

***GOD'S COVENANT
WITH
THE ANIMAL KINGDOM***

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Dedicated to:

My wonderful parents
Whose support and sacrifice
Made it possible for me
to become a veterinarian



This manuscript is a tribute to my **Fred**...
You graced my life with your presence.
Thank you for every moment we shared.
Until I can journey to where you now are
You are just one breath away.
I hold you in my heart until we are together
Once more and I hold you in my arms never
to be parted again.

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A soul mate is someone to whom we feel
Profoundly connected, as though the
Communicating and communing that takes
Place between us were not the product of
Intentional efforts, but rather a divine grace.

Thomas Moore

I suppose there is one friend in the life of
Each of us who seems not a separate person,
However dear and beloved, but an expansion,
An interpretation of one's self, the very
Meaning of one's soul.

Edith Wharton

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*“ A Good Man is concerned for the
welfare of his animals.”*

Proverbs 12:10

FORWARD

I have spent the vast majority of my life's waking hours asking "why" about multitudes of questions. As years have accumulated, the focus of my inquiries has narrowed to the question of what happens to animals after their time on earth. Although this question is a small piece of the grand puzzle of our existence on this planet, its' answer has become the central theme of my life's purpose.

My years of studying medicine made me deeply aware of God's complexity and intensity and passion regarding His creative processes. From the overall magnificence of the universe, to the most intricate detail of the individual molecules that comprise this creation, the bottom line is: ***"God is awesome!"***

Even though I cannot begin to understand God's decisions regarding even the simplest aspects of His creation, I *can* fathom that God is Good, and His mercy endures forever. God has an ultimate perfect plan to restore all of His creation that has suffered the consequences of the great war, The Fall, or however you wish to refer to the battle that is occurring between good and evil on this planet. I believe this redemptive plan involves **all** of God's creatures, not only human beings.

I always thought by the time I reached the twenty year milestone in practicing veterinary medicine, I would have many more answers than I do now that I have actually reached that marker. I find the saying, "the older you get and the more you learn, the more you realize how little you know" to be a truth that is ever expanding. For every answer I find, I can think of an additional multitude of questions in every arena of life. We do, indeed, live in a complex world; and if we wait to voice our opinion until we have all the answers, we would simply cease to communicate about abstract issues such as theology, philosophy and ethics. Consequently, I have come to realize if I don't reflect on the few answers I have discovered now, I probably never will.

So, as an anniversary celebration of sorts to mark twenty privileged years of serving God and animals by practicing the art of veterinary medicine, I give you my thoughts regarding the question of the spiritual nature of the animal kingdom, and the answers God has so graciously provided to me.

Carol Galka-Agnew
June 1998

"We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mythical concept of animals...We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err; and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complex than ours, they moved, finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren; they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth."

Henry Beston

The Outermost House

*Oh, Shame on the mother of mortals,
Who did not stop to teach,
the sorrow that lies in dear animal eyes,
the sorrow that has no speech.
For the same force formed the canine,
that fashioned man and king,
And the God of the whole
gave a spark of soul to
each furred and feathered thing.*

Author unknown

Chapter 1

GOD'S COVENANT WITH THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

"And God said to Noah and the Animals..." How many times over the years had I read this account of the Great Flood and never realized the significance of God including the animals in His Covenant promise? In the five times that this wording is used within Genesis, Chapter 9, I had never consciously understood that the clue to many of the answers I was searching for regarding my questions about the status of the animals in the grand scheme of things were stated within these verses.

For years, I had relentlessly searched for the answer to the question of whether animals went to Heaven when they died. I asked every religious leader I could find; and the most common answer I received was that animals don't even have intelligence, let alone souls. I was chronically devastated. In fact, I almost gave up my career in veterinary medicine.

Anyone who knows anything about animals knows that they have a similar range of feelings as do humans. The animals also have reasoning and learning abilities that go far beyond mere instinct. So, to learn that religious scholars scoffed at the notion of animals having souls was a terrible blow to my search . . .

Foolish human that I am, it didn't occur to me to ask God, Himself, until many years had been wasted and many unnecessary tears of despair had been cried. We could all save ourselves a lot of heartache if we would just ask God directly for answers to our questions, both trivial and significant. ***God tells us in Jeremiah 33:3 to call upon Him and He will show us great and mighty things*** That theme is repeated in Ephesians 3:10..... ***"unto Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly far beyond what we ask or even think..."*** WOW!

After years of agonizing, God in His kindness began to shed light upon my question of whether animals have souls. In addition to the obvious fact that they are sentient beings, I had to know that God made provision for them in His eternal plan. I could not face one more broken-hearted client grieving the loss of their beloved pet without having an assurance for them that God loves the animals He has created even more than we do. "And God said to Noah and the animals" seems like a relatively inconsequential remark, since all of the Bible is God speaking to us, revealing His Will

through His Word. A special revelation is uncovered for animal lovers when you realize that God valued the animals enough to make a covenant with them. A covenant is defined as "an agreement that is solemn, formal and intended as binding." Would God waste His words making an agreement with stupid, senseless, mindless, soul-less animals? Not likely. I think we can all agree that God says what He means; and means what He says. It would be pointless, and even absurd to make an agreement with the animals if they have no capacity for understanding, reasoning and communicating.

All of us who have contact with animals know that they possess awareness, intelligence and great depths of emotion. Those of us who have the privilege of sharing our day to day existence with animals as members of our family know this without question. Animal lovers often make promises, agreements and pledges to their animal companions. When I adopt an animal into my family, a covenant is made. My part is to promise to love, protect and provide for the animal. The animal responds by showing its' willingness to become part of the "blended" human-animal family. My husband and I are constantly including our animals in commitments we make as a family. Whether it is a promise to play frisbee after the work is done, or to bring them leftovers when we dine out, we unconsciously and automatically take these promises seriously. I know that the vast majority of my clientele make agreements with their animals on a daily basis also. When my patients are dying and beyond my assistance, I solemnly promise them that I will provide comfort and dignity while I euthanize them. I am absolutely certain that the animals understand this. I can see the relief and relaxation in their body language when I have verbally made these promises to them

I would like to state my opinion, at this point, as to the popular saying that dogs love unconditionally. Dogs do not automatically give unconditional love. But, they do show their love and acceptance of people unconditionally once they have made the decision to give their love to someone. I have seen many, many animals come into my clinic with an obvious desire *not* to leave the clinic again. When animals are treated with kindness, respect and dignity, they do not willingly return to a situation where they are considered to be valueless "property." When an animal is considered a disposal possession and there is no emotional bond between the person and the animal, the animal does not have unconditional love for that person. The animal may be perpetually hopeful that the person will enter into a covenant bond with the animal. But, until that bond is forged, until that covenant is agreed upon, I assure you that animal will gladly switch allegiance to the first person that treats them with dignity, gives the love

they deserve and values the animal as an individual being.

