

**For Our Friends the Animals:
Cultivating a Reverence for Life**

By
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Ocala, Florida

This book is dedicated and beholden to the spirit of Jesus Christ. It is the fervent hope of the author that this spirit will create in each reader an appreciation for a reverence for life, an ethos which is simply the love of Jesus given universal applicability.

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Preface

As Albert Schweitzer wrote in *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, “But the truth is, it is not Jesus as historically known, but Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time and can help it.” In *Albert Schweitzer, An Anthology*, Schweitzer avers in statements that we will shortly consider that this spirit, the spirit of Jesus, comprises and informs his chosen philosophy of a “reverence for life.” The doctor goes on to assert his conviction that the historical Jesus is nowhere near as important to a person’s wellbeing as is the spirit of Jesus. It is that spirit, argues Schweitzer, that is paramount, or should be paramount, in the lives of people. It is that spirit that still functions in this world and imparts to humans the strength to believe they can overcome this world. He states further that the spirit of Jesus abides with us still, still assisting humans to accomplish the will of Jesus through their daily lives and tasks.

It is my fervent hope and prayer that the spirit of Jesus will also impel and inform our own actions and thoughts and will lead us to the inescapable conclusion that the compassion resident in the ethos of a reverence for life must be applied to all animals, indeed to all life. This is simply because our anthropocentrism, our unflagging yet highly dubious and injurious belief that the human animal is somehow more deserving than other life forms, is causing great harm to and often the untold deaths of countless other animals, species, and their habitats. In so doing, of course, it is causing a similar result among humans. In fact, there is substantial evidence that our anthropocentric cravings and resultant actions have played a major role in the creation and outbreak of COVID-19, the most recent corona virus menace. There can be no greater conceit than to imagine that merely because we are human we can lay claim to some *carte blanche* authorization to treat other lives according to our whims. On the contrary, we should acknowledge the obvious; namely, that we are one of millions of species, of life forms, blessed with the power of intelligent thought and organizational ability. May this book, advanced by and written under the aegis of the spirit of Jesus, urge our thinking and behavior toward adoption of a reverence for life as our common cause.

It is the power of that spirit that I gratefully acknowledge and invoke. Finally, this book pays tribute to and humbly seeks to implement the adjuration of Ann Cottrell Free to help keep alive the Albert Schweitzer spirit.

Dirige me, Domine!

Introduction

Reverentia vitae.

A reverence for life. The purpose of this offering is at once educational and inspirational. My aim is to educate the reader regarding the importance of a reverence for life, and simultaneously provide a biblical, indeed, a spiritual undergirding of that ethos. My hope is to present a commentary or critique of the philosophy of a reverence for life, especially as formulated by Dr. Albert Schweitzer, side by side with an analysis of supporting spiritual references, thus to create for the reader a seamless disquisition on compassion for animals. Through discourse and commentary, my aim is both didactic and aspirational. In sum, I want to alter your view of the animal world, and alongside that alteration, transform your actions toward animals to actions predicated on compassion, caring, and mercy.

The book is at the same time then spiritual and didactic. My goal is to reach out to everyone, including but not at all limited to, animal rights groups, animal lovers, religious groups, and individuals by demonstrating the link between a reverence for life and its biblical and prayerful underpinnings. I hope to educate and make clear to all readers and people that a spiritual life and a reverence for life are not mutually contradictory but are rather two sides of the same coin, each one reinforcing and energizing the other. That coin is a love and respect for all God's creations, human and otherwise.

This book is composed of applicable biblical passages, prayers, commentary, and follow-on analysis and arguments on the ethos of a reverence for life. In particular, the analysis and arguments will explore the applicability of the philosophy of a reverence for life to the treatment of animals by the human animal in the twenty-first century. Many of the cited prayers and commentary must be credited to Schweitzer, although this book will also draw upon other sources for prayers and guidance.

My hope is that by constant reflection and prayer on the status of animal life and human responsibility for preventing harm done to such life, there will arise a sea change in your attitude and consequent behavior. To replace an attitude of hostility or

indifference with one of active compassion. My desire to replace violence toward animals with an involved gentleness. Such a replacement in behavior will occur only as a result of a modification in our thinking, and an alteration of our thoughts requires a consistent, conscious choice of reorientation. If we are committed to a change in thought, then the spirituality resident in prayer and reflection can assist in bringing that change to fruition. Buoyed by the spirit of Jesus and the cogent writing of Schweitzer, it is my humble yet deeply felt prayer that this book helps you attain the needed level of understanding in spirit, thought, and deed.

Much has already been written regarding the life of Albert Schweitzer, so our treatment herein can be brief. Schweitzer was a true polymath, a Renaissance man if ever one existed. He was highly degreed, a theologian, musician, philosopher, writer, and in mid-life he underwent not a crisis but a calling, opting for medical studies. After attaining his degree, Schweitzer set out to practice medicine at a mission in Lambarene, Gabon, and in one trip to the mission on the Ogowe River, he strove furiously for an overarching, grand unified theory of ethics. His boat chanced upon a herd of hippopotamus cavorting in the river. The phrase “reverence for life” flashed into his mind, and with that phrase was born the ethos that Schweitzer popularized through subsequent writings and by the very life he led. I’ll offer several examples of how Schweitzer intended for his ethos to be put into practice.

This book will also follow my journey of growing spiritual belief, awareness and commitment. The first portion will be mainly didactic and instructional in nature, laying out the basic principles of a reverence for life, providing guidance on the philosophy that undergirds this ethos. The instruction will also set forth and critique the spiritual foundations of that philosophy, a foundation that at once supports and actualizes.

Once that instruction has been received, comprehended, and inculcated, I offer a pledge for all readers to sign and follow. This pledge will set forth the promise of each signatory to adopt reverence for life as a guiding principle, thereby to behave in particular ways regarding animals and life. The instruction, analyses, arguments, and the signed pledge will serve as a sign of readiness a bridge affording the reader the opportunity to move on and participate in the second half, an exposition of a reverence for life actually put into practice. While this first part is intended to be mainly spiritual and introductory

in nature, Part 2, while still predicated on prayers, commentary, and analysis, will be more practical in outlook and will outline several issues confronting us regarding animal rights and treatment, as well as providing ideas for assessing and proposed solutions to those problems based on our combination of a reverence for life and its sacred support.

Finally, a disclaimer: This book is not aimed at or derived from any one faith, religion, sect, or cult. Its goal is to reach and inspire all who are open to receipt of the spirit of Jesus and may possess even a spark of compassion for animals in their hearts. We earnestly affirm that the spirit of Jesus, of all encompassing love as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, is freely available to anyone who asks. Honestly, my feeling is that organized religion and most human philosophy are aggressively and predominantly anthropocentric. Other beings, if afforded any treatment or coverage in religion or philosophy, were usually dismissed as mere means to human ends, created and placed on earth for our use, amusement, and exploitation.

As the passages, prayers, and commentary will, I trust, demonstrate, the foregoing view is a most narrowly circumscribed and erroneous view of the role and rights of animals. There is ample evidence of a far more inclusive and kindlier outlook toward the animal kingdom in scripture and allied religious thought. I ask the reader to open his/her mind to the possibility and desirability of a universal love, a love for all life, a love that most assuredly includes animals in its embrace. While the spirit of Jesus will serve as a guide in this journey of prayers and analysis and arguments, ultimately each of us must reach out to Jesus and find and tap into the vein of outward focused compassion that He wishes to exist and be demonstrated within us all. It is you who agree to follow and embark on this spiritual journey, regardless of denomination, to whom we reach out.

Now to the task at hand. Our passages, prayers, and arguments will touch on the varied and many forms of harm and degradation inflicted upon animals. I will address (as if it really needed such clarity) why such harm is bad and in which human activities the harm is most injurious. I will argue and seek to demonstrate that a reverence for life, admittedly imperfect as it is, constitutes the best hope and brightest aspiration for human thought and action as regards all other life on this fragile planet. It's my overriding wish that every reader will be persuaded of the usefulness and efficacy of a reverence for life, that every reader will sign and commit to the ethics set forth in the pledge at the end of

Part 1, that every reader will wish to continue on the journey to the more practical aspects of a reverence for life, and most importantly, that every reader will become a zealous proselyte and proselytizer for that ethos of all consuming loving kindness.

One final thought and clarification before we begin our spiritual trek together. This book does employ the conceit of a voyage into spirituality for purposes of structure, form, and continuity to our argument. This book centers on the reader becoming open and receptive to the spirit of Jesus through His words and relevant commentary. With each subsequent review and examination, I will introduce, develop, and rework an understanding and applicability of the presence of the spirit of our Savior. So every thought and follow-on exposition in the book will build upon and flesh out preceding ideas, all leading toward our ultimate duty to embed the spirit and words of the Lord into the discharge of our daily obligations to ambient life. In particular, of course, we seek to arrive at a destination where each reader applies that spirit and those words to his/her dealings and relations with animals.

(Unless otherwise noted, all biblical citations are drawn from *The Annotated EMTV New Testament*.)

Oremus.

Part 1 A Reverence for Life

Chapter 1

Opening Prayers

Anima Christi sanctifica nos!

Our opening prayer—any opening prayer—has several purposes. Chief among those is to begin to meditate and focus on a sense of contrition in which sins are admitted and mercy for those sins is requested. Additionally, the opening prayer serves to set forth and express the theme of our entire literary effort. The prayer may be uttered in silence or recited aloud, and either way, as a community it is a means for our unified prayers of the people to be gathered or collected and offered to the Father through Jesus as we seek forgiveness ourselves and offer it to others. As Jesus said, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you.” Matt.6:14.

We will employ two prayers to accomplish these tasks and goals, one known to have been written by Albert Schweitzer, and the other thought to have been written by him but without formal proof of authorship. As we pray and reflect upon these prayers, let us begin to understand and dwell on one of the chief themes of this celebration of the spirit of Jesus, of life: Namely, nurturing in us and then applying concertedly, outwardly, and liberally a merciful love for our fellow creatures. As we pray, let us experience the silent power of combined prayer, of many souls seeking enlightenment and guidance in their dealings with animals, praying for mercy and to be merciful.

There is a prayer for animals that Schweitzer composed and recited as a child. However, it is quite short and is not widely known. Here it is from *Animals, Nature & Albert Schweitzer*:

“O, heavenly Father, protect and bless all things that have breath; guard them from all evil, and let them sleep in peace.”

Here is the more common Prayer for Animals, which is attributed to Schweitzer, although there is a faction that holds that he was not the author. (This version is taken from the Pinterest website.)

A Prayer for Animals

Hear our humble prayer, O God, for our friends the animals,
especially for animals who are suffering;
for animals that are overworked, underfed and cruelly treated;
for all wistful creatures in captivity that beat their wings against bars;
for any that are hunted or lost or deserted or frightened or hungry;
for all that must be put 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.

Our first commentary from Schweitzer is excerpted from one of his sermons from *Albert Schweitzer. Reverence For Life*. “The interior joy we feel when we have done a good deed, when we feel we have been needed somewhere and have lent a helping hand, is the nourishment the soul requires.”

Additionally, Schweitzer sets out his conviction that humans must be a part of the spiritual world in order to be satisfied and at peace. But the doctor is keen to point out that our presence in the spiritual world must be an active one. Our soul is strengthened by the deeds we perform in the service of God. An active role in the service of Jesus, of bringing his wishes for us to fruition, is a theme found often in this book under various guises. We are called to lives of active compassion as our analysis of the foregoing prayers will indicate.

The first prayer is a charming childhood entreaty, presumably recited by the young Schweitzer before going to sleep. It is important because the prayer includes as its objects “all things”, *all* life, not just humans. This concept is the beginning of our journey, the

commencement of understanding a reverence for life. We must seek and ourselves provide protection for all life, and indeed, in uttering this prayer we tacitly agree that all life is worthy of heavenly protection, and of ours. We acknowledge implicitly that all creatures are God's creatures and merit His protection and our intercession for such protection.

This prayer also acknowledges the obvious—namely, that there is evil in this world, and as a result, cruel, unpleasant things can happen to any entity. Even as a boy, Schweitzer, perhaps indirectly, captures another important concept that we will continue to develop. This concept is the responsibility of every human being to prevent and preclude evil to the maximum extent possible. Evil does exist in this world, and much of that evil especially acts of cruelty and harm perpetrated upon creatures, domesticated and feral, is manmade. That we are responsible for acts of barbarity, and as a consequence that we are additionally responsible for ceasing those acts and preventing them wherever possible, is an awareness of life that came early to Schweitzer.

There is a second sort of evil, perhaps more implicit than explicit in Schweitzer's boyhood prayer, but certainly no less deserving of our attention. Evil perpetuated directly and purposefully on animals is painful enough to contemplate, but just as insidious and wrong is the evil of which we are aware but which we leave unattended, ignored, deliberately overlooked. Let's face it, we humans know fully well how animals are maltreated, how they are forced to lead lives of pain, squalor, and terror, most often at our expense and on our behalf. Let us not turn a blind eye to such suffering; rather, may we acknowledge our responsibility for having caused such distress. Let us freely admit that no amount of clever packaging or sophistry, no amount of linguistic gymnastics can hide our guilt. There is as great an evil in being aware of wrongdoing and taking no action to counter it as there is in engaging in acts of malevolence. Let us seek and accept responsibility, not only for our own actions that cause suffering for animals, but for those of other people done to animals on our behalf. Let us accept responsibility for being able to speak out and actively oppose the infliction of such cruelty and for not having done so.

