

This is a letter to a friend about the oil spill and responding to her related thoughts on capitalism. Please enjoy. Bob.

Dear friend,

Your willingness to post articles on your Facebook page regarding the gulf disaster and similar issues is commendable. I may not know anyone as serious about protecting the environment, and I admire your courage. If you decided to put some of your thoughts on the matter to pen, I would read them. Part of the purpose of this letter is to explain why I don't post all of the same articles even though I tend to agree with our position. Most of what you post is meaningful and self-evident. Maybe a difference is that you're an environmentalist, and I am a person who teaches that we have a God-given duty to protect the environment. Mankind has other God-given responsibilities, but given that we live in a time where we can cause major oil spills and other environment imperiling catastrophes, our duty to protect the world's living environment has become particularly important.

I got a head start on writing, sort of blogging, in a way. I started writing politically motivated emails in late 2002, about the time I realized the coming Iraq war was based on a lie and started noticing a politically motivated change in American life. These letters were to 8 and then 20 of my friends that had expanded to about 100 by the time I first got on Facebook in 2009. They were mostly disjointed rants back in the early days, and I pretty much disclaim everything before May of 2006, but I received a decent amount of constructive feedback. The early days provided me a learning experience, a preparation for a more focused message that I didn't plan.

I don't get a lot of comments back on my postings, so it always surprises me when I hear things like people saying they read everything I write. It's maybe only a hundred or so that read them regularly, but my brother ran into an old friend I've seen in maybe once in ten years, and his wife, whom I couldn't name, told him with some emphasis, "You're Bob Young's brother? I read everything he writes," and another friend I've seen maybe once in ten years told him the same weekend, "tell your brother to keep the emails coming. I read 'em all." So it's hard for me to say how many people read it. But I've lost a few readers by forwarding other people's articles. It actually makes me feel good about my letters when people, by contrast, get angry and ask me to take them off my list because of things I've forwarded that other people have written. It's only been maybe ten or so. But I've learned over time to keep people focused on the bigger message, which is partly a new understanding of old ideas. It's especially important when you're trying to get people of extremely varying beliefs to focus on a related tapestry of important ideas, helping them to see the forest through the trees. People tend to write or forward things that appeal to like minded people, but I try instead to get people who believe differently, which are most people, to see and acknowledge basic ideas that appeal to our collective core sense of right and wrong, our basic better natures. If more people can learn to understand that the messages connect to one another and describe God's will for us, there will be many more who will feel the need to act to see that we make it so. Other people's

writing that I have forwarded tends to be single-issue focused, and the consequences can be polarizing and de-constructive.

You probably saw that I went ahead and posted an article you put on your Facebook page yesterday (June 3rd), and I'd planned on saying that might be the only one. But I thought the one you posted last, "I want my Earth back", was especially good, so I re-posted that as well. But I know that I risk losing people who don't want to hear a one-sided attack with points that are too obvious, even if they tend to be all too true. I don't expect you to buy into this line of reasoning, but if I write too much on the gulf nightmare, people will stop reading. I don't think of it as compromising my values. Truths of God is shockingly clear on protecting the Earth God has given us as a commandment of doing unto others. But the bigger picture is tailoring the reality of the oil spill to the message I'm trying to teach people, the message I hope people will eventually teach one another. I hear all the time, "if you reach one person, you've made a difference." That is of course true, but I feel the onus to reach many more than one, more than a hundred. If it isn't such that other people push it forward, then the difference it will make in people's lives, and that of the Earth, will probably not be significant enough to change the future for the better.

A big part of Truths of God is about free will. Our decisions make a difference. It's the anti-John Calvin. You know the line from Love Story, "Love means never having to say you're sorry." That is what the Christian religion has become to too many, "Faith means never having to say you're sorry," despite Jesus, John the Baptist, and many of the Old Testament prophets stressing repentance so vehemently. A component of repentance is regret and making the wrong things right when you can. This environmental disaster, which will hopefully not be as bad as you fear, but will have long-term effects well beyond what many people will acknowledge, is one of those moments. Can we learn better, and not just in terms of deep-sea oil drilling, but in terms of protecting the Earth in general, and ultimately finding a better understanding of God's will? Truths of God speaks to this directly, before the gulf disaster happened. There are many other things that Truths of God speaks directly to that have not happened yet. The question is will we use the free will God has given us to turn the corner and start moving back in the other direction in a meaningful way? If we do, many of the worst-case scenario events of the future may never occur.