To realize that God values the animal kingdom so much that He specifically included the animals **five times** when He gave His promise of the Flood covenant is truly the basis for much comfort and encouragement. God does not think it silly that I enter into verbal covenants with my patients. God does not consider it abnormal that we desire to communicate with the animals that share our world! When I finally discovered that God greatly values each individual animal, I was able to begin enjoying my career. I was able to begin enjoying life in its' entirety. The realization that God cares for the animals has freed me from the anxieties I fretted about. A peace that encompasses my whole being has enveloped me ever since God showed me the significance of Genesis, Chapter 9. I no longer care what Bible "experts" and religious leaders have to say regarding animals. I only care what God has said. It only matters that God has revealed great promises to me regarding our animal companions. It only matters that God has made promises to our animals themselves. It is inconsequential to me whether religious experts believe that those promises are valid and significant.

God's revelation of the significance of including the animal kingdom in His covenant agreement was the starting point in discovering that the Bible does allude to the special place animals have in God's eternal plan in quite a few passages. God, alone, knows how difficult it is to convince me of anything; but, there is enough Bible reference to satisfy me that my beliefs are based upon more than mere hope! I am firmly convinced that the animals have a place in God's eternal Kingdom. Animals are sentient beings that are spiritual beings also; and this belief has a Biblical basis. From Genesis through Revelation, animals are referred to. In Genesis 2:7 and Genesis 1:20,24, the same Hebrew word for "living being" is used interchangeably when speaking of human and animal creation. Animals were created to give both God and humans pleasure and companionship (Gen. 1:21; 2:18) In our society today, we are finally beginning to realize just how wonderful and important the companionship of animals is for providing a healthy, fulfilling atmosphere in which to dwell. In Ecclesiastes 3:20,21, the writer ponders the same questions many of us have regarding the spiritual aspect of animals. In Romans 8:19,22 (Living translation) the Bible says: "For all creatures wait patiently and hopefully for that future day when God will resurrect His children. For we know that even the things of nature, like animals and plants, suffer in sickness and death as they await this great event."

Please do not think that I am saying that animals and humans are the same. It is precisely because they are NOT human that animals are so very special. My purpose in referring you to these Biblical references is to show that animals are individual, sentient creatures who possess souls and are spiritual beings. They are *different* from humans in certain respects; but, created by God the same way we were. The following chapters will deal with further details of animal sentience and the question of whether animals have souls.

*"Now to Him Who is able to do
immeasurably more than all we ask or
imagine, according to His power that is
at work within us, to Him be glory in the
church and in Christ Jesus throughout
all generations, forever and ever!"*

Ephesians 3:20

**“ I suppose there is one friend in the life of
Each of us who seems not a separate person,
However dear and beloved, but
An expansion, an interpretation, of one’s self,
The very meaning of one’s soul.”**

Edith Wharton

Perhaps there are those of you who have found that their special friend who is like an extension of your soul is a four-footed, rather than a two-footed person. I know this is true of me.

Chapter 2

THE REALITY OF ANIMAL SENTIENCE

I have always believed that the greatest service I can provide for the patients in my care is to educate the clients that bring the animals to my office. I have done my job well when I am able to enlighten an individual regarding the emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of the wondrous creatures sharing their lives and homes.

Twenty five years ago, fully three-fourths of the clients I encountered across the exam table were amazed to report that their animals appeared to be reasoning, feeling creatures. Today, the majority of my clients casually accept the fact that the animals in their households do, indeed, act "just like the kids." Hurray for progress; but, there is still a vast amount of education required for the general populace about the furry and feathered beings with whom we share this planet.

So many people think the notion that their animal companions think, reason, calculate, remember, learn, feel and, in general, exhibit intelligence must be foolish sentimentality merely because they have formed an emotional bond with an individual animal. When I am able to assure clients that their observations are an accurate indicator of the mental and emotional complexity of animals, it often leads to a whole, new way of thinking regarding our animal friends.

It is impossible to view animals as dumb and unfeeling once you see firsthand all the evidence to the contrary. Several years ago, we had people over for dinner and they were totally shocked that we not only talk to our animals -- but, our animals do understand and interact with us just like any human family does. These friends couldn't really believe that we are a typical, blended human-animal family. They couldn't seem to fathom that this inter-species communication is normal. I didn't know whether to laugh at their ignorance of animals, or to pity them for the great adventure they are missing out on. Life would be dismal and this world would be a very gray and boring place without the animal kingdom to color and vitalize the planet.

All of us who love and admire animals know they have self-awareness and a range and scope of emotions very similar to that of humans. Animals express feelings: joy, contentment, excitement, fear, jealousy and lots of love to list just a few examples. Animals exhibit rational thinking also,

whether it is plotting in a game of hide & seek, or performing serious tasks and difficult work. Whether herding flocks, doing police work of all kinds, assisting people with various disabilities, performing search & rescue procedures - the list is endless - calculating and reasoning are required. Some people ask "How is this possible?" It is possible simply because the animals were created by God as sentient beings.

Sentience is defined in Webster's dictionary as: "capable of sensation and of at least rudimentary consciousness." The ability to exhibit conscious perception is as evident in animals as it is in humans. Have you ever observed a dog or cat after being groomed? If the animal is pleased with the haircut, you will see evidence of vanity as they strut around and show off. If a long-haired animal is shaved (stripped) down, that dog or cat will act as humiliated as a naked human, unintentionally exposed in a public place.

Animals not only show themselves to be sentient beings in their self-awareness; but, in many ways, animals are much more perceptive than humans where unconscious or subtle emotions are involved. What we commonly refer to as "body language" is an example. Not only do animals understand body language better than most humans, they also perceive underlying moods and auras more thoroughly than humans. How else do you account for a dog's ability to know a seizure is imminent in an epileptic person? What special ability allows animals to perceive auras and other phenomena that humans have yet to understand? How is it that our animal companions are able to read our moods by just a glance in our direction, when verbal communication is usually required between humans to make our feelings known?

To ignore the highly developed communication skills that animals possess, or to categorize their intelligence as mere instinct, is a cop-out, done out of indifference, laziness or fear. Humans typically fear what they do not understand. I believe that many people are frightened to acknowledge the many abilities animals have for a very significant reason. To acknowledge the depth and scope of animals' capabilities in so many various areas would require people to admit that animals are neither dumb nor unfeeling!!! This would, in turn, bring up scores of issues regarding animals and their rights as individuals. Most people would prefer to discount, rather than deal with, this issue.

Let me give you a few Biblical examples of sentience in the animal kingdom. In the Bible, there are quite a few references to animals as

thinking, feeling creatures. In Job 12:7-10 (see ref # 13) we are told that animals are often our teachers. Specifically, in Numbers 22:21-34 (see ref. #14), there is the remarkable account of Balaam and his wise donkey. I find this to be one of the most comforting stories in the Bible for a number of reasons. If you read the entire account, there is a lot of instruction given to us about animals, even though it is mainly an account of human disobedience and fallibility. In this amazing passage, we are shown that animals, as sentient beings, are able to see into the spirit dimension. We also see that the angel viewed the donkey as an individual being. The angel clearly said he would have killed Balaam, but would have spared the donkey's life if the man had not listened to the donkey and stopped. And, we are also treated to the fact of the donkey verbally speaking to the human. I have no scripture to back up this next statement; but, I firmly believe that, in the next world, we will communicate with animals verbally. I believe this loss of animal speech was part of the curse that came upon the earth after the humans rebelled against God. Just as God never intended us to eat animals (or for animals to eat each other - see Gen. 1:29,30 (ref. #3), God never intended for the verbal communion between human and animal beings to be severed.

