by as many as possible. From the beginning I realized that in order for this to really change peoples lives, it would have to be such that some people would choose to share it with others based only on the strength of the message itself. You might not be interested in reading this because I, a complete stranger, have asked you to do so, but there are likely people in your life who could get you to read a book with only the smallest encouragement. Determining who can best influence whom has been mainly a process of educated guesswork (there's no manual for this), and when there are any questions, I usually err on the side of sending them a copy of Truths of God and asking them to share it with others if they find merit in it. If Oprah (who was also sent a hard copy) was to tell her audience, "you really have to read Truths of God. It has the power to change the world for good," that would go a long way.

Given the dearth of responses so far, it becomes more and more evident that I will fail to reach enough people to give it a permanent impact, and it will likely burn out having touched the few hearts that have chosen to read it. I have learned to accept that. For me this is a "Serenity Prayer" issue. If all I'm able to do is change a few hearts, then perhaps it was meant to be this way. We never know when something we said was the butterfly wing that created the storm on the other side of the world. But if I can make Truths of God a permanent part of the public discourse, then it is incumbent upon me to try. If I fail, it won't be due to a lack of faith or a lack of effort. On the flip side, some of the few responses so far have been very encouraging. I received the following letter from a Catholic bishop this past Saturday:

"Thank you for sharing Truths of God with me. Your note indicating that you hoped I would find it both spiritually invigorating and enjoyable to read was right on the money - I thought it was both. Your challenge to the readers that we leave this world in a better way that we came into it by first changing ourselves can resonate to any person of good will.

You must be a very reflective person and I appreciate all the time, prayer and reflection that you put into writing Truths of God."

Different people read it differently, but it leads inevitably to certain conclusions. Perhaps the only criteria for understanding Truths of God is what the kind Bishop has written above, that the reader be a person of good will. A person can be a Christian, a Muslim or otherwise, or of no particular faith and accept the simple truths set down within it. And that's why it will ultimately threaten many of the established institutions of man. But, as Truths of God also makes clear, it all comes back to the choices we make.

One challenge with Truths of God has been to make a simple message accessible to as many as possible. I write this specifically in reference to your critique from December 20th. You mentioned the pedestrian nature of the writing itself as well as my failure to grab the reader in the first five pages. Your honest commentary is appreciated, and for the most part I understand that your reaction is fair and justified. But when you're trying to reach out to people who have never really delved into the meaning of things, in some cases because no one's given them anything to believe in that makes sense to them, you have to build from simple, solid ideas. For instance, you wrote, "the discussion of knowledge in terms of darkness and light didn't seem to provide any new insights." For you and the typical reader of the books

you publish that may be true. But I can assure you that many haven't considered this concept in terms of ignorance and understanding; the idea of darkness not as black=evil and white=good but rather darkness being evil and concealing truth, and light, such as the light of God, melting away darkness and dispelling ignorance, being good. The new insights only begin in Chapter 3, and the latter chapters add meaning to the earlier ones. As one reader commented to me, "it's so complete."

Perhaps after reading this letter addressed to you personally, you will read Truths of God not as a book editor but as a man. And while you may not have the clout of an Oprah, you are a man, like I am, and in so being you must have some degree of influence over others. It might not be unreasonable for me to hope that you use that to encourage people to read Truths of God. Perhaps you may even take it upon yourself to make bound copies to more easily share it with others. But all I have asked of you, and all I will ask, is that you read Truths of God for yourself with an open heart and decide what it means to you.

If you don't read it, that's your choice, but take ownership of that choice. I've come to you with a letter called "Truths of God." If the title is accurate, then you should consider the possibility that your decision not to read it springs from your fear of what you will find. That is certainly your choice to make. But I have lost count of how many people in my life have given me all manner of excuses for not reading it. They don't have time, they have too much work to do, they find the title offensive (which includes the presumptive suggestion that they've already concluded that what I have written is NOT Truths of God, but otherwise). I've learned not to be offended, but I have not yet managed to divorce myself from a deep feeling of disappointment with others who simply will not hear it. And I've come to accept that some people weren't born with the capacity to understand certain complexities of thought, and they just need to be accepted and loved as they are. But I will reach as many as I can, because the clock is ticking. The future will be what we make it, and we are drawing near to another time when our decisions will be especially meaningful. The time to reexamine our purpose is upon us, to each according to his capacity. We are all shepherds to one another, to some degree. If you no longer have a hard copy you can download one at <http://www.truthsofgod.net> and feel free to contact me with questions at (614) 332-4855.

You remarked upon the first five pages. I could have instead written at the beginning that there was a time when I was a different person, and then I felt the Holy Spirit of God and understood that we have failed to understand the wisdom that he has made available to us through others, that I saw the world shimmer brightly. Maybe I could have written that event in the first five pages to draw people into reading it, but people shouldn't read it because of my spiritual experience. They should read it because of the wisdom it communicates. My personal epiphany is not irrelevant, and it begins the final chapter, but there is nothing I can say about it that provides evidence of its veracity. The understanding in Truths of God, however, provides its own justification. You simply have to read it to know.

So it is.

Bob Young.