Bringing in a related idea, you wrote earlier in relation to the oil spill that you believe capitalism is evil. I certainly don't agree with that, but I'm sure you can provide me with multiple examples where it has proven to be true. But capitalism can be a good system that gives a society the ability to create and develop at an optimal level, providing a better life and more opportunity for the many. People need some kind of system for buying and selling, for producing and distributing goods, etc. There has to be some level of organization beyond person-to-person bartering. This is not about faith but simply necessity. We've had many different systems that include the control and promotion of commerce: simple tribalism, empires where a single person dictates the rules of trade to all (though often beholden to powerful groups), feudal states with a power-sharing elite ruling over mere slaves that work the land, communism, capitalism, others. This paragraph could be a several-hundred page essay. But every system is only as good as the

people that run it and the rules that keep those people, and the system itself, in check. Any system can be abused. And capitalism as you know it has become a system of abuse, but it doesn't have to be so. It has worked in the past, for the United States and the world in general, and it can continue to work, but that doesn't mean giving corporations and people in general leave to do anything they can to make as much money as possible, regardless of who gets hurt. There have to be rules in place we generally agree upon that protect the greater interests of the people, including protecting the Earth, and there have to be people with the power to enforce those rules. The people who argue for unfettered capitalism are the same ones who would be arguing that a company should be able to employ 9-year-old children working 50 hours per week in its factory generations ago. People who argue such things have a rational basis for doing so, but they ignore the negative externalities of the situation, and when they claim that the government stepping in to legitimately protect the interests of its citizens and the living environment is evil, it is their position that becomes evil. We overcame child-labor and numerous other abuses of conscience with government intervention, while retaining capitalism as our basic system of commerce, and we can overcome the current challenges as well.

Have you read the Communist Manifesto? It is a short piece, but it's difficult to read. It took me several days, but when I read something challenging I make it a point not to simply glance over it, and some writings, like the Bible for example, require slow and intense application. Trying to get to the point, I skipped over the preface and read the manifesto itself. It was mainly about people being abused by the land and factory owners and how the situation would never improve unless people embraced the communist ideal where everything is owned by the public. You have to understand that it was written during the early stages of the industrial revolution, when working conditions were pretty horrible and people needed jobs to survive, and the few opportunities available to them required that they acquiesce to a slave-like subsistence. The largess of the profits of the bourgeoisie, in addition to being reinvested into capital, went almost entirely to enriching the bourgeoisie class, and Marx argued that the much more populous working class, the proletariat, had no choice but to violently overthrow their masters. When I was finished reading it I decided to go back and read the preface, and I was surprised to find that Karl Marx says, many years later, that much of his argument was nullified by changes that had occurred within society over the several decades between his writing of the manifesto and his later writing of the preface. He was basically owning up to the fact that governments and the ownership class had taken some of the largess of their profits and used it to make the lives of the workers, and the opportunities for those workers, better. He wasn't saying that a communist revolution was wrong, in his opinion, but that the situation that made it necessary had changed. But in Tsarist Russia, which had not acknowledged the living conditions and needs of the working class, the situation had not changed, and it only took an educated man with a fiery temperament and an axe to grind to convince the people that revolution was the answer.

Unfortunately for the Russian people, communism was not the answer. If you give a small elite unchecked power, they have a strong tendency to use that power to ensure that they retain it, which necessitates neutralizing (i.e. imprisoning or killing) anyone who might challenge it. Not long after the Tsarist government was utterly deposed Lenin had a

stroke and later died leaving little in terms of future instruction for proper government other than communist ideals. And what followed in Russia, which became the U.S.S.R., was more or less a feudal state that claimed to be in a continual state of revolution against the capitalist world while holding their own people beholden to the whim of an elite few, in reality one madman, for 30 years at gunpoint, with another 40 years of economic stagnation to follow. During Stalin's reign they say as many as 20 million mostly innocent citizens were executed or worked to death in camps, but sources vary as to the actual number.