God's original creation was so much more glorious than we can even imagine. And, when He restores creation to its' original splendor, we will truly marvel at His works for all eternity. God is so much more loving, so much more wildly creative, so much bigger than we can possibly imagine!!! Just as we cannot comprehend light without shadows, we cannot understand our created world without the impact of death and decay. The day will come when animals will again verbally commune with the human race. Balaam's donkey speaking is an inkling of that aspect of restoration.

Another example of animal sentience involves our feathered friends. Years ago, I raised parakeets. At one time I had perhaps 200 of these wonderful creatures in the aviary. I can say, from personal experience, that even these tiny creatures are sentient beings. Each and every bird had a completely unique personality. The vast range of emotions shown by a society of birds is as complicated as watching humans at any given social gathering. These birds are capable of forming seemingly instant opinions and strong dislikes toward each other, as well as an unshakeable, undeniable evidence of devotion. I watched the birds interact with a variety and intensity of emotion as vast as what we observe in human culture. There were monogamous parakeets, both male and female, and there were those that were promiscuous, to put it mildly. Certain pairs could not be separated

or they would pine, stop eating and literally become ill. Others detested each other -- there is no other word to describe how strongly they disliked one another. It was a perpetual soap opera, so to speak; but, watching their social interactions taught me much about animal sentience, even if I couldn't articulate it into words at the time.

The fact that animals have such similar emotional lives as humans in no way suggests that I am implying that they are "humans with fur or feather." The greatest attribute and wonder, the most glorious magic of our animal friends lies in the fact that they are NOT humans. What a delight! Animals are sentient beings in their own right. Thankfully, we do not have to justify our great joy and awe of God's animal kingdom by trying to prove their worth by making them out to be human. Animals are not nearly as tainted as humans by the moral corruption that has invaded this world. Animals' capacity for forgiveness and unconditional love far surpasses the ability of all but the most saintly of humans.

To close this chapter, let me share a true story with you that will clearly show just how sentient our animal friends are. In the 1980's, I had a patient named Peanut who stayed at the clinic whenever his people went out of town. One summer day, a client walked in and asked me if the dachshund sitting outside the office door belonged to me or my staff. I went out to see the dog; and there sat Peanut. Initially, I was not terribly surprised, as he was scheduled to come in that day to stay while his people were away. I assumed that his people were on the premises and just hadn't entered the office as yet. I brought Peanut into the clinic and waited for his people. And waited. And waited.

After several more clients had come in and left, I had a few minutes free. I went outside to find Peanut's people. They were nowhere on the premises. Now, I was puzzled. I finally had my receptionist call their house. The people assured me that Peanut was at home -- they were not planning on bringing him to the clinic for several hours. I suggested that they actually look for Peanut, as there was no doubt whatsoever that Peanut was at my office, not at his home! When the people verified that Peanut was indeed missing and nobody from the family had dropped Peanut off at the front door of the clinic as a practical joke, we all came to the undeniable conclusion that Peanut had actually walked across town by himself, and checked himself in! I was so surprised I never did have Peanut sign the register like his people customarily did when he was going to stay with us for awhile!

I am life that wills to live in the midst of other life that wills to live. I must interpret the life about me as I interpret the life that is my own.

My life is full of meaning to me. The life around me must be full of significance to itself. If I am to expect others to respect my life, then I must respect the other life I see, however strange it may be to mine.

And not only other human life, but all kinds of life: life above mine, if there be such a life; life below mine, as I know it to exist... We need a boundless ethics which will include the animals also.

Albert Schweitzer

*Every creature is full of God
and is a book about God.*

Meister Eckhart

*In a wonderful and inexpressible way,
God is created in His creatures.*

*Scotus Erigena
Medieval Theologian*

Because the Divine goodness could not adequately be represented by one creature alone, God produced many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting in one in the representation of the Divine goodness might be supplied by another.

*Thomas Aquinas
13th Century Catholic Theologian*

Chapter 3

THE "SOUL" QUESTION

To discuss the question of whether animals have souls is no more or less difficult than debating over the same issue regarding humanity. Webster's dictionary defines soul as the "immaterial essence or substance; the animating principle or activating cause of life, or the individual life; the psychological or spiritual principle in general shared by or embodied in individual human beings or all beings having a rational and spiritual nature."

The very word "animal" comes from a Latin root, "animalis", that means "having a soul" and is closely linked to the noun, "animus", or breath. To ancient philosophers, "soul" was the mysterious force that gave life and breath to all the earth's creatures.

Soul, spirit, essence -- these are all terms that represent an intangible characteristic of living beings. Scientific researchers have tried to prove (or rather disprove) the existence of the soul by weighing individuals just prior to, and immediately after, physical death. Any weight difference would be considered physical proof of the substance of the being's soul. However, it is impossible to use our physical world's scientific methods to prove the existence of something that exists beyond the boundaries of this limited dimension.

My only purpose for including this topic is to point out that if, indeed, human beings possess souls that exist in another dimension after physical death, so do animals. When Biblical reference is made to the animating element, the "breath of life" in Genesis 7:22 and Psalm 104:29, there is no distinction made between human or animal "breath" of life. The same Hebrew word, "Ruwach" (breath or spirit) is used in relating to both humans and animals. "Ruwach" means the element of life in a person and/or animals.

Another point I would like to make is that God's original plan for animals was that they be a source of companionship for humans (Gen. 2:18). Originally, all living creatures on this planet were vegetarians (Ref. #3, Genesis 1:29,30) It was only after the Flood that the creation changed and God allowed humans to eat animal flesh (Gen. 9:2,3). The Bible does not give any explanation for this change; but, the encouragement I find in spite of this is that God did not originally intend for the animals to be used and abused in the manner in which they are in this present world system. The

Bible has numerous passages where reference is made to the time when all creation will be restored. The lion laying at peace with the lamb. The carnivores eating grass. The entire Bible points to the glorious day when all will be restored to its' rightful, original intention. The animals were originally a very glorious creation. Not created as were the angels. Not created like humans. Created as valuable, individual beings to provide God and us wonderful companions for all Eternity.

There are numerous passages in the Bible where the Hebrew word, "Nephresh" (living soul) is used in reference to animals. Often the word, Nephresh, is used interchangeably with the Hebrew adjective, "Chay." This word, Chay, has many meanings in Hebrew --- living, alive, sustain life, life forever. In Hebrew, Chay is a set of experiences, not an abstract principle of vitality that is separate from the body. The Hebrew view of this word is holistic - encompassing the body, mind and spirit as a unified whole. The Bible also claims that animals experience emotions. The Hebrew word, "Bahal" used in Psalm 104:29 means troubled, terrified, frightened or perplexed. These are certainly not adjectives you would use to describe a senseless soul-less being. Therefore, I believe there is considerable validity in presuming that animals, in addition to humans, possess souls.