As we pray and reflect on our own behavior, let us be mindful of that responsibility. Let us not be blind to our actions or inactivity and their consequences, but let us have the courage and compassion to see ourselves as we are, and properly and accurately assess

the outcomes toward animal life that our behavior brings about. Let us accept the plain truth that all life comes from God and that we who walk this earth as humans have a special obligation to protect God's other creatures from harm.

Our second opening prayer introduces and touches upon several important ideas, ideas that will be developed throughout this portion of the book and the next. The first line makes mention of humility in "our humble prayer". For too long humans have seen themselves as the focal point of existence, at the heart of life on earth, as the reason that life and the earth exist at all. This prayer asks us to reconsider our place, to come to the realization that we are one of many creatures on this planet, not at all special merely because of our presence.

The first line then invokes the name of God for our petitions in an unmistakable acknowledgment that God is not only our creator, but the creator of all living things. There would be no point in seeking God's help for animals were this not the case. In our prayers let us dwell on that crucial fact: All creatures come from God, and when we injure or mistreat any creature, in so doing we do great damage to our own solidarity with the Lord. We rebuff him by our misuse of those lives He has placed here. Finally, the first line makes clear our relationship with animals; they are our friends. As such, animals are not to be exploited, harmed, mistreated, or injured. They are not means to human ends. They enjoy as friends a special status with us; indeed, friendship brings with it an obligation of care. We owe a duty of care to our friends, and that duty extends to our friends the animals.

Lines two through six delineate in a ghastly way some examples of the ill treatment accorded animals by people and asks that God hear our prayer for those animals who are the recipients of that treatment. These lines are reflective of an all too common human phenomenon, the exploitation of animals for human greed, profit, and amusement. Work animals are seen as a means to an end, as a business asset to be worked as much as possible, cared for as little as possible (care costs money, after all), and to be discarded when no longer capable of turning a profit.

Farm animals are often housed in deplorable conditions with their ability to move freely, indeed, to move at all, heartlessly curtailed. Their ability to lead a life, even

remotely accordingly to their abilities and wishes is restricted at best and usually prevented entirely. Once deemed ready for slaughter, such animals are crammed together on arduous, torturous journeys that culminate in a bloody, frightening butchery. All to end up on our dinner table.

Human amusement at animal enslavement finds manifestation in zoos, animal parks, animal shows, but also in horse and dog racing, even dog fighting and fighting among other species. Again, when an animal no longer can earn its keep and becomes merely a cost center, its life is ended, ignominiously and without ceremony or remorse. Let our thoughts turn to all these poor creatures, and may we reflect on just how badly we humans have dealt with them. May that reflection start us on the path to understanding and sympathy, toward viewing animals as friends, as fellow creatures, as lives to be respected and aided, not as tools to be worked and discarded when no longer useful.

The final five lines ask for “mercy and pity” for these beings, but the prayer also makes it clear that we humans must change our attitude and consequent behavior toward them. May we seek and find in our hearts the ability and strength to show compassion, to be gentle and kind, to be sympathetic even when we are derided by other humans for doing so. As our friends these animals are deserving of compassion, gentleness, and kindness from us, but the prayer is quite plain in stating that these traits are not common in humans now, that we must actively pray to receive such traits, and even more to the point, we must affirmatively change our behavior to incorporate those traits in our every action. We pray to God for His assistance in making those affirmative changes possible and enduring. We pray to God that our eyes and hearts may be opened to animal suffering, to the unassailable fact that so much suffering is human caused, and that with His help we may share “the blessings of the merciful” with our friends. May God grant us the ability not only to see animal suffering, but to acknowledge a sense of duty and obligation to alleviate it in every possible way we can. That is being active in the kingdom of God.

Chapter 2

We Begin Our Journey

The purpose of this chapter is officially to launch our journey to living a life of compassion, perhaps also described as our blueprint for coexistence. This section can and should be viewed as an introduction, a preparation, a commencement of activity and thought. Our prayers, quotations, and analyses help frame and kick off our voyage, but it is crucial to note that this is not a journey of one, of a person going it alone. Let us employ the ideas in this chapter and in this book, not only as a beginning, but a beginning of a combined effort, an occasion of concerted, allied thoughts and prayers, and ultimately unified action and behavior based on those thoughts and prayers.

Many times a psalm serves well to initiate a spiritual quest, so a psalm it shall be. Our psalm is a famous one in which the creative power of almighty God is celebrated. Please read it carefully and slowly before turning to Schweitzer's comments and the analysis and argument.

Psalm 104 (from the Holy Bible, New International Version)

1 Praise the Lord, my soul.

Lord my God, you are very great;
you are clothed with splendor and majesty.

2 The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment;
he stretches out the heavens like a tent

3 and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters.

He makes the clouds his chariot
and rides on the wings of the wind.

4 He makes winds his messengers,
flames of fire his servants.

5 He set the earth on its foundations;
it can never be moved.

6 You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.

7 But at your rebuke the waters fled,
at the sound of your thunder they took to flight;

8 they flowed over the mountains,
they went down into the valleys,
to the place you assigned for them.

9 You set a boundary they cannot cross;
never again will they cover the earth.

10 He makes springs pour water into the ravines;
it flows between the mountains.

11 They give water to all the beasts of the field;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

12 The birds of the sky nest by the waters;
they sing among the branches.

13 He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;
the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.

14 He makes grass grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to cultivate—
bringing forth food from the earth;

15 wine that gladdens human hearts,
oil to make their faces shine,
and bread that sustains their hearts.

16 The trees of the Lord are well watered,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

17 There the birds make their nests;
the stork has its home in the junipers.

18 The high mountains belong to the wild goats;
the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.

19 He made the moon to mark the seasons,
and the sun knows when to go down.

20 You bring darkness, it becomes night,
and all the beasts of the forest prowl.

21 The lions roar for their prey
and seek their food from God.

22 The sun rises, and they steal away;
they return and lie down in their dens.

23 Then people go out to their work,
to their labor until evening.

24 How many are your works, Lord!
In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

25 There is the sea, vast and spacious,
teeming with creatures beyond number—
living things both large and small.

26 There the ships go to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

27 All creatures look to you
to give them their food at the proper time.

28 When you give it to them,
they gather it up;
when you open your hand,
they are satisfied with good things.

29 When you hide your face,
they are terrified;
when you take away their breath,
they die and return to the dust.

30 When you send your Spirit,
they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.

31 May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works—

32 he who looks at the earth, and it trembles,
who touches the mountains, and they smoke.
33 I will sing to the Lord all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
34 May my analysis and argument be pleasing to him,
as I rejoice in the Lord.
35 But may sinners vanish from the earth
and the wicked be no more.
Praise the Lord, my soul.
Praise the Lord.

Schweitzer's commentary is excerpted from one of his sermons. "When our wills are united with the will of God, we never take all the goodness and beauty and people and things in life for granted, but we accept them again and again as a gift from him—given that we may serve him with still greater joy and thank him for it..."

In his book, *Reverence for Life*, Schweitzer often reiterates his thesis and theme of an active service to God through hearing and heeding the words of Jesus. Schweitzer asserts that in such service we will especially come to know Jesus more and more and gradually acknowledge him as our master. Additionally, by virtue of increased familiarity with Jesus, we unite more and more with our fellow humans, confident that as a unified front we can help bring about the world Jesus sought to achieve.

May this psalm assist us in gaining perspective on creation, as it so plainly identifies God as the creator of all things, for our purposes, all life. "The earth is full of your creatures." As this passage truly opens the argument of this book, let the words of this psalm open our hearts and minds to the magnificence and sacredness of life. May we realize that we are but one of God's creatures. May we give thanks for our creation, and in giving thanks may we understand that all life is created by God, all life is under His protection, doing His bidding. May we realize and accept that His bidding for us requires that we care and nurture all life.

For this purpose were we made, that through us and our actions His creatures might live as they were intended to live, free from human domination and devastation, able to

enjoy their lives to the fullest extent. May this psalm remind us that we all live and die, that we all inhabit this earth together, and that harm to any of God's creatures is a rebuke of God's kindness and love. Such a rebuke is an unforgivable sin. As the psalm ends: "... may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more." May we in our thoughts and deeds seek to show care and compassion to all creatures, just as we implore the Lord to show His mercy to us.

As we turn our thoughts to God, let us also turn our attention to the requirement for praying, then acting in unison. While an alteration in our attitudes and subsequent alteration of behavior must and will start with each of us individually, let us reflect also on the requisite need for unity. As a large cadre of believers committed to acting with compassion we can effect change as no one individual can. So, as we pray and meditate on the gift of life that has been bestowed upon us, without our asking and without our meriting, let us in this introductory phase start to contemplate and embed in our hearts and minds the transformation in the treatment of animals that a united front of affirmative, active compassion can bring about.

It takes neither intense thought nor imagination to visualize and understand the interlocked nature of all life. There is a fine balance to life on earth, and upsetting that balance anywhere, at any time places life—all life—in peril. For too long we humans have not only acted with individual selfishness, but we have acted selfishly as a species. We have blithely and deliberately ignored the harm that we have caused other life forms on this planet. We have viewed the world as produced and in existence solely for human life and purposes. Only recently has that view begun to shift, as the legitimacy of the "butterfly effect", as it is now commonly understood, is more and more strengthened with each environmental catastrophe that occurs. Only recently has some widespread thought been given to the idea that animals have rights as well, and that we human animals are called to be guarantors of those rights. May we humans, then, pray not only to act in concert with each other, but in concert with all life. More and more may people seek ways of bringing responsible stewardship of the earth, of all life to bear on all our activities.

Chapter 3

We Ask for Mercy and Learn to Give It

In this chapter we discuss the concept of mercy. Mercy is a simple concept. At its basic level mercy involves the ability of one entity with the capacity to wield destructive or harmful results on a second entity, but choosing not to do so. It is an option the first entity need not select, but one it opts for out of compassion.

One of the most effective ancient prayers of mercy was the Kyrie. In the Kyrie we beg for mercy. We repeat three times. *Kyrie eleison*, Lord have mercy. *Christe eleison*, Christ have mercy.

From the website fwdioc.org comes the following disquisition on mercy.

“In reciting the liturgical responses, ‘Lord have mercy... Christ have mercy... Lord have mercy,’ we become like David, repenting of our sins and asking for God’s forgiveness. We become like the blind men begging for Christ to heal our own weaknesses and lack of spiritual vision. We become like the fathers in the Gospel, pleading for Jesus to act in the lives of those we love. In saying *Kyrie eleison* (Lord, have mercy)..., we humbly entrust our entire lives—all our weaknesses, sins, fears and sufferings—and the lives of those we love, to the merciful heart of Christ.

“As... Thomas Howard expressed, this cry for God’s mercy sums up all the pleas of a fallen world. He says, In the Kyrie... we may hear the fathomless cry of the whole race of man ascending to heaven from the depths. Kyrie! goes up from all widows, and all dispossessed and brutalized children, and from all the maimed, and the prisoners and exiles, and from every sick-bed, and indeed from all the wounded beasts, and, we could believe, from all rivers and seas stained with man’s filth and landscapes scarred by his plunder. In the liturgy, somehow, we stand before the Lord in behalf of his whole groaning creation. And beyond the

liturgy: When we hear the groaning of creation, when we see an animal suffering, or some child or hear an ambulance pass, we say ‘*Kyrie eleison!*’ as the liturgy has taught us. We are priests, remember, through our Baptism; and one of the tasks of the priest is to intercede for others who don’t or can’t pray for themselves. This mystical entrusting of all humanity and indeed, all creation, to the infinite mercy of Christ is what we enter into each time we recite the Kyrie...”

Our commentary on the concept of mercy comes from Schweitzer as set forth in the book, *The Animal World of Albert Schweitzer*.

“We can do nothing about the cruelty which exists among nature’s living creatures. We ourselves, however, as people who have learned wisdom, must not train animals to provide entertainment for us by the cruel murder of their poor victims.”

Here, the doctor does acknowledge that cruelty exists in nature, but he adjures all of us never to add to the already existent cruelty. Rather, he insists that it is incumbent upon us to demonstrate as much mercy and compassion as we possibly can muster. Schweitzer recognizes that we humans often, too often, bring pain and suffering to our fellow creatures, often mindlessly and for no valid purpose. Because of our actions Schweitzer calls on us to impose a duty on ourselves to act mercifully wherever and whenever possible.

And from *Animals, Nature and Albert Schweitzer*: “How much effort will it take for us to get men to understand the words of Jesus, ‘Blessed are the merciful’, and to bring them to the realization that their responsibility includes all creatures. But we must struggle with courage.”

Mercy. This is our cry to God to be mindful of our weaknesses and to take them into account in judging us. Even more to the point, the request for mercy is a tacit admission of the differing levels of power between the requester and to whom the request is made. It is an acknowledgment that God reigns supreme over us, that we are indeed, at His mercy.

Animals stand to us in nearly the same position as we stand to God. Though many animals are stronger and faster than we humans, through our intellect, our ability to work in concert, and through our sheer numbers, we are the dominant species on this planet. A

crucial difference—most animals cannot ask us for mercy. By their very existence on earth, and by ours, animals beg for mercy each day. We must give it willingly and often, never waiting for a formal prayer or invocation. They ask to be left unhurt, never needlessly killed or cruelly exploited, never abused or abandoned, never caged or enslaved. Their cries for mercy simply ask us to function as stewards of all life on this planet. Mercy means humans exercise self-restraint and realize that every human action carries with it consequences for all life on earth.

And here let us dwell on a theme that will be recurrent in this book: It is not enough to pray for some kindly quality, mercy in this case. We must pray for the courage, energy, and ability to act on and bring about the desired state of affairs. To pray to be infused with mercy is a start, but only a start. Mercy cannot exist if it is kept in thought alone. Mercy by its very definition requires positive acts of charity and care. Mercy requires an involvement in life, that we take an active role. May we pray then, as we ask God to take an active role in our lives by showing us mercy, to take that same active role with all beings with whom we are involved. May we pray to act affirmatively, to help life that we encounter, to ease pain and suffering as much as we can.