This isn't to say that your feelings on capitalism are without justification. Certainly my providing a worst-case scenario opposing example of communism doesn't invalidate your position, but I don't think saying that capitalism is evil is accurate. But capitalists need to balance the ability of some to make greater profits, which should come about by offering invention, ingenuity, and better or cheaper products, with the needs of society and the general peace and welfare of the people. If instead, a few people control the avenues of wealth, and live in luxury, and the many can't afford basic necessities to survive and even have an opportunity to embrace a measure of prosperity, then society becomes more unbalanced. When we take away that balance, we move in the direction of a police state, where the few that prosper use more of their resources to have their government create stricter laws, more law enforcers, and greater surveillance to enforce those laws against the people. Maintaining order becomes more about the exercise of force and less about the sharing of goodwill. And it is happening, and we are living in a time where the rights of individuals to live as they choose, the pursuit of happiness, continue to become fewer, and the rights of corporations and the wealthy to become wealthier and more powerful become less regulated.

Take bank regulations. It is in the best interest of society that people have an impetus to maintain bank accounts for saving and keeping track of their money. Yet many people who might choose to do this have been marginalized out of banking by ever increasing fees. In the days of our youth, not so long ago, even poor people could afford to keep their money in banks and have the encouragement of earning a little interest. Today, if you don't have X dollars in your account, your account fee is \$15 per month, for instance. If a person is only making \$1,000 per month, they can't afford to put what's left of their income into a bank. And that doesn't take into consideration penalties for bounced checks and the like, which were \$10 not 20 years ago and \$30 now. "Hey, Mr. Banker, minimum wage has only increased about 90% in 20 years, and yet your fees have increased 200%. What gives?" His honest answer would be that he's been given leave to try to make as much money as he can, and while it may be in the best interest of society that working people be able to afford a bank account, those people are not his concern. Better for him to rape a few people who are trying to maintain and give breaks to wealthy customers, and the poor can pay \$2 per check cashed to check-cashing places. Maybe you can't blame him, since he's just doing what the competitors he colludes with are also doing, when they send their unified lobby to pay their government for deregulation, but that's exactly why we need some regulation, some leveling of the playing field, to protect the basic interests of our citizens. Give the banker incentive to provide a competitive service at a fair, accessible price, and let him feel good about it. And what has been the

consequence of bank deregulation? More national stability? Of course not. Instead it's the financial crisis in which we now find ourselves, because instead of using their profits to ensure the viability of their investments, they used it for risky speculation so they could make even more money.

This isn't a Republican = evil issue. This goes back to the deregulation days of the Clinton administration. And the Clinton administration was also instrumental in deregulating the telecommunications industry. The Democrats have also been the biggest beneficiaries of the insurance industry lobby. Basic medical care, and a basic insurance plan, more than tripling in 15 years, and still going up? More and more working people can't afford the basic things they took for granted only a decade or two ago, and this in our time of such prosperity? It is unconscionable. And the answer certainly is not to further "crack down" on the rights of individuals to simply be as they are. It's just a distraction, and a bad one at that, from the much more important issues of civic responsibility.

As to the oil spill itself, I told you before that I haven't written on it, because there's nothing good to say. I wrote two fairly extensive letters against expanded drilling back in June of 2008. What can be accomplished by saying, "I told you so."? There's not much new I can say about it better than the "I want my Earth back" article you sent that I re-posted on Facebook. I have no way to calculate the damage done. It doesn't make sense to suggest that we simply stop drilling for oil and close down all the rigs. But I can comment on aspects of the public attitude on the issue, which is an attitude that needs to change. If what I've seen on the news is accurate, BP has believed it is free to largely ignore safety rules in the name of profit, and their offshore drilling platforms have violations far in excess of those of similar companies. You may have read that one of their subcontractors, Haliburton no less, warned them of problems with that particular well and tried to delay the process to put more safety measures in place. Supposedly the enforcement teeth were taken out of those regulations during the last government administration, but other companies voluntarily continued to follow them. But I think the public attitude on this is the best indicator of how we got to this point, and how it changes will affect government policy and our hope for a better future. B.P.'s actions are a direct reflection of the reckless attitude that so many of us have demonstrated boldly that encouraged the government to relax those regulations.

You've heard the term, "drill baby drill." That quote comes directly from another quote, "burn baby burn," from the Los Angeles riots in the 1960s. "Burn baby burn," was shouted by people who were literally burning down their own neighborhoods in anger, and "drill baby drill" perfectly captures that same reckless anger, arguably aimed at people who want to force others to limit their destruction of the environment. Seriously, if you follow or respect someone who would promote this kind of shortsighted ignorance, then you need to reconsider your rationale on life in general. I would be willing to bet that there is an intensely high correlation between the people who said, "drill baby drill," and those who argue for unfettered capitalism, the consequences be damned, probably somewhere in the 95% range. There is a reason for being cautious with protecting the environment. There is a reason that we've regulated numerous industries over the last