Over the years, I have had many opportunities to witness animals' reaction to the death of a fellow creature. I assure you that animals act very similarly to humans when in the presence of a deceased companion. The animals express anxiety and insecurity as well as a general quieting while viewing the deceased body. I have no way to qualify this observation; but, I have consistently witnessed an attitude I can only describe as reverence when animals are in the presence of a dead companion. You may scoff at this statement, and ask why animals show no apparent remorse if they encounter a dead animal that is a stranger to them?

I can only reply that humans show even more lack of respect for suffering and dead fellow creatures than do animals! We can sit through movies that depict every kind of method in which to kill another human without even wincing. Even newscasts of disasters occurring to strangers fail to make us grieve for their plight - we take in the information with a morbid curiosity. This attitude is only tempered when tragedy strikes close to home - when those we know and love are affected. So it is with animals in dealing with mortality of other creatures - the animals do mourn the death of beloved companions (as well as the demise of their human family

members) and the concept of mortality seems to be understood on some level.

It has been my experience that animals occasionally make their own decision to be euthanized when they are beyond help and in advanced stages of multiple system shut-down. Several times while I have discussed the alternatives with my clients when my patient is gravely ill, the dog has gotten up from beside his/her people and walked over and sat by my side when euthanasia was being discussed. These animals have clearly told all the humans having the verbal discussion that their opinion counted as well, and the individual patient was deciding for euthanasia.

Many times, I have had patients end up sitting in front of my office door when they have gotten side-tracked in their wanderings. Numerous dogs with broken chains have patiently waited for me to find them outside my door and invite them into the clinic. I have never felt comfortable with dogs and cats roaming freely for many reasons, not the least being the great likelihood of injuries befalling them. Therefore, I never just released the animals to find their own way home again. I would always try to determine who the dogs belonged with, although I usually knew the visitor by sight.

I will never forget a beautiful Doberman named Hadas. She wandered the town freely, much to my distress. I worried and fretted over her welfare; but, her people refused to keep her safely confined to their homestead. She would often show up on the front porch of my home, which was attached to the clinic. In the summer months, she would bark her greeting through the screen door, and wiggle with joy when I would come to greet her. As she was perpetually roaming, I finally gave up on bringing her into the clinic and having her people come for her. As far as I know, she was a perfect lady everywhere she traveled. Her life was cut short when she was finally and inevitably hit by a car and instantly killed. I vowed after that experience to never again give up trying to convince people of the grave danger in allowing their animals to roam loose in this day and age.

Perhaps my reflection on Hadas has little to do with the discussion of whether animals have souls. But, when I picture her sitting at my front door, her eyes shining and laughing in anticipation of my discovery of her visit, her face is the summation in my own mind of a being overflowing with "soul." I look forward to seeing that gorgeous creature again one day in God's eternal kingdom. And, I anticipate with great joy the glorious reunion with all my beloved animal patients whom I have cherished over the years. I suppose people will understand in Heaven when I greet their animal

companions first when we meet, as I have the same habit in the here and now. I am constantly greeting my animal friends before I greet their humans. Fortunately, most people take this quirk of mine good-naturedly, and realize that my affection for their animals does not diminish my fondness for the people who bring them to my office!

Yes, I feel confident in my belief that animals have souls, and are spirit-beings that do exist eternally. Yes, I feel confident in my belief that people have souls, and are spirit-beings that do exist eternally. I can offer no proof, other than the inner certainty I have that God is good and merciful and full of compassion and love for His creation. We will all know the conclusive answer to this question soon enough. Our time on this earth is so incredibly brief; but, that topic is an entire series of books in itself, better left to discussion by theologians and philosophers.

A dog hath true love

A dog hath right good understanding

A wise dog knoweth all things

A dog hath force and kindliness,

A dog hath mettle and is comely,

A dog is in all things seemly

A knowing dog thinketh no evil

A dog hath a memory that forgetteth not

I say unto you again

A dog forsaketh not his duty

Hath might and cunning therewith

And a great brave heart.

Poeme sur la Chasse, 1359

Gace de la Vigne

Chapter 4

DEALING WITH DEATH

*“No eye has seen,
No ear has heard,
No mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love Him,
but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.”
I Corinthians 2:9,10*

I would like to open this chapter by sharing a very personal experience that God used to teach me many things about the subject of death, and how to cope with its' inevitable intrusion into our earthly lives. I have no Biblical references to share along with this story. I leave it to each of you to contemplate what, if any, significance it has for you. I hope that sharing this true encounter will provide hope and encouragement to those of you who ponder all the difficult questions we face when confronting death.

In the waning months of 1989, I faced a very personal encounter with death as my Grandmother hovered on the border between this life and the next. God used an animal to minister comfort to me during this personal crisis. There is nothing unusual in God providing comfort through our animals but the story of this particular animal is unusual indeed!

My grandmother's last weeks on this earth were spent in a hospital bed in my parents' living room. At the time, the family pet was Teddy, a 100 lb. golden retriever, who decided early in his puppyhood not to like cats. The neighborhood feline strays that my family fed on the porch were constantly harassed by Teddy. He had a ferocious bark, and was a very effective watchdog. No cat would go anywhere near Teddy. Until one night in the last weeks my Grandma was alive.

During the night one of the stray cats chewed through a screen window and broke *into* the house! My mother awoke to the sound of a purring cat laying by her side. For some unknown reason, Teddy was a complete gentleman with this particular cat; so the cat was allowed to stay with the family when we realized that Teddy would not harm her. The cat spent most of her time on the hospital bed watching over my grandmother.

Even though I knew my beloved grandmother was dying, the night she actually left this world found me in a state of physical shock. By the

time I arrived at my parents house, my grandmother's body had been taken away. Although it had been a relatively warm day for October, that night was bitterly cold. The windows were still open upstairs. As I lay shaking uncontrollably in an upstairs bedroom, it didn't occur to me that I was physically cold. I was so disassociated from my body by the trauma of realizing my grandmother had vacated her body, that I couldn't comprehend the simple need to close the windows. That darling stray cat lay on my chest all night, as I wept and shivered and shook in disbelief until the dawn. Looking back, I was in such severe shock that I truly don't know if I would have survived that night without the cat's warmth to sustain me. The cat stayed with us through the days leading up to the funeral. I am ashamed to say that we never even gave her a proper name, as we were all so consumed with caring for my grandmother initially; and then the combined general exhaustion and confusion that occurs in a household when a member dies. Once I finally started sleeping during those days, she slept on my chest the entire week. The morning after the funeral, we were going to get her a litterbox, toys and other such things to make her an official family member.

Suddenly, none of us could find her anywhere, which was strange since she had been our constant companion during the entire week. Eventually, we began searching outdoors. Finally, my brother discovered her body on the crossroad. She had been hit by a car, and must have died immediately upon impact judging from the appearance of her body.