Without ever being asked to do so, let us show mercy in our role of trustee and caretaker by affording animals a chance to live their lives in accordance with their nature. Let us be merciful by not hunting, not eating meat, not destroying habitats, not over breeding or breeding for fighting or racing, by not abandoning animals we have brought into this world. Above all, let us be merciful by adopting and living an affirmative duty of compassion, of care. Let us not only seek to avoid the infliction of harm, but let us positively act to redress harm where we find it. As we seek protection from God's awesome power, may we stay our own hand and offer protection to all the animals that inhabit this planet with us. That is mercy.

Chapter 4

We Acknowledge the Glory of God and Life Itself

All too often many of us overlook the incredible miracle that is life itself. That life can exist at all and flourish in so many manifestations is truly breathtaking. Too often we permit our daily worries and cares to cloud and darken our view of life. We neglect to offer homage to the creator of life, of this magnificence, this miracle—God Himself. Let us acknowledge life for the rare blessing that it is and give due thanks to God for having gifted us with that blessing.

Paul touches on this concept in Acts 17, 24-25:

“The God who made the world and all the things in it, Him being Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

nor by the hands of men is He served, as though He needed anything, for He gives to all life and breath with respect to all things”

We follow Paul with the simple words the angels sang at Jesus’ birth. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

These words are in essence a song of praise both for God and for the life God has made. It is a ringing affirmation of life!

Just two of Schweitzer’s comments will suffice.

“We must realize that all life is valuable and that we are united to all life. From this knowledge comes our spiritual relationship to the universe.”

“Reverence for life affords me my fundamental principal of morality, namely, that good consists in maintaining, assisting and enhancing life...”

Among the most famous and cherished writings of Albert Schweitzer is his gripping depiction of how a reverence for life finally dawned upon him as his ethos, the over-arching ethos that we all must follow. He recounts how he filled page after page with

thoughts and theories until, passing a herd of hippopotamus on the river to his medical station in Gabon, the light dawned upon him regarding a reverence for life. When the door finally opened for Schweitzer, his joy and thanksgiving were immense, for he chanced upon the theory he had long sought: A theory of active compassion in the service of God. Schweitzer gave thanks for this insight, for this gift from above, but he was under no misconception that this was the end of his journey. Being thankful was only a start for Schweitzer. What is important for people is not only to be thankful and grateful for the gifts we receive, but actively to show that gratitude and thanksgiving by leading lives of active mercy and assistance to all. That was truly the doctor's great insight on that river.

Praise, adoration, and thanksgiving. All are given to God by the words of the angels. In a similar fashion, may we heap praise and thanksgiving upon God's most magnificent creation, life itself, upon the miracle of existence. Nature, in its abundance and variety, is an awe-inspiring spectacle. Life exists in remarkable places and under incredible conditions. May we come to the knowledge that life is a creation of God, that as we give Him thanks and praise we must include in that adoration the life forms He brought about. Life itself is a miracle, a pure gift from God that we have done nothing to deserve or merit.

Let us harken back to our own experiences of gift giving. One of the most satisfying experiences we can enjoy is to watch how one of our gifts is properly used for its intended purpose. One of the most effective "thank you" is to accept a gift and then fully utilize it as the donor wished it to be used. There is no greater snub than to accept a gift and then lock it away from view, unattended and unused. Think of God's gift to us in this way. As a present to us He furnishes us with life, and certainly part of His gift is the expectation, the hope, that His precious offering will be used for His purposes. Not only must we thank God in our words, but by our actions as well. May we employ His gift to us of our lives as He would choose for human recipients to do: To be involved in life, actively seeking ways of sharing kindness and love. That is the thanks He deserves.

As we thank God for our lives, let us widen that thanksgiving to all lives, to life itself. If life is a divine gift, then it is worthy of our respect, our care, our compassion, our nurturing. If life is a divine gift then, as the doctor states elsewhere in his writings, what is ethical is to take those actions that preserve and enhance life, all life, avoiding those

actions that bring about the opposite effect. If life is a divine gift, then all life, all lives are precious in the sight of God. Let us realize that this earth was made for all life that resides on it, not just our own. Let us realize that each creature values its life as much as we value ours, and let us realize our special obligation as thinking, spiritual beings, to engage in life-affirming thoughts and deeds.

So as we give thanks for life, may we understand that such thanks are not enough. Praise and adoration of God's creation are not sufficient for ethical human behavior. To affirm life is to practice an active compassion for all life, for truly a part of life is suffering. All creatures suffer. As humans may we not only avoid the infliction of needless suffering, but may we actively pursue regimens of healing and pain relief. We must get involved in life. We must be involved in life. We must stay involved in life. That is what life affirmation requires. That is what leading an ethical life requires. That is the true evidence that we praise and adore God. Give thanks and act so that all life may give thanks as well.

How is that done? We've heard the phrase "a life well lived." For animals, a life well lived is an existence an animal can live according to its abilities, inclinations, and desires, as free from human encroachment and interference as can be. Animals who are able to do that say "thank you" by living fully the life God intended them to pursue. Humans give thanks to God by affording animals that opportunity.

Chapter 5

Prayer of Petition

This chapter sets forth and offers commentary on an important prayer, the prayer of petition. This prayer is a petition made in the name of all the people collected, gathered together in this world. View this as a supplication, a request that includes our personal needs and those of others. We ask the assistance of God in addressing whatever needs confront us, be they physical, emotional, or spiritual.

This concept is beautifully set forth in the prayer Jesus left us: “Give us this day our daily bread.” Matt. 6:11.

According to the Prayer Coaching Principles website,

“Petition is a privileged element of prayer; therefore, we must be mindful that what we’re requesting (asking) God for is in accordance with His will and purpose. One important note to remember is that He knows what we need of even before we ask (Matthew 6:8). Ultimately, the prayer of petition is a privilege that comes with being in relationship with a loving and caring Father.”

Simply put, a prayer of petition is a request to God that asks Him to fulfill a need. By prayer of petition, we acknowledge our dependence on God. Indeed, St. Paul mentions such a prayer in his letter to the Philippians: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition, along with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”

Our prayer of choice is taken from the tradition of the blessing of the pets. “Blessed are you, Lord God, maker of all living creatures. You called forth fish in the sea, birds in the air and animals on the land. You inspired Saint Francis to call all of them his brothers and sisters. We ask you to bless this pet. By the power of your love, enable it to live according to your plan. May we always praise you for all your beauty in creation. Blessed are you, Lord our God, in all your creatures! Amen.”

In one of his sermons, Schweitzer added this poignant comment: “Before suffering drives us to pray, ‘Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,’ we should pray for it as men of will and action, and shall find the joy of our life in such prayer.”

Schweitzer embellishes and clarifies his thoughts on God’s will by writing in addition that God’s will must inform our lives, that we must be open to the receipt and sensation of that will within us. If we can accomplish that, Schweitzer is certain that we can then share the hopes and fears of others and can better render assistance to those in need. He states once more the importance of a life of active compassion and assistance to all with whom we come in contact. He truly believes that such a life, if led by enough of us on earth, will play a paramount role in bringing the kingdom of God into being.

As we commence our disquisition, let us bring to mind one chief reason for prayer, namely, to present our needs to God and in return, to discover and know the true, living God. Let us offer our petitions, a few of which are set forth below, but let us also open our hearts and minds to the presence of universality of the living God. God is the God of life, and all life is His. Through our prayers may we come to know this God, each day seeking a better and closer relationship with Him. As we know Him better, may we know, respect, and love His ways and His compassion for us. As he shares His compassion with us, may we “pay it forward” and share that same compassion with those other lives on earth that He created. That is knowing God.

May all of us, emulating St. Francis, dwell on the heavenly gift of life. Nothing is as important as life, a gift from God to us and to all creatures on earth. As we partake of life, let us consider that every living thing on this planet wishes to do the same, to live life as best as possible according to its capabilities and opportunities. Let us rejoice in our lives, and let us afford others, humans and animals, that same chance to rejoice. For life is so rare and unique it is truly a wondrous gift.

As we reflect, let us expand the sentiments in the blessing of the pets to all animals, all creatures, all life. Let us view each life as a brother or sister. Let us show love and compassion to all life, permitting life to flourish according to God’s plan. If the Lord is blessed in all His creatures as the prayer intones, then we humans must respect and protect all God’s creatures, reveling in the beauty of creation, joyous that we are a part of

that creation, and determined to promote and enhance that which God has placed on earth. May we harness the power of God's love and channel it toward all life, all lives, with which we come in contact.

May God inspire us as he did St. Francis to denominate animals as our brothers and sisters, and may we, as part of His plan, spread mercy and clemency and a reverence for life throughout the world.

As we implore God's mercy, we tacitly recognize His sovereignty and authority over us. Only a being with control and influence over us can exert mercy. Otherwise it is fruitless to ask. In acknowledging our status vis-a-vis God and our consequent need to pray for His forgiveness, let us dwell for a moment on the similarities that exist in the relationships between God and humans and between animals and humans. While we do not enjoy the creative power of the Almighty, unfortunately, humans have evolved to be able to wield a destructive force that is instant, catastrophic, and global in nature. We pray to God to stay His terrible power, yet we knowingly unleash our own destructive powers on the rest of creation. Is that because the rest of creation does not seek our appeasement with their prayers? Or is it because we cannot, or will not, hear their prayers? Consider this. Although animal life may not bring their petitions to an altar as we do, they go us one better. They approach God by seeking to conduct their lives according to God's design.

If we view life as having been created by God, then, as stated earlier, His creatures serve Him best by living the lives He intended, in the manner He intended. Our own choices may often put us at odds with God's plan, requiring that we seek His mercy for our errant ways. But our own choices also prevent other beings from leading fulfilling lives, following the instincts and capabilities He bestowed upon them. As we seek mercy from God for our own transgressions, let us show mercy—God's mercy—to all animals against whom we have also transgressed. By living out their lives as God set forth these animals enjoy God's mercy.

When we interfere with God's plans, often with devastating results, the animals who are precluded from perfecting their lives seek God's mercy from us, the people who

denied it to them by our treatment of them. Let us truly live and let live, drawing closer to God by affording animals the opportunity to perfect their lives, unhindered, but aided wherever possible, by human choice and agency. This, then, is our prayer of petition, uttered by humans in the name of and on behalf of all who share this planet with us, all who are gathered together on this earth.

Chapter 6

We Reflect Upon Paul's Letter

The epistle—a letter in the biblical sense—is a letter provided to impart teaching and instruction on one or more topics. In much older times, letter writing was one of the chief methods of communication. The ability to read and write was not widespread, so those who could read, and especially those who could write (i.e., scribes) were highly prized and in great demand. As we peruse and discuss Paul's letter below, let us place ourselves back in his time, imagining the excitement and anticipation of Paul's audience at being able to receive and share Paul's singular thoughts regarding the glory of God's creation, taken from the trad4christ website:

“An epistle is a letter. The Epistles in the Bible are letters to the first Christians who were at a distance from the Apostles. These letters contain advice or instruction.

“Sometimes the Epistle...is from the Acts of the Apostles or the Apocalypse or the Old Testament. But always it is from a book of the Bible. The Bible is the word of God. God is its real author. The Bible contains lessons from God for men.

“The Epistle...gives instruction. It teaches a lesson, sometimes several lessons, to help men grow in the knowledge and love of God or their neighbor.”

Our epistle is taken from Paul's letter to the Romans,
Romans 8:18-22:

From Suffering to Glory

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly awaits the unveiling of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but on account of Him who subjected it in hope; because even the creation itself shall be freed from the slavery of corruption

into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that all the creation groans together and labors in birth together until now.”

We'll start our analysis and argument with comments from Schweitzer as reprinted in the book *The Animal World of Dr. Schweitzer*. “St. Paul speaks of the longing of the whole creation for early redemption in the eighth chapter (verses 18-24) of the Epistle to the Romans. His deep sympathy with the animal creation finds expression in those verses.”

With St. Paul may we be mindful of the suffering of all creatures, and as fellow sufferers may we expand our understanding into an active empathy and sympathy. Seeing the agony of another must not only rouse us to pity, it must awaken in us the desire to serve, to assist, to relieve suffering wherever possible and never to cause pain unless there is no other choice open to us. There is a commonality of life. There is a community of life. We are all in this world together, and our actions and inaction have consequences for all other species.

Let us vow, then, first to understand the interconnectedness of life, and then to assume our role as contributors to the betterment of life for all, to the extent humanly possible. May we not shy from involvement in life, but rather let us affirmatively seek such involvement, acknowledging that all creatures endure pain and are striving to find ways and means of ameliorating such pain. For if the Apostle Paul is correct that animals will find a place in eternity along with the human animal, then surely all other inhabitants of this earth are worthy of our protection, care, cultivation and husbandry. If animals are part of our eternal future, then let us treat them in the present as we'd wish to be treated, with thoughtfulness, kindness, and tenderness.

So, as the introduction to this section sets forth, let us employ this epistle for its lesson. Especially may we be aided by Paul's thoughts and words to increase our knowledge and love of God and neighbor. As for Paul, he reiterates one of the common and most deeply held beliefs: God is the creator of all life. Every creature owes his life ultimately to God's decision, God's choice to bring it about, and we are called and urged to view that decision and choice as indicative of God's love.