hundred years, the time that America rose to greatness, including oil, insurance, telecommunications, and others. People want to demonize Obama by calling him socialist, and they do so very successfully, but if Obama is socialist, then the best years of America's greatness were super-socialist, because what America has become is a far cry from the days where the government required corporations to act in the furtherance of the public good, where we passed child labor laws, and minimum wage laws, medicare, made genuine public sacrifices for the war effort in World War II, built the St. Louis Arch and Mount Rushmore, and other society-improving acts. If someone can motivate people to believe that these things were good things, and that we should move back in this direction, then I would be inclined to support that person. I don't see much evidence that Obama fits the bill, but at least his rhetoric is encouraging.

I would close this letter with something more concrete. Many are upset with the President's handling of the Gulf spill. As much as I don't want to be, as much as I want to say, "what was he supposed to do," I find myself among the doubters. When Obama announced expanded offshore drilling, I was sorely disappointed. The subsequent BP oil rig disaster, not two weeks later, seems to me a warning, a consequence of bad decisions on multiple levels. When the Bush administration was operating in full swing, I bemoaned to my readers the unheard of profits that Exxon and other companies were making, as gas prices continued to rise and rise and rise again. I understand that prices are a result of commodities markets, but those markets can be fixed, or pushed, by United States government action or inaction. When Bush took office, the oil companies rejoiced, because they could charge whatever they could get, and Exxon made record profits, for any company, beating their own record four years in a row. My Republican friends said indignantly, "I don't care how much money they make!" (Similarly, when companies like Haliburton and Blackwater made billions from the Iraq war, these same friends said indignantly, "I don't care how much money they make!") Conversely, my liberal-leaning friends are disappointed with Obama. I think the administration sat down with oil-company executives and said, "if you agree to lower gas prices, we'll allow expanded offshore drilling." And now we've had this disaster. Certainly the burn baby burners and unfettered capitalism proponents don't help on this.

Yes, I'm disappointed that the government hasn't acted to ensure that the response was more immediate and more focused. Obama's "wait and see" approach on issues he claims to take very seriously is troubling. On healthcare reform, for instance, he stepped back and waited for Congress to deliver it, and instead of getting an affordable public option for basic coverage, we get an insurance-company approved law that forces us to buy their product. And Republican refusal to participate in the process of government while screaming "socialism!" just made it worse. It seems like big money is still calling all the shots. I'm disappointed that the government, whatever administration you chose to blame, hasn't done more to ensure that B.P. couldn't simply choose to ignore known and legitimate safety concerns in the pursuit of more profit. You wanted to know my opinion on it? I think at the least that the United States government should hold B.P. entirely responsible for the damage caused. B.P. should pay every penny for the clean up, compensating the residents for lost income, including all the shrimping boat captains, and for environmental damage into the future. And this type of recklessness should trigger

some sort of criminal liability on the part of those ultimately responsible for the decision making. I understand that the government may not want to hurt a company that is friendly to American political interests and its shareholders, but some decisions are so damaging that they transcend the buddy-buddy system of Washington, and they should be genuinely punished. If the result is that the government and big business are no longer best friends forever, I can help thinking the people will win in the long run. In any event, we should feel a renewed responsibility to ensure that this type of disaster doesn't happen in the future. Only time will tell if we've properly learned a lesson in this, but the future is already here tomorrow. It would probably only take a poorly timed hurricane to make things much worse, blighting large areas on land as well as the sea.

Anyway, hopefully this sheds some insight on the matter. This disaster is just one mishap that came about from our failure to take the issue of protecting our environment seriously. I concern myself with what I can do. I wrote this letter. That's one thing. I wrote it for the many, but also for you in particular, because you inspired me to it. But I wrote Truths of God to address this problem in the bigger picture. If you want to help me, though you may not understand or agree with all of it, you can forward Truths of God to anyone you think might be able to find some motivating purpose in it. Or you can send me names of people that can't be reached by email who could benefit from receiving a hard copy, and one will be mailed to them. I've mailed out about 800 copies of the final version so far, at a personal cost of more than \$10,000, plus thousands of hours of work if you include research. It's worth the money. I believe in us. I believe God believes in us, but it's up to us to validate that belief with our choices. Free will. Hopefully we will use it to prevent things like the Gulf of Mexico oil disaster from happening in the future. It's all about strengthening our foundation of understanding from the ground up.

So it is.

Bob Young.