Naturally, we were all devastated and I was perplexed "Why" would God allow this? After a long time speculating on the possibilities, I have come to realize that God used this cat's death to instruct me further regarding the meaning of life and the necessity of death in this world. God had a lot to teach me about spiritual matters; and I had a lot of submitting to do. At that time, there was a lot of anger inside me - resentment and rebellion toward God about why He had even allowed evil in this world. I needed to learn with my heart, not just my mind, that I have no control over events in this world. I needed to learn that loving God means loving Him in good times as well as in the midst of crisis - in the midst of losing a precious loved one, and even in the midst of grieving over a stray cat that was directed to our family at that critical time. There are so many unanswerable questions regarding the appearance of that particular cat. Did God specifically tell it to break into my parents' home? It would certainly seem so. Why did God allow it to die? Why wasn't it allowed to stay on with our family, or at least go on its way unharmed?

I find myself wondering if the cat was not really a cat at all, but a

ministering angel that assumed a cat's form for the duration of time my family and I needed her furry little body that had brought us so much comfort.

I certainly don't know the answers to these speculations. But, I do know that God most definitely used that cat to: 1) provide physical shelter to my body the night my Grandmother died, 2) provide comfort and unconditional love to my grandmother in her last days on earth and to us as a family when she left and 3) God used the death of the cat to teach me even more about accepting death than what I had already learned in those heartbreaking days after resigning myself to the reality of my grandmother's departure from this life.

If she was a natural cat, I know I will meet her in Heaven one day, and thank her for her help during that dreadful week. If it was a ministering angel in the form of a cat, it will be the first of a never-ending variety of marvelous things God has to show and teach us throughout eternity. We are going to spend a very long time delighting in all God's goodness, laughing with joy at all His marvelous surprises and thanking Him forever for all He is, and all He has done for us!

*“ You think dogs will not be in heaven? I tell you,
They will be there long before any of us.”*

Robert Louis Stevenson

*“... I thought to myself, do not we, in hunting
innocent animals to death, very much resemble
the Devil who by crafty wiles, and the instrument
of wicked priests, is seeking continually whom he
may devour.”*

*Martin Luther, from letters and sermons,
c. 1535*

Chapter 5

DEATH AND SAYING GOODBYE

The subject of death is a difficult one to address. The Bible says death is the last enemy. Human and non-human, all inhabitants of this earth exist in mortal bodies. Each individual must die. Knowing that with our rational minds does not necessarily mean we are able to emotionally accept death.

We all must say goodbye to loved ones, human and animal alike. The separation and ordeal can be less of a torment if we recognize that under the skin, be it smooth, furred or feathered, we are all created by God; and God has made provision for all His creation. When it is time for our animal companions to leave this world, we need to understand that they go to a better place. They do not cease to exist, any more than humans do.

God knew how difficult this life journey would be for each of us. He provided animals to assist and comfort us on this sojourn. And, God has provided for the animals in eternity as well. Heaven is a very, very, very big place. Scientists say our physical universe is continuous and ever expanding. This physical dimension we exist in here and now is only a small portion of God's multi-dimensional universe. There is plenty of room for all the creatures that have ever lived on this planet in the heavenly kingdom.

The Christian philosopher, C. S. Lewis, explains this concept perfectly in "The Chronicles of Narnia." In "The Last Battle" when the inhabitants of Narnia get to the "real" world on the other side of death, the further in they go, the bigger the world gets. The wisdom and joyous hope proclaimed in these "children's" books is a pure treasure for all animal lovers. I can only imagine the impact these books would have had on me if I had discovered them as a child!

The Bible is so very clear on the matter of death and immortality regarding humans. It also has many passages that allude to our animal companions in the afterlife as well, if we read the Bible with a hopeful heart. Hope is not a mere wish, but unshakeable confidence concerning the future. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that "faith is the substance of the things we hope for." I spent so many years desperately hoping that animals are immortal spirit beings. Eventually, God was able to show me that anguish and despairing

hope are not really hope at all. Joy is incorporated into true hope. Joy and happiness are central themes for God's eternal plan. The Bible is almost overwhelmingly hopeful in its' references regarding our future life in God's eternal kingdom. From our limited perspective, it does at times seem "too good to be true" when we contemplate God's promises found in the Bible.

One of the most basic tenets of the Christian faith is that we are to believe in God's promises that seem too good to be true. In I Corinthians 15:19 (see ref. #16), a profound statement is made. If we as Christians have benefits and hope in this lifetime only, we are to be pitied. The implication here is that there is so much more wonderful life than is imaginable that awaits us in Eternity. Our main focus of hope is to be anticipating our eternal future, and the heavenly plans God has for us. If our animals were not intended to be part of this eternal future, why would God have given them a soul, spirit and sentience? That would, indeed, be both cruel and senseless. God has a purpose in everything He does and there is no cruelty in His plans.

The cruelty, sadness, injustice and death that we encounter in this world are not part of God's original plan; and it is not part of His eternal plan. We humans have a part to play in the great war of good versus evil that is being played out on this planet. The evil and injustice is only temporary; but the animal kingdom suffers because of it by being in the wrong world at the wrong time. The animals do not have a moral responsibility and accountability to God as do humans. The animals have the benefit of automatically going to God's eternal kingdom when they die on this earth. It is the human beings that have the responsibility of choice in the matter of eternal destiny. It was the human race that rebelled against God, and brought death into the world. The animals were innocent bystanders who are temporary casualties on the battlefield of planet Earth. The good news is that the Bible is very clear that, ultimately, there is a happy outcome and the warfare will not last forever. Just as the Bible explains how death came into this world, it also explains how death was defeated by Jesus and what He accomplished by coming to Earth.

Just because I know, mentally, that the humans and animals I love exist after physical death does not mean that I don't feel great sadness when they die. The loneliness of that separation is a very real sorrow. The grief that we endure when our loved ones die is bitter, indeed. We do not want to experience this journey without them. The pain is lessened somewhat, knowing that ultimately we will be reunited with our loved ones; but, in the

meantime, we miss them desperately. Missing our loved ones does not mean that we don't believe in God's promises. It does not mean that we are without faith or hope.

Grieving and believing are compatible emotions; and while we are still in this world when we encounter death, we will grieve. Knowing that it will all be made right in the long run does not discount the reality of the pain we experience in the here and now. If I did not know that our animals live on after their mortal bodies die, I could not personally cope with the grief of losing them. I would not only be grieving at losing contact with them temporarily, I would grieve endlessly at the waste and senselessness of their having simply ceased to exist. If God had not shown me that the animals do indeed live on after death, I simply could not have continued practicing veterinary medicine.

When death strikes a loved one, it is normal to be sad. It is inevitable to be lonely. It is necessary to grieve. But, when we lose our animal companions to death, it is also okay to *hope* and trust in God, Who loves our animals even more than we do. Now, when I see abused and suffering animals, there is hope in my heart to help offset the sadness involved with ministering to their crushed and broken bodies and spirits. God is aware of the plight of each creature that endures the perils of making this life journey.

As much as I grieve when a patient of mine dies, the sadness is tempered with the joy I feel thinking ahead to our reunion. I not only hope that I will meet them again one day in God's kingdom, I *know* that I will see them again. What a day that is going to be!