Second, Paul reminds us of the universality of suffering. To live is to bear pain. No one, no creature is exempt. In this commonality of suffering let us understand our

similarity to and union with all the animals. Each one of us must endure affliction while on this earth, and while we await liberation from pain, “bondage” as Paul terms it, let us remember that earth is home to many creatures, each with an equal right to be here.

Finally, as we dwell on the equal right of God’s creation to share the bounty of the earth, and as we acknowledge their shared suffering, may this realization bring about in us, as the introductory portion of this section suggests, an increase in love for our neighbor. As we grow in love, may God assist us in expanding that love to encompass all His creatures, all our neighbors, all life. May that love impel us not only to a shared empathy for all life, but to an active desire to enhance life and alleviate suffering wherever we find it. While we wait and hope for the Lord to deliver us from suffering, may we do what we can to hasten that situation here and now.

Chapter 7

The Gospel

In the gospel God speaks to us through the words of Jesus. The gospel writers sought to transmit the important life events and teachings of our Savior. We are indeed fortunate that so many of the sayings of Jesus have been captured, preserved, and conveyed for our edification. As we read the words of Jesus, let each thought sink in slowly for its full effect, and as we ponder the remarks of Jesus, let us give thanks and rejoice at their power to transform the lives of people across many centuries. Through His words may the spirit of Jesus incline us to the behavior He desires for us.

Our gospel reading is the beloved Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7. This isn't the entire sermon, but the reader is adjured to spend time reading and contemplating the words of Jesus in their entirety. For our purposes and analysis and argument we choose the following:

The Beatitudes

“And opening His mouth He began to teach them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you whenever they revile you, and they persecute you, and they say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in haven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Love Your Enemies

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and you shall hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you, so that you may prove to be sons of your Father in heaven; because He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and He sends His rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your friends only, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? You therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

The Golden Rule

“Therefore, whatever you want people to do to you, you also do to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Enter in through the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way which leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in through it.

“O how narrow the gate, and confined is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

To commence our analysis and argument, here are some introductory thoughts from Dr. Schweitzer.

“The ethics of reverence for life is nothing but Jesus’ great commandment to love—a commandment that is reached by thinking; religion and thinking meet in the mysticism of belonging to God through love.

“And finally, ‘The ethic of reverence for life is Jesus’s ethic of love widened to universality.’”

Implicit in these passages is Schweitzer’s understanding that suffering will continue as long as the world continues, as long as life exists. As such, he opines that we humans have a commandment from Jesus to love, to love all creatures. Again, this is not a passive love of one who merely notes the sufferings of animals. For the doctor, our love must be active, involved. We must enter into this world on a daily basis, doing our best to alleviate and to prevent suffering to the maximum extent possible.

Our analysis and argument is twofold: Let us dwell first on love, our love, broadened enough to be universal, to include all life. Second, let us mull over how to reify our love, how to bring our affection for life to bear on all that life that we encounter, how to engage in an active compassion.

First, universality. For too long humans have incorrectly prided themselves on being the most important—if not the only—creatures of note on this planet. We have excluded, with very few and only recent exceptions, all other life, especially wild or feral life, from legal and moral standing and protection. It is high time we view *all* life as having merit, as having worth, as an end in itself, not a means to some human goal of greed or exploitation. Life comes from and is a gift from God. As such, all creatures on earth must be viewed as God's creatures, God's creation, entitling them to the same love and consideration we mainly bestow on our fellow humans. Limited love is not true love. Unlimited love is the watchword of the day. May our love for life, for lives, be unlimited, always expanding to meet the requirements of the creatures we encounter.

Second, an active compassion. It is not enough simply to love life and lives in the abstract. Real love, the love of Jesus, requires an active compassion, an affirmation that life is to be lived to the fullest. Living life to the fullest means getting involved, seeking to render help and assistance, treating and easing suffering, and in general seeking to make life better for all to enjoy. As we see and come across opportunities to be of service to any other life, let us not sit by idly or pass by looking the other way. Let us embrace life, with all the joys and sufferings life brings, seeking ever to augment the joy and decrease the suffering.

An interesting and unique feature of the Sermon on the Mount is how Jesus juxtaposes conditions that are usually seen as being the opposite of how he describes and terms them. The poor in spirit shall attain the kingdom of heaven. Those who mourn shall be comforted. The meek shall inherit the earth, and so on. Jesus turns expected and standard philosophy and moral guidance on its head, in essence preaching a message of love and compassion, even in situations where the opposite sentiment would seem to be the norm. Be merciful. Love your enemies. Most important, do unto others as you'd have done to you. Remarkable! Rather than seeking to exploit or use another soul, rather than seeing that person as a means to some end of ours, Jesus urges us to view all people as

ends in themselves, worthy of the same consideration and love that we usually reserve for our own being.

As we meditate on these momentous sayings of Jesus, let us heed the guidance of Dr. Schweitzer and make them universal, applicable to all life and all lives, not just humans. Let us be meek to all animal life and always show mercy. Let us understand and agree that animals are God's creatures and as such, let us treat animals as we would want to be treated were we in their place. Most of all let us seek and find that narrow gate leading to universal compassion. Let us enter through that gate, confident that in extending the hand of friendship to all life we are doing the will of Jesus. May our ears be fully open to the message of the Sermon on the Mount. May we act on it and share it with all lives with which we come in contact. Through our thoughts and deeds may the message of the Sermon on the Mount indeed become universal, and through those thoughts and deeds may we encourage others to join us in passing through the narrow gate.

Chapter 8

The Sermon

In my humble view, the shorter the sermon, the better. Let me do my best to follow my own dictum. Our quoted selections, biblical passages, and follow-on analysis and arguments imply and expand upon a very simple premise: All life on this earth is a product of a conscious decision by God to bring it about. It is God's will that life exists, and as such, life is to be accorded the very same treatment and respect as any of God's commandments. It seems ludicrous to revere the spoken or written word of God, while at the same time needlessly killing or injuring the living product of His very work and design. So the first part of our adjuration in the homily is point out the need to respect life, all life, as a gift from God.

Second, as the cited writings make clear, simple respect is the very minimum standard of behavior and involvement expected of humans. Stopping at respect without further development does not reach the level of solidarity with life that Schweitzer and others espouse. To live is to suffer, and all creatures suffer. While respect is the first step on our journey, care and compassion for God's creations is indicated if we humans are to progress. Just as we seek (and sometimes offer) care and compassion to and from other humans in times of difficulty, we are called to offer that same care and compassion to all animals, all life, as much as is humanly possible. Very few would argue that this is a perfect world, and often it does seem that nature is indeed "red in tooth and claw." All the more reason that compassion should be our watchword.

Finally, we humans are charged not only with striving to think benevolently, but to demonstrate compassion in all we do, in each and every interaction dealing with animals, with life. We are called to an active caring. We are called affirmatively to seek ways of reducing suffering and enhancing the lives of all creation. We are called to be stewards of the earth, seeking methods of protecting and enhancing habitats so life therein may flourish. We are called to avoid the needless causation or infliction of harm. Yes, there are times when humans must injure another creature, but let such times be the rare

exception to our behavior, and implemented thoughtfully and regretfully, and only as a last resort when no other humane decision is possible. Let us take an active role in protecting and preserving this earth, realizing that it is home to numerous species, each of which has the same right to be here as do we.

For men in particular, let us overcome the tendency to believe that manliness is shown only by acts of destruction, killing, maiming, and torture. On the contrary, let us see manliness and strength as reflected in and demonstrated by acts of gentleness and compassion, as Jesus did. May we come to believe and understand that acts of compassion are actually creative in nature, as they set the recipient of such acts on a better and perhaps new path in life, a path not attainable without our caring. Let us persevere in compassion, even amidst and despite the jeers and jibes of those who see benevolence as weakness. It is never an act of weakness to help someone live and thrive. It is never an act of weakness to help life prosper. Such an act makes us creators, allows us to share in the power of God, as helping life prosper is accomplishing and aiding God's plan. That is not weakness. It is strength and courage.

To sum up, humans are called to lives of active beneficence and charity. Due to our enormous mental acuity and ability to organize, we humans have a choice to make. We have the power and ability—blindly or with eyes open—to engage in acts of unparalleled destruction to the environment and all who live there. Indeed, many such acts have already been recorded and taken place. They occur in the main because humans see elements of the environment as means to an end, usually human greed, exploitation, or enjoyment. While a few shining lights have advocated for a different outcome, the history of humanity on earth is a sad one, replete with selfish, unthinking, uncritical decisions. Countless lives have been lost and species destroyed through human arrogance, willful indifference, and outright cruelty.

As we go out into the world, let us choose to act with compassion, to act with affirmative love of creation, seeking both to ameliorate our environment in general, and individually to care for all life in that environment to the maximum extent practicable. It is our choice. We can either amend our ways and be managers and caretakers of God's creations, or we can continue on our current course of killing, exploitation, and injuring those creations, ignoring and mocking God as we do so.

Choose compassion. Choose an active caring. Choose to be responsible for life, and in so doing choose to honor God. As Dr. Schweitzer said, "May our lives be our argument."

Chapter 9

We State Our Beliefs

A credo is a statement of faith and belief, a guiding principle or set of principles. Sometime we need to aver the obvious in a formal way perhaps to refute or convince those who take issue with our beliefs, or perhaps just to convince ourselves of those beliefs. These formal pronouncements often take the form of a credo, an official exposition of principles and tenets. The following credo is one of the most basic expositions; indeed, it is one of the most critical for our understanding of our role and position in the world, for it casts God as maker of all things, creator of all on the earth.

Here are a few lines of an old, familiar statement of beliefs, the Nicene Creed.

We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

These few lines so nicely enumerate our shared beliefs, the most important of which is that all things on earth are God's creation, including human hearts and minds. As the creed also states, however, there is much unseen by us that is still in the province of God's kingdom, much that we humans have yet to understand, or if we do understand, we have yet to bring about. There is still so much to be accomplished, still so much of God's reign that we have not yet internalized.

First, let's look at two applicable writings of Dr. Schweitzer.

“The last petition of the Lord's Prayer has again its original meaning for us as a prayer of deliverance from the dominion of the evil powers of the world.

“But there can be no Kingdom of God in the world without the Kingdom of God in our hearts.”

The coming of the kingdom of God is a major topic of concern and interest for Schweitzer. In his writings he makes clear his firm belief that God's kingdom will not locate itself in the world until it first locates itself in the hearts of people. The kingdom will be present, Schweitzer feels, when people act in accordance with what he sees as God's wishes; namely, an active compassion, deliberate and effective acts of mercy. For Schweitzer, while the coming of the kingdom should be an overriding concern of Christianity, he makes it abundantly plain that it is we humans who must first embed that same kingdom in our own hearts. The kingdom will come, but not until that kingdom is firmly planted in the hearts of all people.

Belief! Belief in God betokens belief in God's Kingdom. As we recite and meditate upon the Creed may we affirm our faith that God is the creator of all, that all life exists because of His choice. May that faith progress from belief to knowledge, from hope to certainty, from the possible to the absolute. May we absolutely acknowledge God's power as the Almighty. As the Almighty, He is due a reverence befitting the Supreme Designer. Let us extend that reverence to all the creatures of His Kingdom, for they are His works too. As we deem the Lord to be the grand architect, may we be steadfast in our knowledge that His blueprints include a plan for all animals, for all life. His creatures have an equal claim to possess this earth. May we rejoice in our obligation and opportunity to participate in God's plans by showing compassion to the animals, by facilitating and enhancing their lives, by allowing them to enjoy His Kingdom.

As we recite and ponder the Creed, may we also seek a unity of thought and action with other humans. The creed, even though recited individually, is a collective tenet, a shared belief. As we think about the grandeur of the Lord's domain and our duty to share that domain with other lives, may we realize that sharing is a communal act, an act requiring organization and human unity to effectuate. No one person can bring about the changes needed to protect the millions of species of life under threat by human arrogance and harm. While each of us must seek and bring the Kingdom of God to bear on our hearts and minds and to dwell there forever, only if each of us, individually receptive to the Kingdom, actively shares his or her faith with others, can the Kingdom, a world of peace and compassion, be erected on earth.

But even more than sharing is indicated and required. To bring about the sought after kingdom we must be creators as God is. Though we may not be makers of all that is seen and unseen, through the practice of an active compassion, showing mercy rather than cruelty, easing and reducing suffering rather than being its cause, we can in our own ways bring a small portion of the Kingdom of God unto existence. Every act of kindness is a creative act, as it places the recipient on a different trajectory than was the original case. Every act of kindness shares an infinitesimal part of God's power. United, these acts will facilitate the creation of His Kingdom. Show mercy to all, as you'd have it shown to you.

Faith. Unity. Creation. May we place our faith in God, doing our best to accept all that comes our way as the will of the Almighty. Be it good, bad, or indifferent, it is life. May our faith sustain us in times of difficulty. May we never forget our faith when times are good. May that faith impel us onward to seek communion with others, humans and animals. All life. May our faith cross all boundaries and overcome all obstacles that separate us, most of which we place in our own paths. May our faith in God unify us in seeing that life is worth living, and that all life strives for the same end, fully to live the life God has made available to us to the best of our abilities. May our faith help us recognize that God's love is made manifest in the lives of all His creation, each of which seeks a fulfilled life. Finally, may we share in God's creative power by rendering assistance to all life to the extent that we are able. Whenever we assist any life we change that life for the better, only if even for a moment. Whenever we help any life we render that life more able to live fully according to its talents, as God intended. Whenever we help any life we bring it, and ourselves, closer to God's plan.