***“Only the ones who believe
ever see what they dream,
ever dream what comes true.
Life gives us magic
and life brings us tragedy,
Everyone suffers some loss.
Still we have faith in it, Childlike hope -
THERE’S A REASON THAT OUTWEIGHS THE COST.”***

***Lyric from "Color of Roses"
Sand and Water
Written and performed by
Beth Nielsen Chapman***

A Prayer for Animals

"Hear our humble prayer, O God, for our friends, the animals, especially for animals who are suffering, for any that are hunted or lost or deserted or frightened or hungry, for all that must be put to death. We entreat for them all Thy mercy and pity, and for those who deal with them we ask a heart of compassion and gentle hands and kindly words. Make us, ourselves, to be true friends to animals and so to share the blessings of the merciful."

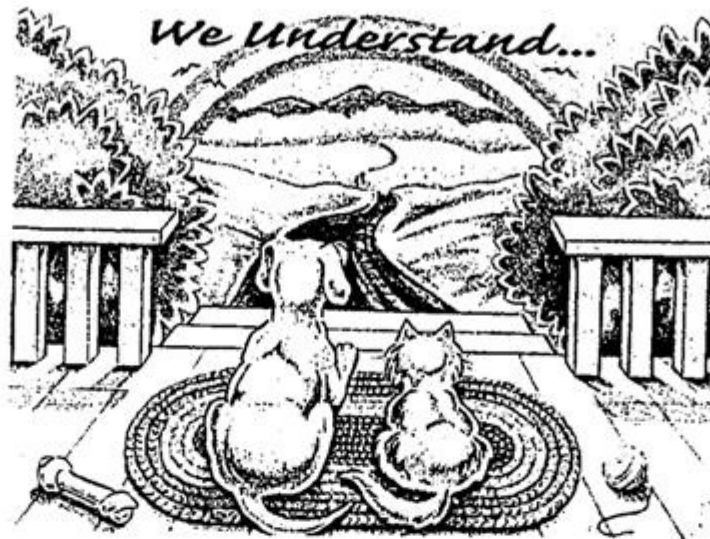
Albert Schweitzer

"Call to me, and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

Jeremiah 33:3

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord "plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"

Jeremiah 29:11



THE RAINBOW BRIDGE

Just this side of Heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge. When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together. There is plenty of food, water and sunshine and our friends are warm and comfortable.

All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor; those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by. The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing: they each miss someone very special, someone who was left behind.

They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent; his eager body begins to quiver. Suddenly, he breaks from the group, flying over the green grass, faster and faster. You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you look once more into those trusting eyes, so long gone from your life, but never absent from your heart.

Then you cross the Rainbow Bridge together

Author Unknown

Chapter 6

DOLPHIN ENCOUNTER

Standing at the Sea World dolphin pool in Florida, I looked outwardly serene; but, inside I was being torn apart. Five years after graduating from vet school, I found myself facing a career crossroad. At that time, I had a very busy vet practice attached to my home. My work days were consistently long and hectic. I had no trouble coping with the workload and the "normal" 70 - 80 hour work weeks. I thoroughly enjoyed most aspects of my chosen career and always delighted in the animals for whom I was caring.

What I found increasingly difficult to cope with was the continuous and inevitable succession of terminal patients among my clientele. It was not at all unusual to euthanize at least 20 patients during a work week. With such a large caseload each day, it was statistical fact that not every patient could be saved. Amidst the numerous triumphs of saving trauma patients hit by cars, poisoned, inflicted with gunshots and trapping mutilations, there were many geriatric patients dying from cancer, heart and kidney failure, and other age-related illnesses. The emotional stress of providing intensive grief counseling for the clients in the process of dealing with losing their beloved animal companions began to take its' toll.

Without even realizing how it had occurred, I found myself seriously re-evaluating whether I should continue as a veterinarian. The perpetual life and death issues that I was dealing with was, of course, a normal facet of my occupation. But, I was not comfortable with the idea of emotionally "detaching" myself from the clients and patients I was serving. I had always felt that if the day came when I was truly indifferent to the suffering of either my animal patients, or their people, it would be time to move on to something else. So, rather than becoming indifferent, I found myself saturated in other people's grief, and at a loss to provide them with answers to the questions they posed to me as they tried to come to terms with the death of their animal companions.

For years, I had been in relentless pursuit of answers to the spiritual questions related to the animal kingdom. I knew animals were sentient beings who experienced the same range of emotions as do human beings. I knew that simply from observing animals, and being entranced by them from the time I was old enough to toddle over to the family dog and snuggle up to him. What I could not answer for clients was whether our beloved

animal friends had souls that lived on after their mortal bodies died. Every religious leader I asked either outright laughed at my question, or firmly denied the possibility of animals being spiritual creatures.

This had been a dilemma for me ever since I was old enough to comprehend the significance of mortality, human or animal. Now, I found myself almost obsessing about the matter; and it was consuming a lot of my emotional energy. There was really no one to discuss the matter with. The few friends or family members I approached about the subject gave me strange looks and told me to lighten up. Those who know me well have always said I think too much. I never outgrew the asking "why?" stage as a child. My poor parents!

Now, as an adult, the few people I chose as confidants had to endure my endless parade of "why this?" and "why that?" At that point in my life and career, it had not occurred to me to follow my grandmother's wise advice to ask the Lord directly for answers to all of my questions. Over the years, each time I asked my precious grandmother a "why" question that she didn't have an answer for, her emphatic advice was to ask God directly for an answer. It is a characteristic of youth that we seldom follow the advice our elders offer. So it was with me.

As I stood at the dolphin pool, my emotional despair regarding this subject of animals' eternal destiny had reached epic proportions. I was so distressed internally at the thought of euthanizing one more animal friend, and imagining them simply ceasing to exist, that I was seriously contemplating selling my business and relinquishing my veterinary license. I cannot emphasize clearly enough how depressed and discouraged I had become. All the years of intensive work and sacrifice to become a veterinarian were about to be thrown away because I couldn't bear the emotional turmoil I was experiencing any longer. In desperation, I silently cried out to God to please show me a sign that animals go to Heaven. I begged. I pleaded. I threw a tantrum internally. I threatened God with rejecting Him if He did not speak to me, and show me a sign, *by permitting me to touch one of the dolphins as they swam by!!!*

At this time, the Holy Spirit had not as yet revealed to me the significance of God's statements in Genesis when He made the covenant with Noah and the animals. Although I had been raised in a religious home, and schooled intensely about the Bible at church, nothing had ever been taught about animals, except that mankind had been given authority over the animal kingdom, and we were "superior" beings. In my late teens and

twenties, all my time and energy had been devoted to college education relating to becoming a veterinarian. After that, I had spent all my time practicing the art of veterinary medicine. There had been virtually no time or extraneous energy to expend on studying the Bible in search of the answers I needed.

God is so compassionate to us in our ignorance and distress. He constantly makes allowances for our weaknesses and limited abilities. The Bible clearly teaches that we are not to test God, or ask Him for "signs" We are to walk by faith -- we are to trust God in all situations even if we cannot see the answer or understand the purpose in each circumstance in our life. After I threw my tantrum at the dolphin pool and dared to threaten God with imminent rebellion, I rather quickly apologized and resigned myself to God's sovereignty. ***I told God that I would serve, trust and love Him no matter what His eternal plan was. If it included the animals, all the better. But, if in His wisdom, He purposed them to cease to exist when they died, I would accept His directives.*** This internal monologue occurred over approximately a 10 - 15 minute period as I stood watching the dolphins in the center of the pool. I resigned myself that I was not to know the fate of animals after their deaths, and I began to thank God for His goodness and mercy and forgiveness for my ghastly outburst. I had no further thoughts of having a dolphin allow me to touch its' dorsal fin as it swam past.

I continued to contemplate God's mercies to me and my attention drifted from the dolphins even as I leaned against the pool wall. After another period of time, perhaps minutes - maybe a half hour - a dolphin crashed up out of the water directly in front of me and began chattering to me. No one else was standing near me at the time. Someone had thrown a paper straw wrapper into the pool; and this particular dolphin brought that wrapper to me and placed it in my hand. The dolphin allowed me to pet and caress it, and instigated a game of fetch with that paper wrapper that went on for at least 20 minutes. Early on in the play encounter, other people began grouping around me, wanting their own share of dolphin contact. The entire prior time I had been at the pool, the dolphins had been completely indifferent to all the humans observing them.

People clamored around me, and many with longer arms could have easily made contact with my dolphin play partner. The dolphin stubbornly refused to let any other person touch it or the paper straw wrapper that was becoming progressively more shredded and water-logged with each successive time I threw the paper and the dolphin retrieved it. I know the people around me were totally baffled by what they were witnessing; but, I

was so intent on the experience occurring between God, myself and the dolphin that I was hardly aware of the other people pushing and pressing in to take my place. Once the paper wrapper disintegrated, the dolphin let me have one final caress and then the creature swam away from me and the crowd as if nothing at all had occurred, returning to the center of the pool.

To other people, this would seem like an insignificant, although unusual, and entertaining experience. To me, it was a statement from Almighty God that He is indeed concerned for every aspect of our lives, and is willing to give us so much more than we can even imagine! Ephesians 3:10 (see ref. #18) became a living reality to me at that point! I had asked God for a sign -- to touch a dolphin for a moment as it swam by. God gave me so much more -- a play time with one of these magnificent creatures that I could not have ever envisioned in my wildest dreams!

This experience changed my life in so many fundamental ways! It showed me a glimpse of how much more our Heavenly Father loves us than we can possibly comprehend. It showed me God's compassion and great sense of humor in helping us handle all the life questions which plague us while on this sojourn each of us must make through this world. It showed me how finite my comprehension is compared to the great and mighty Creator of all the universe and the creatures inhabiting it. And this experience showed me that God cared for me on an individual level regarding the question of animal spirituality that no human religious leaders had been willing to even discuss with me. The lesson my grandmother had tried to teach me all those years finally took hold -- look to Jesus for my answers. Go to my Heavenly Father with all my concerns. Marvel at the reality that God wants us to spend our time here in this life's journey with peace, hope, happiness and love filling our hearts and overflowing to our fellow inhabitants of this earth, both human and animal beings.

Although this may seem to some a fairly insignificant experience, God could not have more clearly given me the answer I so desperately needed if He had written in the sky. As happens so often, the major events of our lives crystallize in a very few moments. Such an apparently insignificant encounter has affected the rest of my life, both personally and professionally. I can now rest in the security of knowing that God is in control, and ultimately the animal kingdom will indeed be freed from the curse that came upon this planet so very long ago.

Now, when I see abused and suffering animals, there is hope in my heart to help offset the sadness involved with ministering to their crushed and broken bodies and spirits. God used this experience to give me a calm assurance of His awareness of the plight of each creature that endures the perils of making this life journey.

I have a great assurance in knowing that one day the pain of all this world's creation will cease; and God will restore everything to the way He originally intended this world to function. The lion will, indeed, lie down with the lamb. Jesus will reign over a peaceable Kingdom; and sadness, tears and death will be no more.

All of this was realized from a simple game of "fetch", concocted by God and a dolphin, to help an emotionally devastated veterinarian!!

Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages. Thomas Edison

How are we to build a new humanity?

Reverence for Life.

Existence depends more on reverence for life than the law and the prophets.

Reverence for life comprises the whole ethic of love in its' deepest and highest sense.

It is the source of constant renewal for the individual and for mankind.

Albert Schweitzer

Chapter 7

REVERENCE FOR LIFE

In our society today, there is an appalling lack of reverence for life of any kind, human or animal! It is a sad truth that we must deal with, and attempt to restore the reverence for life in the children that will be the founding generation of the next millennium. It is imperative that our children be taught to value their fellow human beings and the animals with whom they share this planet. We must teach the next generation by the way we treat the members of the animal kingdom we encounter daily. Children need to learn that animals are not disposable property. Humans are kin to, and must be kind to, all creation. We must teach the children to cherish and respect the creatures who are part of God's awesome Creation. This is not so much for the sake of the animals. The animals will be provided for by God in eternity whether or not we care for them properly. The next generation must learn to respect other creatures for the sake of society as a whole, and the well-being of the human race. It is a very short step from abusing an animal to justifying child abuse. It is inevitable that human life and dignity will be devalued if children are taught to disregard the value of the other sentient beings with whom we share our existence.

If we all contribute to educating the next generation, the task is not so formidable; and the outcome is not so bleak. It is heartwarming when I see children come into the office exhibiting true devotion and respect for their animals. It is heartbreaking and alarming, however, when I observe children come through the door displaying indifference to suffering animals. It is not surprising that the number of disrespectful children seems to be increasing. The turmoil and violence our society is currently experiencing will directly affect not only the human populace, but the animals whose paths cross ours as well. God has made His covenants with the human race and the animal kingdom. We would be wise to reassess our covenant promises made to God, each other and our animal companions as this era closes and a new millennium dawns.

We must determine to have a positive impact and influence upon our children! We cannot teach our children what we ourselves do not already know. We must learn what is necessary and proper to teach the upcoming generation about reverence for God and reverence for life, in all its' forms.

To recognize that animals are sentient beings in their own right, beings that deserve our respect and admiration would indeed be an enlightened and humane way to approach the next millennium. To teach these values to our children is the essential requirement for a hopeful future as we enter the new millennium. Children need positive role models and wise instructors. Heroes, if you will!

I, myself, have never had a true, human hero until the last few years when I discovered the writings and autobiography of Albert Schweitzer. This remarkable man was born in 1875 and lived until 1965. During his lifetime, he accomplished more than most people could ever dream of doing in ten lifetimes. Not only was he a medical doctor, he was a theologian and philosopher and an accomplished musician and organ builder. He received the Nobel Peace Prize for his eloquent writings in the quest for World Peace and the banning of atomic weapons.

He spent many years in Africa as a medical doctor and missionary. His life achievements are almost epic in their proportions. What has endeared me most to this eminent man was his great devotion to animals and his profound Reverence for Life philosophy that he not only articulated on paper, but lived on a day-to-day basis throughout his amazing lifetime.