The Pledge

I hope that the readings, analysis, and arguments have prepared the reader for entry into the second part of the journey, the part wherein we delineate and expand upon many of the wrongdoings perpetrated by humans against other animals and life, and then prescribe recommendations to address and redress those acts of wrongdoing. As a connector to that journey and as testimony that the reader has grasped the basics of a

reverence for life, here is a formal pledge, a document to draw upon the lessons and ideas just provided and to assist us in aligning our thoughts with the philosophy necessary to effectuate useful action—namely, a reverence for life.

Study the Pledge. Sign it. Date it. Live it. By living it you prepare yourself for the tasks ahead, for full participation in an existence of affirmative love and compassion, for a full participation in life.

My Pledge

I, the undersigned, pledge to adopt a reverence for life as my ethos, as my governing philosophy. I make this pledge freely and in full awareness of the commitment to affirming the value and primacy of life that it entails. I pledge to treat all animals, all life, as ends in themselves, as creations of God having dignity and worth by virtue of their very existence here on earth. I pledge to avoid harming or exploiting any life, and I pledge to avoid the killing of any life, directly or indirectly caused by me, unless there is no other available alternative. I pledge to live a life of active compassion, seeking to reduce or alleviate suffering wherever I find it, not standing idly by on the sidelines when an active involvement is called for. I pledge to treat all creatures as I would be treated, spreading and making the love set forth in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount universal.

Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Part II Putting a Reverence for Life into Practice

Introduction

Now that we have worked our way through the introductory chapters and have signed our Pledge, we are ready to proceed. Part I has been all about preparation and the beginning of change. It concerned itself with laying a proper mental and spiritual foundation for what is to come. Through prayer, reflection, and analysis and argument, we seek, we hope to successfully alter our concept of humanity's place in the world. We seek to begin to alter our consciousness of the lot of animals, from entities here solely for human ends, especially dreadful as some of the ends are, to creatures of God, deserving of their place on earth, and deserving of our respect and stewardship.

Part I is a journey from notions of abuse and exploitation of animals to their care and nurturing. It is a journey from an attitude of cruelty and indifference to a sense of love and active compassion. It is a journey from an anthropocentric view of humans as God's only worthwhile creation, to a view that engages and accepts all life as stemming from Him, thus worthy of and demanding our empathy, sympathy, and charity. Finally, the first part of this book is a move from a mindset of man's pre-eminence and dominance over animals, to frankly, a much more nuanced, sounder, and wide-ranging spiritual mindset, supported by biblical passages and commentary, that animals are God's creatures as well, and as such are entitled to the same veneration and wonder that we bestow upon God's word. Part II challenges us and says in effect, all well and good, but now what? What are you going to do about the woefully inhumane treatment of animals currently on display in all parts of the globe? What are you going to do to demonstrate your love of all God's creatures? What are you going to do to evolve from a philosophy of injurious misuse to a philosophy of caring intervention? What are you going to do to bring about the Kingdom of God on this earth for all life? What actions will we take, must we take, to follow Jesus, to bring His spirit into us, and heed the urging of Dr. Schweitzer?

Part II of this book will continue our journey with signposts suggested by biblical references, writings of Dr. Schweitzer, and assorted prayers, commentary, along with analysis and arguments. Part II will also be a trek, a sojourn, as our journey will bring into sharp focus many of the acts of inhumanity perpetuated against animals. Many of those signposts will sadden and anger us. Good! May that sadness and anger spur us onward toward the ultimate goal here: Our creation of and enlistment in the army of like-minded people who seek only to bring about a caring environment, a biosphere of love and compassion. May that sadness and anger impel us to find and inaugurate solutions that we can implement to change or cease those acts of inhumanity. Through those solutions may we help to bring about God's Kingdom on earth, a Kingdom of affirmative caring under the ethos of a reverence for life.

We make the same disclaimers for Part II as for Part I. The format of a spiritual voyage is used for this purpose only, to give shape, structure and continuity to our argument and effort. This book proselytizes for no particular religion, faith or sect, only that the spirit of Jesus may penetrate and inform every heart and mind.

Dirige nos, Domine!

Chapter 10

We Offer Ourselves

Here, I'll provide some initial commentary of the offertory itself before proceeding to thoughts of Dr. Schweitzer and our analysis and arguments. An offering is something that is given to God as part of a religious worship. Consider it a gift, present, or tribute. But there is so much more to an offering! Ultimately the crucial gifts that we lay at the altar are ourselves, our entire beings, our complete souls. There is no greater gift for us to offer than to offer our entire being, our entire selves to the spirit of Jesus, to be totally committed to being open to His presence.

Now let us examine some related thoughts from Dr. Schweitzer.

“And now one last point. Jesus says: I am with you to comfort you and lift you up above the world and all the experience it brings.”

Schweitzer continues this line of thought by arguing that, to the extent we are in a deep spiritual relationship with Jesus, to that same extent will Jesus comfort us, providing respite from the troubles and sufferings that befall us. For Schweitzer, the spirit of Jesus enables and offers solace and succor, relief from pain and confidence and joy in life. If we open ourselves to his spirit, if we offer ourselves totally to him, then peace and blessedness will be ours for the asking.

Schweitzer additionally takes several lines of philosophy and ethics to task for being unabashedly anthropocentric, for focusing entirely on relations between people. True ethics, as found in a reverence for life, occurs when people offer themselves, their hearts, their love, their merciful actions to all creatures, to the entire world.

We are given four thoughts upon which to dwell in our analysis and argument: The offertory is our opportunity to offer ourselves to God and to accept what He wills for us in our lives. The offertory is our chance to unite our lives with those of others, similarly situated and of similar belief, such that we may become allied with God and with each other in our striving. The offertory is an occasion to work together to bring about the

Kingdom of God here on earth. And last, the offertory permits us the occasion to strive to bring that Kingdom of God into play for all creatures, all life, not just humans.

First, we offer ourselves. This is more than placing money in a basket, or even carrying the gifts to the altar. What the offertory requires of us is that we give ourselves, and of ourselves, heart and soul, to God. The Lord has no need of our money. He needs our involvement, our “oneness” with Him. He does not need the signs, the trappings of faith. He needs our complete and total faith in Him and His works. In the offertory let us commit ourselves totally to Jesus. Use us, Jesus, for Your purposes. We give ourselves utterly to you, waiting patiently for Your Command. We are Yours, O Lord. Through the offertory may we unclutter and open wide the lines of communication so we can hear and heed Your call. In this offertory may we empty ourselves of any excess baggage, of any preconceived notions or ideas, of any noise or static that will impede the flow of truth. May we listen, resolved to hear and understand the sublime message of the Lord. We are here, Jesus. We present ourselves. We stand ready to pay strict attention to Your presence and Your words.

Second, as we make a gift of ourselves completely to Jesus, may we realize and comprehend that communal thought and action are truly necessary. Yes, in one sense the offertory is an individual effort, as we stand individually before God proclaiming our faith. But examine our surroundings as we stand there. Together as a community we offer ourselves entirely to the Lord. How much more powerful and effective is this combined effort? How much more pleasing to God is unanimity of spirit, purpose, and intention? May we realize that we are a part of a greater whole, a single cog in a grand machine of faith. Celebrate then our community. Celebrate all who join in offering their all to God.

This is the key to our success and to the success of Jesus here on earth. We present ourselves individually, but we prepare ourselves to act in concert with each other, with all beings. Earth is but a tiny speck in the universe, and we who inhabit it are inextricably linked with one another by life itself. Life is what brings us together, gives us commonality, a shared existence. There is only so much area on this planet, only so many resources, and all must partake of these limited goods in order to exist and thrive. Yes, we present ourselves individually in the offertory, but we await a shared inspiration for a

common cause. That cause is the preservation and enhancement of life, and it will take all of us united in combined effort to bring it about.

Third, why make such offerings? Such a commitment? What do we seek? The answer is the Kingdom of God present on earth. Not at some faraway future point in time, but now. But let us be certain we know exactly what that entails. As an individual, as a group of motivated believers, through our love and compassion we can help Jesus bring about the promised Kingdom of God. By giving all to God, by holding nothing back, we can hasten the arrival of His Kingdom. By making a Reverence for Life our guiding, overarching ethos, we can hasten the day of blessedness. Let us then, alone and in unison, commit ourselves totally to Jesus. Let us have no doubt of what to expect. This is more than lip service. This is more than a mindless recitation of prayers and readings. This is an affirmative compassion to which we commit ourselves every day. This is offering ourselves to Jesus without reservation, and being ready to act according to His wishes. If we can do this alone and collectively, making universal the love of Jesus through our words and deeds, we will speed up the arrival of His Kingdom on earth.

Finally, as we strive to hasten the Kingdom, may we always call to mind that His Kingdom includes all His creatures, all life. Through the offertory we pledge ourselves to Jesus in thought and deed. We vow and avow positive acts of care and compassion. May these acts be all encompassing. May these acts embrace all life on earth, because His Kingdom includes all life and belongs to all life. Because His Kingdom is promised to all. Let us render our compassion universal, broad enough to include, shelter, protect, and where there is pain and suffering treat, all life with which we come in contact. As we give ourselves to the Lord through Jesus, may we give ourselves thoroughly to His creation. Through acts of caring, by widening our net of compassion to include all life, may we, solely and as a community, take action to bring about the Kingdom of God for everyone, for every creature.

Chapter 11

We Thank God

Gratitude is a critical human emotion, as one who is grateful acknowledges the beneficial acts of another being. To be an ingrate is a deadly human flaw, as ingratitude betokens a willful dismissal of the kindness of others, a taking for granted that other entities will act on our behalf. Just as we acknowledge God as the creator of all things, it is incumbent upon us to show gratitude for that creation, for our very lives.

From the Home of the Mother website:

“The reason for this [section] is to thank God for all of his gifts, for all of the favors that he has granted us throughout the history of salvation. Recognizing his greatness and recognizing his works implies two attitudes:

In the first place, an attitude of thanksgiving because these works have been done freely in our souls so that we can reach salvation.

At the same time, recognizing the greatness of God implies a second attitude, that of praise. We praise God because these works are truly magnificent, these works are great, and these works are truly worthy of an all-powerful God, of a God who loves.”

To start us off in our assessing and thinking, here is an excerpted but highly relevant piece from Schweitzer’s *A Reverence for Life*. “Those who thank God much are the truly wealthy. So our inner happiness depends not on what we experience, but on the degree of our gratitude to God, whatever the experience...”

The doctor alleges further that an ungrateful person can never know God, much less himself. In our prayers, the doctor urges, let us strive for oneness with God through thanksgiving, through gratitude for his many creations, which of course includes us. In our prayer of thanksgiving Schweitzer exhorts all people to pray for the strength and ability to assist others, in prayer and in actuality. Give thanks to God by rendering all

necessary aid to any of God's creatures in need of such assistance. That is the best way to give thanks.

Let us give thanks to God. Let us call to mind our many blessings, the many gifts God has bestowed. May we act with gratitude for all those gifts and blessings, fully conscious of how undeserving we are. God's gifts are provided to us without reservation or any obligation for a quid pro quo. They are provided freely, even without our asking. They are made available to us, even if we choose to ignore them, not accept delivery, or fail to act upon them. We have the ability to accept them blindly, and selfishly, but that's not gratitude, is it? No thanks from us can ever be sufficient recompense for this generosity. That said, and acknowledging our human frailty and limitations, may we never cease proclaiming "Thank you, God."

Let us in our gratitude focus on the greatest gift of all—our very lives. May we always view our lives, our creation, as evidence of God's overarching love for us. Let us pause for a moment and consider the miracle of life. Consider that miracle, consider how unlikely it is that we are even here, and in that consideration may we realize that in relation to this gift from God, our single most heartfelt and effective manifestation of appreciation is to use our lives for His purposes. We best express our gratitude by using His wondrous gift, our own lives, to fulfill and complete the tasks He has set before us to accomplish. Are we required to do this? No. We can as many people do, accept a gift without thanks and without any thought of reciprocity. But that route leads to pure selfishness and is the polar opposite of what the love and respect for God contemplates. Show gratitude by seeking to accomplish the tasks that God sends our way.

One such task is to live a life of affirmative compassion, to render aid and assistance to others who are in need. May we give thanks for our lives by providing aid and comfort to those struggling with their existence. May we discharge our debt to the Lord by showering those who are downtrodden and despondent with compassion and care. May we render thanks by helping others to elevate themselves such that they, too, will seek their own ways of discharging their obligations to God. May we understand that in helping others, we form a united group of believers who in turn seek new members to help and then bring to the fold. May we never be satisfied until those to whom we

provide assistance are also thanking God and seeking their own opportunities to serve others.

Finally, as part of our being grateful, may we never forget our obligations to those who cannot thank God as we can, the animals. They love their lives as much as we humans love ours, and in a sense, as we should also be doing, they show their appreciation for life by acting in the manner He intended. As a reward for our existence on earth, may we give thanks for the chance that God bestows on us to be stewards to and trustees of all creatures, to all life that reflects that magnificence of His works. So while we seek to help and serve the downcast, let us extend that help and service to the animals. By our prayers, our caring, and our acts of kindness may we do His will, caring for all His creatures, giving thanks and giving back the blessings and opportunities provided us. By extending our circle of compassion to the animals, indeed to all life as much as we can, may we indeed achieve “true communion with Him.”

Chapter 12

We Dedicate Ourselves to a Higher Purpose

A consecration may be viewed as a dedication to a special purpose or service. The word consecration literally means association with the sacred. Further, a consecration is to make holy or to dedicate to a higher purpose. A thing consecrated may be regarded as dedicated to God. In some ways it places those at the consecration in the presence of God.

Dr. Schweitzer comments as follows: “He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word, ‘Follow thou me,’ and sets to us the tasks that He has to fulfill for our time.”