In all my years of searching for the philosophical answers to the questions addressed in this discussion, not one person directed me to study the life of this most inspiring man. I only found my answers one piece at a time, over many years. God has so very graciously showed me the answers I needed to achieve peace of mind and contentment in my profession. Only after I learned to trust in the goodness of God and the Hope all creation has in God's glorious eternal plan, did God lead me to study Albert Schweitzer's writings. All the years of emotional turmoil could have been eased if I had known about this amazing man.

I think it is a far better lesson the way God taught me though. I believe God, in His infinite wisdom, wanted to impress upon me the vital lesson that I needed to learn: to trust first and foremost in God, and not to look to other people for answers and guidance that should come mainly from God Himself. I can only give the credit to God for showing me the answers I needed regarding animals as spiritual beings. Then, God used Albert Schweitzer to confirm to me that I am not alone in my deep concern regarding the spirituality of animals. For all eternity, I will be thanking God for the provisions He has made for me and the human race, as well as the animal kingdom.

I can think of no more appropriate way to conclude my musings than to introduce you to the philosophy of Albert Schweitzer regarding animals by including the following excerpts from the autobiography of Albert Schweitzer, entitled "Out of My Life and Thought":

"The ethic of Reverence for Life is the ethic of love widened into universality...Objection is made to this ethic that it sets too high a value on natural life. To this, it can retort that the mistake made by all previous systems of ethics has been the failure to recognize that life as such is the mysterious value with which they have to deal. All spiritual life meets us within natural life. Reverence for Life, therefore, is applied to natural life and spiritual life alike. In the parable of Jesus, the shepherd saves not merely the soul of the lost sheep, but the whole animal. The stronger the reverence for natural life, the stronger grows also that for spiritual life.

The ethic of Reverence for Life is found particularly strange because it establishes no dividing line between higher and lower, between more valuable and less valuable life. For this omission, it has its' reasons. To undertake to lay down universally valid distinctions of value between different kinds of life will end in judging them by the greater or lesser distance at which they seem to stand from us as human beings - as we ourselves judge. But, that is a purely subjective criterion. Who among us knows what significance any other kind of life has in itself, and as a part of the universe? To the man who is truly ethical, all life is sacred, including that which, from the human view, seems lower in the scale... If he has been touched by the ethic of Reverence for Life, he injures and destroys life only under a necessity which he cannot avoid, and never from thoughtlessness. So far as he is a free man, he uses every opportunity of tasting the blessedness of being able to assist life, and avert from it suffering and destruction.

Devoted as I was from boyhood to the cause of the protection of animal life, it is a special joy to me that the universal ethic of Reverence for Life shows the sympathy with animals which is so often represented as sentimentality, to be a duty which no thinking man can escape.... When will the time come when public opinion will tolerate no longer any popular amusements which depend upon the ill treatment of animals? Any profound view of the world is mysticism, in that it brings men into a spiritual relation with the Infinite. The view of Reverence for Life is ethical mysticism...The concept of Reverence for Life has, therefore, a

religious character. The man who avows his belief in it, and acts upon the belief, shows a piety which is elemental."

As we step across the threshold into a new millennium, each of us can determine to add a little more humanity to the essence of the human race. One way we can do this is by entering into sincere covenant agreements with each other, God and the animal kingdom. God assigned humans the task of being the keepers/caregivers of Planet Earth and its' inhabitants. Sadly, the human race has done a rather poor job of serving wisely and humanely in this capacity up to this point in time. We *can* change this, though.

With a new millennium about to dawn on Planet Earth, let us use this as a point of new beginning. Let us commit to do our individual parts in establishing the peaceable planet God originally intended. Let us agree to enter this new millennium with hopeful hearts and compassionate attitudes toward all the other inhabitants of this world, both the human race and the amazing, awesome creatures of the animal kingdom.

Romans 11:33-36

***Oh, the depth of the riches of the
wisdom and knowledge of God!***

***How unsearchable His judgments
and His paths beyond tracing out!***

***Who has known the mind of the
Lord?***

***Or, who has been His counselor?
Who has ever given to God
that God should repay him?
For from Him and through Him and to Him
are all things.***

To Him be the glory forever!

Amen.

Ethics is compassion. All life is suffering. The conscious will - to - live is filled, therefore, with the deepest pity for all creatures; it is particularly aware not only of the woes of mankind, but also of those creatures that suffer with it.

In ethics, what we usually call "love" is, in its true character, pity. In this great compassion, the will - to - live is turned away from itself, and its purification begins.

Schopenhauer

Oh, Shame on the mother of mortals,

Who did not stop to teach,

the sorrow that lies in dear animal eyes,

the sorrow that has no speech.

For the same force formed the canine,

that fashioned man and king,

And the God of the whole

gave a spark of soul to

each furred and feathered thing.

Author unknown

*"If I am to expect others to respect
my life, then I must respect the other life
I see, however strange it may be to mine.*

*And not only other human life,
but all kinds of life*

*We need a boundless ethics which will
include the animals also."*

Albert Schweitzer

*"One can only regret that no further implications for the
mutual relations of human and animals are drawn out.
Yet surely it is implicit that God is seen as promising to
care for both orders of creatures, and if both are God's
covenant partners how can they not be in some sense
covenantally bound to each other?"*

The Cosmic Covenant, Biblical Themes of Justice, Peace and the
Integrity of Creation By Robert Murray

*All Scripture quoted is from the New International Version
unless otherwise indicated*

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

1. Genesis 1:20-24

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky. So, God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them...And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds...And God saw that it was good."

2. Genesis 2:7

The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

3. Genesis 1:29,30

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food and to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground. Everything that has the breath of life in it, I give every green plant for food. And it was so.

4. Genesis 9:2,3

The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you green plants, I now give you everything.

5. Genesis 9:8-10

I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after

you, and with every living creature that was with you -- the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you -- every living creature on earth.

6. Genesis 9:12

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between Me and you and every living creature with you."

7. Genesis 9:15

I will remember My covenant between Me and you and all living creatures of every kind."

8. Genesis 9:16

Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

9. Genesis 9:17

"So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between Me and all life on the earth."

10. Romans 8:19-25

The creation waits in eager expectation for the Sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its' own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only (creation), but we, ourselves, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we are saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But, if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

11. Psalm 104:24, 29, 30

How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom You made them all; the earth is full of Your creatures. When You hide your face, they are terrified; when You take away their breath, they die and return to dust. When You send Your Spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the earth."

12. Job 33:12

The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life."

13. Job 12:7-10

But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these do not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.

14. Numbers 22:21-34

"Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth and she said, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" (22:28)

"The Angel of the Lord asked (Balaam), "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now; but I would have spared her." (22:32)

15. Ecclesiastes 3:20,21

All came from dust and all return to dust. Who knows that the spirit of man rises upwards and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?"

16. I Corinthians 15:19

If only for this life, we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

17. Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see.

18. Ephesians 3:20

Now to Him Who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever!

19. I Corinthians 2:9,10

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him, but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.

20. Jeremiah 33:3

Call to Me, and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

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