Jesus, Schweitzer goes on to add, will reveal himself to us in our work, our tasks, our duties, our pain, and our conflict. If we heed the spirit of Jesus and let that spirit permeate our very being, Jesus will manifest himself to us through our activity, through what we do when emboldened by that spirit. May we dedicate ourselves to a higher cause by our association with Jesus. Again, for Schweitzer, Jesus is present through our active participation in life, in confronting and meeting all that challenges that life offers us. Filled with the spirit of Jesus, if we embrace these challenges, Schweitzer avers, we will know Jesus more closely and fully than ever, and with that knowledge will come our total involvement in that higher purpose: Making the love of Jesus universal.

The consecration has traditionally been thought of as an offering of bread and wine, an offering of goods, of things. Without our presence, however, the consecration lacks an immediacy. Without our presence and participation, active and in prayer, Jesus remains hidden from us. Let us take this opportunity to allow Jesus to come into our hearts. Let us offer Him everything. Let us give Him every aspect of our lives, joys and sorrows, toil and rest, pain and happiness.

All life is His. Our lives are His. But only if we give them willingly and unconditionally to Him. He calls out to us. He offers Himself to us. He is always there. But we must meet Him halfway. We must give of ourselves. We must trust in Him. By this offering may we cross that threshold and be linked with the Savior. In unity with Him may we offer Him our entire life unconditionally. May we hold nothing back from Him; rather, let us give Him everything, every day. May this offering be a metaphor for our existence, as we give all of ourselves, our entire essence, to Jesus. As Schweitzer writes, through offering Him our pain, suffering, joy, elation, our peaks and valleys, our every human moment, we will learn who He is. And more importantly, by learning who He is, we will learn who we are and why we are here: To allow His spirit to enter into us openly and completely, and armed with that spirit to complete the work He started on earth.

As we offer ourselves to Christ, let us also be mindful of those who cannot make such an offering, the animals. We humans are blessed with knowledge and much understanding, and we can utilize that knowledge in the offering we present to Jesus. We are fortunate to be able to forge a relationship with the Lord. May we build upon our good fortune and seek to render Christ's blessings to our neighbors the animals. As we offer our trials, our suffering, our discomfort, our fears to Jesus, may we never forget that animals toil and feel pain and fear as well. May we never be oblivious to the fact that animals suffer, often greatly and all too often because of human negligence or cruelty.

As we seek to know Jesus and become one with Him, may we employ that "oneness" on behalf of God's creatures, the animals. As we give our lives to Jesus, may we, in return, spread His love and compassion throughout the world, showering all life with kindness and care. As we grow closer to Jesus in our lives, may we share His love by bestowing an affirmative compassion on other lives, especially the animals. Through this offering may we present not only our own struggles and suffering to the Savior, but may we present the struggles and suffering, the pain, the toil, the striving for life of our neighbors, the animals to Jesus as well. As the spirit of Jesus grows in us, may we understand that this spirit is not for humans alone. It is to be shared with our neighbors. All our neighbors.

Chapter 13

The Lord's Prayer

This prayer is unique in so many ways. It is revealed to us by our Savior, and it is illustrative of how to pray and why. The simplicity of this prayer can be misleading, as despite the simple, basic language, this prayer truly plumbs the depths of our relationship with God. May this prayer assist us in beginning a dialogue with the Lord, a conversation in which we not only utter our pleas, but in which we carefully listen and pledge to obey.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

“The phrase ‘Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’ is a reminder to us that we are to pray for God’s plan in our lives and the world, not our own plan. We are to pray for God’s will to be done, not for our desires...

Remember, in prayer, God is far more interested in our communicating with Him and speaking from our hearts than He is in the specific words we use. Philippians 4:6-7 declares, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

We offer here just a few of the many thoughts of Dr. Schweitzer on this topic. “But there can be no Kingdom of God in the world without the Kingdom of God in our hearts.”

Here, Schweitzer returns to and reiterates a common theme with him: The kingdom of God may well come, but it will never appear until we humans have affirmatively

placed that kingdom first in our hearts. We can help bring about that situation by taking those actions that align us with God's will, by immersing ourselves in a life where we freely and charitably bestow mercy and benevolence. The kingdom of God is first of all to reside in our hearts, and humans can effectuate such an occurrence through acts of charity to all of God's creations. Put the kingdom of God first in our individual hearts by acts of beneficence—then and only then can we expect the kingdom to exist in the world.

The *Pater Noster*. The Our Father. The Lord's Prayer. The precious prayer that Jesus Himself taught us. Despite its seeming simplicity, there is really a good deal of complexity inherent in this prayer. Let's examine a few details as we move into our analysis and arguments.

First, clearly we acknowledge God's awesome greatness and power in the prayer. We acknowledge His sovereignty over us, indeed over all creation. It is, after all, His Kingdom that we acknowledge. It is His reign to which we make obeisance. It is His Lordship over us, over all of us, over all our lives, to which we pay homage and respect. We specifically pray that His plan, His will be implemented, not ours. We seek unity with His plans. We seek to know and adhere to His goals. We seek alignment, not separation.

Communication is a key element of the Our Father. As we pray, may we open wide the channels of communication. May we pray clearly and distinctly, and most importantly, may we listen intently for His word, His directives, His direction. But as we listen may we acknowledge that this prayer is like no other. For this prayer to be operative we must open not only our minds, but our hearts as well. It is not enough merely to recite the Our Father from memory. We must approach God with open and willing hearts, anxious to hear His message clearly, and ready, willing, and able to heed and act upon His commands to us.

As we hear and obey His commands, let us never forget what that entails. Hearing and obeying God is more than acquiescence. It is more than saying yes. It is actually seeking ways to carry out His orders for us. To believe is to act, to act as He would have us act, according to the instructions He has given us. Let us seek then, to hear, to understand, and to act accordingly upon God's word.

To act in that fashion is to live the ethical existence that Schweitzer wrote about. When we pray for alignment with God's will, let us remember that we are not robots. We

are not machines. We are human beings with an ability to choose our course of conduct. To hear God is the start of making an ethical choice on how to act. To be truly spiritual is to lead an active existence in harmony with God's will. That will is so lovingly manifested in the words of the Sermon on the Mount expressed and taught by Jesus. If true spirituality requires affirmative acts on our part. May those affirmative acts be acts of love, of compassion, as Jesus commanded us in that Sermon. Let us understand, then, the Our Father teaches us not only how to pray, but why. Pray to hear and act upon that message. Pray to hear about God's love and then act to share that love universally.

May that sharing of God's love, of the compassion and healing preached by Jesus, truly be made universal. May we see all life, all creatures, as coming from God, as part of His plan, as His own. With that view and the Lord's Prayer in mind, let us practice affirmative compassion for all life. May our hearts be full of love for all life. May we share that love with and seek to redress or at least ameliorate the suffering of any life with which we come into contact, no matter how insignificant that life may seem to us. In that way we will have heard the Lord's Prayer. We will have heard God's message. We will have understood God's will, and, most vitally, we will have acted appropriately on that message. In that way, as Albert Schweitzer wrote, we will have manifested the highest degree of spirituality.

Chapter 14

The Lamb of God

This lovely, brief prayer aids us in understanding the juxtaposition in which we stand vis-a-vis Jesus. He is God's lamb from whom we entreat mercy. Further, as we scrutinize that relationship with Jesus, we are compelled to consider our own standing with regard to other creatures on this planet. We cry out for mercy and expect it to be accorded us in full measure, while animals who cry out to us for mercy and solace receive none, often quite the opposite! Let us consider the concept of mercy, both as requestors and as dispensers.

This is such a beautiful prayer it deserves to be set forth fully here. Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. The religionfacts.com site states, "The imagery of a lamb in the New Testament is built upon how lambs were used in the Old Testament. Lambs were among the animals that were sacrificed by the ancient Israelites as an atonement for humanity's sins. Sacrificial lambs took the place of a human sinner, absorbing the cost of sin, which is death. The New Testament teaches that as animals took the place of people in the sacrificial system, so Jesus takes the place of sinners when he dies for their sins upon the cross."

One short thought from Schweitzer will set the stage for our analysis. "Whenever an animal is somehow forced into the service of men, every one of us must be concerned for any suffering it bears on that account."

Schweitzer goes on to warn us that no person, who claims to adhere to a reverence for life, who claims to believe in the love of Jesus made universal, could possibly inflict any preventable pain on another creature. More importantly, the doctor again tugs at our conscience by reminding us that to love God is to love God's creatures, and no one who claims to love God could turn a blind eye to any suffering. Rather, as people who love God, as people who believe in the love of Jesus made universal, it is up to us to demonstrate that love by acts of mercy and assistance. We must help rather than harm,

for all life is inextricably linked and cries out for relief from pain. We are never, says the doctor, to sacrifice any creature for our greed or gluttony. Instead, through acts of giving and magnanimity we are called to enhance and promote all life. That is our responsibility.

The Lamb of God prayer carries with it at least two major themes. First, there is the clear notion of a sacrificial lamb. In the past, animals were sacrificed to atone for human sins and to appease the gods, or sometimes just God. The death and resurrection of Jesus is viewed by many as the ultimate atonement for our sins, the ultimate sacrifice, the only sacrifice that will ever again be necessary. Jesus has come to be viewed as the Lamb of God, the Lamb Who sacrificed Himself on our behalf. Of course there are many other reasons why Jesus is denoted as the Lamb of God: His meekness, His mildness, His serenity, His innocence, just to name a few. For our purposes, the symbolism of Jesus as the Lamb sacrificed for our sins will suffice.

The second major theme of this prayer is mercy. We call upon Jesus to show us mercy and ultimately to grant us peace. This aspect makes the relation of Jesus to the rest of us quite clear. He is Lord, reigning over us with an enormous, incomprehensible power to dispense retribution, or purely as a gesture of mercy, stay His hand. We implore mercy, love, and compassion even though by our actions we may be utterly undeserving.

Jesus, then, sacrificed Himself as payment, as atonement of our sins, and despite those many sins, which continue unabated to this day, we have the temerity to ask Him for mercy. It will be instructive now to assess our relationship with animals as contrasted with the relationship of Jesus to us. Jesus is all powerful, yet His sacrifice for us, a sacrifice absolutely unmerited by our behavior, is offered for the remission of our sins. And despite being unworthy of His compassion, we call upon Jesus to be merciful in the face of our transgressions.

As regards the animals, we humans are all powerful, perhaps not necessarily as individuals (even though as individuals we have the capability of rendering extreme harm to animals), but our combined presence on this planet has been monumental enough and has caused sufficient environmental change and disaster that we now have our own epoch, the Anthropocene. We have precipitated the extinction of untold numbers of species, and we are well on our way to adding to these numbers.

Rather than sacrifice ourselves or any aspect of our existence so animals may live and co-exist with us, we have ruthlessly treated and slaughtered billions of animals to satisfy our wants. Rather than bestow acts of mercy on fellow denizens of this earth, we have been merciless in our exploitation, savagely cruel in our treatment, and completely self-centered in our handling of God's creatures.

As we reflect on the sacrifice that Jesus made for us, on the merciful acts with which He has gifted us, all again completely undeserved on our part, let us now examine the disparate ways in which we humans have levied untold harm and pain on the other lives that dwell with us on the earth. Let us start to review the many methods we use to sacrifice animals to our causes and desires. Let us comprehend that these are lives to whom we owe a duty of care and stewardship, as they are God's fellow creations. Let us review the many activities in which humans show no mercy whatsoever to those God also placed on this earth. May we feel shame as we review this list, and may that shame goad us, rattle us into a totally new view of our relationships with and duty toward the animals. Here follows a litany of sorrows.

Now comes the listing, a pretty unsettling one at that thanks to the aidanimals.com website, of problematic human treatment of animals. This list is neither complete nor exhaustive, nor does it go into great detail on any one category of ill treatment. For additional information, details, or examples, the reader is adjured to investigate the websites of animal welfare organizations, including aidanimals.com. Those sites will provide all the heartbreaking statistics, data, and detail that anyone could ever wish for.

Finally, this list is set forth in no particular order of importance. The purpose behind making this list available at this time is to start to raise awareness and consciousness, to open the eyes of so many of us who have been willfully blind to animal mistreatment at human hands, and to start us down the path of a reverence for life as our ethos that we may commence the redress and cessation of all this harm. So let's begin.

[Fur Farming – Animals Skinned Alive](#)

The fur trade is one of the cruelest on earth. Animals are skinned alive for their fur after being crushed into tiny cages for months to await their fate. They are injured while roughly treated in transit, but left to suffer with broken bones.

Dog Fighting

The horrific abuse inflicted on the dogs by humans, despite the agony they suffer when forced in to fights when desperately trying to survive and please their bloodthirsty owners, frightened of the sometimes fatal torture they receive if their masters are disappointed.

Animal Experimentation

Animal experiments are extremely cruel to animals and dangerous to humans as they are so unreliable. Humane methods of testing products, not involving animals, is much safer. Think about how often you hear about a promising new drug that is “expected to be available in about five years’ time”, but then never hear of again. This is because at the animal testing stage the results were encouraging. However, humans respond so differently that the same drugs can be found to be useless or harmful to humans. By buying or using products from companies who test on animals, people are funding and supporting the hideous cruelty, some of which is explained on this page.

Crush Videos

Crush videos show animal cruelty of innocent puppies and kittens being slowly crushed to death under the feet of women for the viewing pleasure of sick and depraved individuals.

Greyhound Racing

There is so much unseen cruelty behind Greyhound racing. If the dogs are not making money they are usually no longer wanted. They are often inhumanely and callously killed, neglected until they die, or are abandoned. They have sometimes had their ears cut off without anesthetic so their owners cannot be traced through their racing tattoos.

Animal Abuse Cases

Every single day countless new cruelty cases are discovered where the extent of animal suffering purposely caused is sickening. Many cases will never be discovered. The cases on this page are just a tiny portion of the horrors that happen every day to numerous innocent animals who are completely undeserving of such malicious, vicious acts. They

are examples that serve to remind us why we need to do all we can to help stop animal cruelty and suffering.

[Traditional Chinese Medicine](#)

The use of animals, including endangered species, for traditional Chinese medicine, involves horrific cruelty. It threatens the survival of endangered species and causes a life of misery and agony for many animals because the trade is so lucrative to poachers.

[The Cat and Dog Meat Trade in Asia](#)

Millions of cats and dogs are eaten in countries across Asia. How the cats and dogs are treated and “prepared” is absolutely brutal. Their fates can involve being severely beaten, skinned alive, or boiled/baked/cooked alive after horrific treatment.

[From Farm to Slaughterhouse: Horrifying Cruelty](#)

What the meat industry doesn't want you to know about the terrible cruelty and suffering inside slaughterhouses. This page reveals the horrifying animal abuse that is commonplace in the meat industry that every meat consumer is funding. There is also the illegal meat trade, which can be fatal to humans.

[Factory Farming](#)

This page is about the suffering and misery caused to farm animals trapped in to a life of factory farming.

[Cruel Animal Overpopulation Controls and Attitudes Worldwide](#)

Cruel measures to control animal overpopulation are legal in different countries, causing animals terrible prolonged suffering. In some countries, citizens are paid to kill stray dogs in cruel, barbaric ways. In others, they are burned alive—all despite humane methods of controlling the population being no more expensive.

[Breed Specific Legislation](#)

Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) is where lawmakers order the deaths of millions of gentle, innocent dogs, that have never done anything wrong, JUST because they are a certain breed. It has already in force in the United Kingdom and is a constant threat in other places.

[Spanish Festivals of Animal Torture and Other Cruel Traditions Worldwide](#)

There are sadistic Spanish festivals involving the terrifying and torturing to death of innocent animals. Other countries also have horrific traditions like this, such as the *Brazilian Festival Farra Do Boi*, detailed on this page too.

[Pet Shops, Puppy Farms and Backyard Breeders](#)

Puppy farms and puppy mills are cruel prisons full of suffering that are only interested in profit and not animal welfare. They supply pet shops and kill breeder dogs after abusing them all their lives. Customers of these pet shops who buy these puppies fund this cruelty and abuse. Behind the scenes, animals of all types suffer horrifying cruelty and suffering to make pet shops money.

[Pet Abandonment](#)

Millions of pets are abandoned every year and only a tiny proportion of these are adopted. This results in millions of innocent loving pets being put to death, often in horrific ways, every year.

[Horse Racing, Abandonment, and Abuse](#)

Horse racing causes many horses to suffer terribly. From horses forced to race that die on race courses, to ones killed, abandoned, and neglected when no longer of use. The majority that don't make the grade, or that retire, end up slaughtered for the horse meat industry.

[The Bush Meat Trade](#)

This page provides information about illegal poachers brutally killing wild animals for meat, endangering species.

[Wildlife Smuggling and the Illegal Exotic Pet Trade](#)

The fourth biggest illegal trade in the world, which funds organized crime and leads to extinction of endangered species, this trade causes unimaginable cruelty and suffering to its animal victims.

[Rhino Poaching](#)

With rhino horns being worth more than gold, poachers are quickly driving the rhinoceros to extinction using brutal methods, causing each rhino horrific suffering.

The Ivory Trade

Because of the lucrative illegal international ivory trade, enormous numbers of elephants are brutally massacred every year for their tusks, funding organized crime, leaving young orphaned elephants, and elephants as a species fast becoming extinct.

Canned Hunts and Trophy Hunting

Canned hunting and trophy hunting is where companies trap wild animals in enclosed areas of varying size, sometimes tame and drug them to make them slow and less afraid of humans, and then accept large payments from individuals who want to kill them for fun.

Animal Tourism Cruelty

Find out how animals involved in animal related tourism suffer due to tourists funding the industry.

Shock Dog Collars

Electric shock dog collars are used to try to stop dogs barking, or to discourage other unwanted behavior. However, faulty collars, or misuse of the collars by children who know no better, or by cruel people, can cause burns, lifelong anxiety, and great suffering to pets.

Circus Animal Cruelty

Find out about the terrible suffering animals are made to endure when part of a circus. Again we gratefully credit the www.aidanimals.com website for the foregoing information.

There will be a tendency after working through a list to try to minimize its impact and import. This is due to an all too human desire to reduce the amount of psychological stress that the world places upon us, or more precisely that we place upon ourselves by what we have done. Some crimes, some disasters, some examples of vile human behavior, are of such enormity and magnitude that they seem incomprehensible to us.

“That can’t be right,” we think. Thus do we turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the calamity, or perhaps we invent rationales to make sense and also apportion blame onto those who are suffering. After all, they (whoever they are) brought it on themselves, didn’t they? We even seek to bring other people into our sphere of denial. We certainly can’t be mistaken about this if others hold, or seem to hold, the same opinion, right?

Wrong! First, to deal properly with the horrific situations just outlined let us remember the One from Whom we need to ask assistance. Jesus, of course. Where there is pain and suffering let us recall the mission of Jesus to end that pain and suffering, and let us first open our hearts to Him, the one being who can help us address these many, seemingly intractable issues.

Second, let us recall that wherever and whenever one or more of us are gathered in His name, He is there. No matter how insignificant our group in size or reach, two or more people united in the love of Jesus can accomplish seemingly insurmountable tasks. So do not be discouraged by the enormity of the job in front of us. Find kindred spirits in a reverence for life and accomplish what you are able to do. Just one life saved, one life improved, one life with reduced anguish helps accomplish the plans of Jesus on earth.

Finally, remember what Jesus told us. I am the way, the truth, and the light. Be not afraid to seek, find, and deal with the truth, no matter how horrid, saddening or sickening. To do the bidding of Jesus is to view the world as He viewed it, with His gaze, and to experience all aspects of the world as He experienced them. It is often a world full of ugliness, pain, and suffering, much of that brought about by man’s inhumanity to the rest of creation. Despite that, and even knowing that, Jesus persevered in His belief in the ultimate goodness of most people once they heard the truth. May we persevere, infused with the spirit of Jesus, infused with His truth, and believing firmly that most people do want to do what is right. It’s simply a matter of bringing the truth out into the open, and teaching it, repeating it, and living it over and over again. So bring a reverence for life to bear on every difficult situation you encounter. That is the truth of Jesus. And that will be enough.

Before we move on to the next signpost in our journey, some additional words are called for. The foregoing list is provided not to shock but to jolt the reader into

contemplation, understanding, and action. We humans have carefully hidden from view or chosen not to see the harm we do to animals, the suffering we cause, the callousness with which we treat God's fellow beings. The entire import of this book is to link proper care and stewardship of animals with possessing and then living an attitude of a reverence for life, the ethos given us by Dr. Schweitzer. Our goal is to assist the reader in coming to the conclusion that how we treat animals stems in large part from how we view them, and that our current view, resulting in the examples of pain, suffering and mistreatment just set forth, is plainly and scandalously wrong.

But even deeper, to correct our view and ensuing behavior toward our animal friends, this book seeks to align our treatment of them with the care and compassion called for by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount. As Schweitzer writes so eloquently, to practice an affirmative compassion is to widen that care and compassion, that love, into universality. Only if we humans can and will broaden our acts of compassion and love to include all life do we have a chance of saving this earth and making it a home for all life. Only if we make a reverence for life, all life, our touchstone, will we truly be reflective of the love that Jesus asked us to share.

Finally, to get us thinking along the lines of applying a reverence for life to some of these dreadful situations, let's consider the following brief analysis and arguments. These are just a few of the innumerable instances of callous human treatment of animals, and each instance is followed by a proposed application of a reverence for life.

Current Examples

Two articles in a newspaper (which I discuss below and in my LinkedIn feed) point up the urgent need to follow a reverence for life and also denote the difficulties in so doing.

First, an article exploring the proposed ban in Florida on "fishermen" who catch sharks and then remove the fins for shark fin soup and other human comestibles. This article describes the disgusting practice and also quotes those who engage it as worrying about their livelihood. Frankly, it is time for a new livelihood. A reverence for life teaches that all life has inherent worth, and no life is to be used as a means to a human end, especially human ends of greed and gluttony.

The second article expresses worries about the growing number of macaques (monkeys) along a nearby river. The expressed fear is that the increase will lead to an unpleasant interaction with humans. It is too late to prevent the harm (monkeys were introduced by humans to boost the tourist trade), it can only be managed. Reverence for life calls for compassion, trying to respect the rights of all life to exist. It will require a program of care and finesse to manage, and yet I am not optimistic. Still, with an active stewardship stemming from a reverence for life we may avoid the animal slaughter that is our usual answer to human/animal interactions that incommode us. Share the love of Jesus with all life!

There is a recent op-ed piece in a newspaper to the effect that Asia's wet markets should be abolished. Such markets are cited as the probable source of many viral outbreaks, including the latest Chinese corona virus. Here's the problem. The entire tenor and focus of the op-ed is the danger to humans, as these viruses can be zoonotic and later mutate. The obvious premise is this: If these viruses posed no threat to humans, then the underlying practices of torture, awful living conditions, and ultimate slaughter imposed on animals, domestic and feral, are therefore legitimate. This is clearly in error and a violation of the ethics of a reverence for life. All life is sacred and worthy of respect and compassion. Let us abolish all practices that treat animals merely as means to human ends, as creatures here solely to serve our gluttonous desires. Let us act with care and compassion toward all animals, and let us abolish wet markets, not because their existence threatens humans, but because the cruel activities that take place in such locales are vile and monstrous and inhumane. *Kyrie eleison.*

One local paper, never shy about promoting anthropocentrism, features two stories that indicate just how far humans have to go to reach a sense of reverence for life. The first story details how a record number of manatees have been killed this year in Florida. Those who like to run their power boats at full speed through manatee zones blame the increased kill on increased manatee population, never stopping to think that more manatees should engender even more caution in the water.

The second story highlights a proposal from two Florida lawmakers to have a tax holiday on hunting and fishing items. The proposal would set aside a day when the

purchase of such implements of torture as rifles, shotguns, spear guns, crossbows, bows, and ammunition can be purchased tax free. All in the name of and to facilitate animal slaughter even more cheaply. Those of us who propose a reverence for life as our ethos must not give up in the face of such human stupidity and egocentrism. All life is precious and must be respected. Needlessly to maim and kill any life is the height of immorality. Let us all practice an active compassion—before it is too late. *Kyrie eleison*.

Two interesting articles in a newspaper—distinct and yet utterly related. The first talks at length about the efforts of cattle ranchers to cope with a growing demand for non-meat products. The second states the horrific fact that each year Americans cut down enough Christmas trees to fill an area the size of Manhattan.

The commonality is apparent; namely, that humans must now follow a "reverence for life" as our ethos, and in so doing we must no longer cling to creeds outworn. While meat eating and tree felling were permitted or prized behaviors in past eras, today they must be seen for what they are—acts of senseless and wanton destruction. Meat eating and tree felling view their objects as means to human ends, through gluttony, greed, exploitation, and amusement. We must view all life as an end in itself, worthy of preservation and enhancement, not misuse and abuse. Let us see all life as interconnected, and may we humans find ways and means to revere life rather than destroy it. That is our new creed. *Reverentia vitae!*

And one last example of the application of a reverence for life to assess an example of all too common human deportment toward other creatures. It is another demonstration of the overriding necessity of changing the status quo of human abuse of animals.

A local arts center hosts a fundraising event at which alligator, venison, hog, rabbit, elk, water buffalo, and kangaroo meat are served. In plain terms, that which elevates humans above the rest of creation, the arts, is supported by that which drags us down to our basest behavior—namely, the slaughter and ingestion of innocent animals. The irony cannot be plainer or more unendurable. The loftiest minds stoop to the most ignoble acts. The arts are debased and sullied when their support stems from deliberately and needlessly ending the lives of fellow creatures. This mindset is so prevalent, so pervasive, that any major modification seems hopeless. If the best and the brightest don't get it, then what chance is there of converting the less enlightened? Yet that is our mission, quixotic

though it may be. Let each of us who is so inclined recommit to leading, teaching, and modeling a reverence for life, all life. If we can convert one person to the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount, the ethic of love made universal, that's a victory. *Kyrie eleison.*

And now on to our next stage in our quest.

Chapter 15

We Align Ourselves with Jesus

Much of course has been written about alignment with the Savior, and it is difficult to find a treatise that does not expound one particular act of faith or denomination over another, particularly regarding the real presence. That is not our purpose here and so need not be debated. We are concerned solely with the spirit of Jesus, His spirit as brought to bear on our lives by our faith and prayers. To start off, I do like this snippet taken from the Curt Landry website, so will reprint it here:

“The discovery of your faith roots brings you into the presence of the Lord that you may walk in the increased knowledge of His divine and sovereign character. The immeasurable depth of God is revealed by combining the history of His story with our faith journey today. Tapping into His presence penetrates and changes your heart, and you begin to show Christ to others.”

And one excerpt from Schweitzer will suffice. “Jesus is alive for all those who let themselves be guided by Him in things both great and small, as though He were still walking in our midst...”

Let me explain it in my way. The glorified body of Jesus is to be found in His sayings.”Schweitzer continues along this line by setting forth his firm belief that the spirit of Jesus still makes demands upon all who are open to that spirit. Jesus, in the view of the doctor, is readily available to all who will clear a path to him, to all who will open their ears and their hearts to Jesus. In particular, Schweitzer emphasizes the importance and transformative power of the words of Jesus, his recorded sayings, and he strongly urges us to read and heed those blessed words. He reminds us that Jesus promised us that his words would never pass away. For Schweitzer, the spirit of Jesus is omnipresent in his very words. Through reading, hearing, and inculcating those words we are able to bring the spirit of Jesus to life in us. Schweitzer argues that the words of Jesus were and are

meant for us, to bring us comfort, joy, fulfillment, and most of all to show us the proper way to act toward all life: With total love.

The importance of this section of the book is this: Through our faith in and prayers to Jesus, communion is all about permitting the presence of Jesus Christ to be manifest in us through His spirit and His words. As Landry writes, Jesus in us helps increase our knowledge and awareness of. “his divine and sovereign character.” This is the key. By recurrent acts of reaching out to Jesus, of seeking a union with Him, by our faith and calls for His spirit, we have an attendant increase in our understanding of His character. This is a journey where we are constantly nearing our goal, constantly growing in the Lord.

Let us focus then on this concept: the presence of Jesus in us launches us on a journey of faith. That Jesus voluntarily comes to us is just one part of the equation. Yes, He offers Himself voluntarily, but only to those who seek Him continually, on a daily, hourly, never-ending basis. Jesus is here for the taking, but we must reach out and accept Him. Let us then be open to Jesus, receptive to His offer, anxious for His presence. May our faith impel us to seek and accept our Lord, totally and unconditionally.

There is, however, so much more to the idea of oneness with Jesus than simply seeking and accepting Jesus. Accepting Him is not enough. Acceptance is only step one. For by accepting Jesus we implicitly accept His goals and wishes for us. The presence of Jesus in us will dictate a certain type of behavior in response. Landry terms it a “faith journey.” By accepting Jesus we embark upon a life-long faith journey, called by Jesus to move forward and guided by Jesus every step of the way. And where does that journey lead?

Both Landry and Schweitzer offer solutions.

Landry first. Landry writes that the communion with Jesus, our unity with Jesus helps us “...begin to show Christ to others.” This is the goal of our journey. We seek Christ’s growing presence in us such that we may intensify that presence and ultimately share Christ with other lives. The ultimate destination is a general community of people giving themselves to and sharing Christ’s love. Obviously that goal is a long, long way off, and many people are at different locations along this trek. Some have not even started their journey. No matter. May we share Christ’s presence with all whom we meet on this journey.

And how do we share His presence? Schweitzer gives us the answer. First, he makes it clear that such sharing is our ethical duty. These are, as the doctor terms them the “demands” on us made by the Lord. And what does our duty demand that we share? The answer is the presence of Jesus as set forth in His very own words. The gorgeous, inspiring, comforting words of Jesus. His message of love and compassion for all. His call for love and reciprocity of love as set out in the Sermon on the Mount. That is the demand He makes. Seek and find My presence, and as you discover Me, you will discover My purposes, which are now your purposes. To spread wide the word of Jesus, that word of love, all along our journey. Not only to spread the word, but to live it by our affirmative acts of compassion to all lives, all life, that we meet on this journey.

This is so important that it dictates an additional amount of coverage, and analysis and argument. The importance of Jesus Christ in history is directly related to the ability of the spirit of Jesus Christ to change people’s lives. How many countless millions of souls have been pulled out of the darkness of self-obsession and brought into the light of an outward focus by Jesus? We will never know. But it does not matter. What is important is our initial action in seeking to be one with Jesus, to commune with Him if you will, and then how we build on that action. To commune with Jesus is all about a transition from a focus on ourselves, to a focus, inspired by the spirit and words of Jesus, on others, on life itself.

We start individually, as we must, coming to the altar of Jesus, one by one. We offer our gifts, but in reality we offer ourselves by opening our hearts and minds to the Savior. It is not the tangible things that we offer that are of paramount importance. Rather, it is our act of making an offer to Jesus that is so special, because we openly choose to intertwine our lives with Him. We offer and we listen. We listen for His words, His commands, His wishes for our lives. This is indeed a two-way transaction. We offer ourselves, and in return Jesus offers Himself to us through His spirit and His words.

Then, emboldened and strengthened by His presence within us, we realize that His wishes for us include continuing His work on earth, the spreading of His message to others. So we seek to share the message of Jesus with all—both within our community, and especially those without. We seek to share the all-encompassing love of the Sermon on the Mount with our neighbors. And who are our neighbors? All who inhabit the earth

alongside of us, for their lives have equal merit and are just as important to them as our lives are to us.

So we offer our gifts, ourselves to Jesus. We listen for and await His offering of Himself to us. This is how He wishes us to conduct our lives. We execute His wishes by sharing love and compassion within and throughout the community of God's creations that is present on earth. May the spirit and the words of our Savior fill us with resolve to do His bidding. May that spirit and those holy, comforting words truly aid us at being one with Christ, our Lord. That's what our journey truly is.

Chapter 16

Final Prayers

At the conclusion of any spiritual gathering it is common to conclude with a final prayer. This is usually an incantation to merge and coalesce all the elements of the gathering into an adjuration for morally desirable behavior. Participants are asked to reflect back upon what has been preached and what they have heard and consolidate all that information into a pledge to lead a better life. Our final prayers are cut from the same mold. They are carefully selected and situated here to show us all both the desired comportment and the straightest path to that comportment. Let these prayers and reflections work on you that you, too, may find that path.

The St. Joseph Daily Missal offers us this explanation of the prayers: “The church’s prayer of thanksgiving is short. An earnest endeavor to live a better Christian life is the thanksgiving she wants the faithful to offer God...” The final prayer seeks in us the desire to become what we know we should be, to have a transformative effect on us.

Dr. Schweitzer delivered a sermon, “Christ in Our Life,” from which these words are taken: “And His promise, ‘I am with you,’ continues throughout the world from generation to generation. Only by continuing His life’s work, in battle and labor for him, do we realize what is meant by ‘I am with you’.”

Sharing the work of Christ, Schweitzer avers, shouldering the burden that Christ imposes on us brings us closer to Jesus and allows mankind to share in and experience the existence of His spirit, to be in spiritual communion with Him. The doctor also wrote that not only will assuming the burden that Jesus places on us bring us into greater contact with Him, but when done in conjunction with our fellow humans, as it should be, all of us bearing together the demands Jesus places on us, working in harmony toward the accomplishment of one goal, this concerted effort will unify all people in his spirit. That is why Schweitzer urges all people to embrace our spiritual duty as one, linking our fates,

sharing our toils, and in unison accomplishing the same goal: Growing closer to the spirit of Jesus and putting that spirit to work on all that transpires on earth.

As is often the case with our review and argument, there is more than one concept or idea to wrap our heads around. Our final prayers give us two. First is the idea that having Jesus in us will bring about a powerful transformative effect in all of us. Second is the notion advanced by Schweitzer that the presence of Jesus in us will be manifested if we go about and continue the life's work of the Lord. Let's consider these ideas.

Why do we pray to Jesus at all? Many, unfortunately, pray for tangible goods or things: A new or better job, car, spouse, victory for one's favorite team, etc. As we view such prayer requests, let us see them for what they are: Selfish pleas for transient pleasure, self-centered boons that we ask of Jesus without seeking or promising to give anything of ourselves to the situation. Jesus is not Santa Claus! He did not promise to arrive with a sleigh full of indulgent goodies for us, and those who ask for such goodies misunderstand and abuse the true gift that Jesus offers us: Himself!

Why pray to Jesus? Simple. To become like Him. Pray to Jesus that He may indeed transform our lives. How? By changing us from selfish individuals focused primarily on our own pleasures, to holy, reverent, believers seeking to embrace His presence and be altered by it. Pray to Jesus that each day we may be made more holy than before. Pray to Jesus that each day we may be made more loving and compassionate than before. Pray to Jesus that each day we may more intensely and fully feel His presence, and, most importantly, pray to Jesus that each day we may more effectively share His presence with others.

We pray to Jesus for this "transformative effect". But transformed into what? From what? Let's answer the second question first. We seek to be transformed from what we currently are. Each of us knows s/he can do better, be holier, be more loving and compassionate, more caring and giving. Our many faults are known to us, even if we suppress them under a facade of ego and pride. We petition Jesus and seek His presence that we may be transformed more fully from the imperfect beings that we are, that we may alter our focus on ourselves, that we may be more receptive to the words of Jesus. Oh, Jesus, hear our prayer that we may open wide our hearts to Your love, putting behind

us our many failures when we chose not to hear You, and looking forward to the changed people we will become.

And now changed to what? Changed to people who have removed the obstacles to hearing Jesus that we placed in His way. Changed to people who freely and totally accept the teachings of the Savior. Changed to people who openly seek His words, His counsel, His very essence, in every minute of our lives. Changed to people who freely and constantly seek and welcome His spirit. Change us, Jesus, from self-centered, egotistical humans to loving, compassionate outward focused citizens of this world who seek to share Your goodness with all life. Change us to the people You would have us be.

And that brings us to the second point of this analysis and argument. We pray to Jesus not only to augment His presence in us, but armed with that increased presence, to go out into the world and do His bidding. As Schweitzer says: "...continuing His life's work, in battle and in labor for Him." Jesus came to serve mankind. He came to offer us and to show us the right road to follow. He came to show us how to navigate all the obstacles we will encounter on that road. And He came to unite us in spirit and purpose, wishing for us to follow the same road and work together to surmount the obstacles we all must face.

We pray to Jesus to be with us, to be in us, and in return, we pray that as a unified coalition we may continue to accomplish the work He started. That work was to spread love and compassion all along the roads He traversed. That work was to seek to reduce suffering wherever and whenever He could. That work was to treat all lives with kindness and respect. May we pray to Jesus that united we may advance the cause He stood for and championed. Together may we find ways to sow seeds of compassion all along the trails down which we travel in our lives. May Jesus impel and inspire us to bring about His wishes for all life. May the love of Jesus guide our every footstep, our every act. May the love of Jesus teach us to love and respect all life, to treat all life, as much as humanly possible, as we'd be treated. May the love of Jesus bring us together to live a reverence for life in close communion with each other and with Him.

Give us the strength and courage, then, Oh Lord, not only to seek and find You, but to obey Your orders. And Your orders are to use our time and abilities to their fullest to

make this world a better place for all. Your orders are to love life, respect life, nurture life, preserve life, not only by spreading Your message, but by incorporating it into all we do. Life is often cruel, full of pain and grievous suffering. Jesus calls on us not to compound problems, but to use our human abilities, strengthened by Him, to address and wherever possible solve those problems. Jesus mandates that we embrace life in all its facets and aspects, whether good, bad, or indifferent. Jesus mandates that we involve ourselves in life, striving to do our best on a daily basis to improve the quality of life for all earth's denizens. Not only think and pray about it. Not only do no harm. But each day, utilizing the power He sends us, step out into the world and take positive actions for each life we encounter. That is the work He started. That is the work He expects us to finish.

Chapter 17

Dismissal

And now we approach the end of our commentary, reflection, and analysis, and the commencement of our lives based on those reflections. Let's begin here. We find our guidance in Mark 16:15: "He said to them, 'Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to every creature.'"

Some thoughts from another sermon preached by Dr. Schweitzer will kick off our final section. He said,

"It is our duty to share and maintain life. Reverence concerning all life is the greatest commandment in its most elementary form."

Schweitzer then argues cogently that all people must fully adopt a reverence for life as their ethos. It is his view, and mine as well, that a reverence for life is the last, best hope for humanity. It is our last, best hope for an overarching philosophy of life, a philosophy of active compassion and positive involvement in life, in all lives that cross our paths. But Schweitzer harbors no illusion regarding this hoped-for state of affairs. It will transpire, he believes, only if and when humans make a conscious choice formally and finally to adopt a reverence for life. Each of us must choose and then wholeheartedly act upon that choice. Each of us must opt for a life of active involvement with all creatures, of active assistance to all lives that we can help. At bottom, we must embrace the love of Jesus, and with his spirit guiding us and informing us, make that love universal.

So, as our book and its analysis and arguments draw to a conclusion, we are sent back out into the world on a mission, and that mission is to apply what we have learned. Let's review first what we've learned. Then we'll focus on how best to apply that learning.

What have we learned? Distilled to its essence, in fact we have re-learned rather than learned. We have awakened a long slumbering dreamer. We have recalled some long buried memories. We have become reacquainted with an ethical standard from our youth, just like an honor code or scout's oath that we put aside when its adherence became a problem for us as adults. We have called to mind thoughts long hidden because they sting our conscience; they remind us of what we once believed and know deep down we should still believe.

With what great truths, then, have we re-familiarized ourselves? Simply these: God is a sovereign, all powerful creator. All life, all lives, are His work, a direct result of His will. As such all life, all lives, are sacred, deserving of our veneration, protection, and stewardship. As humans we have been blessed with an intelligence, linguistic ability, and organizational capacity found nowhere else among creation. We must employ those talents in furtherance of God's plan, to effectuate God's will. And where do we find that plan? That will? How is it revealed to us?

The answer is through Jesus Christ. God's will, God's plan, they constitute the Word, and the Word was made flesh. Jesus arrived on earth to show us the way, the narrow path down which we must travel if we are to be His followers. More importantly, Jesus came to life, became flesh, to reinforce the notion of the sacredness of life, to make us understand that life is precious, holy, fragile, fraught with challenges and obstacles, yet very much worth living in its sacredness. Jesus chose life that we might acknowledge with Him how sacrosanct is our existence, all existence. He chose to live and work among us that we might understand the need for collective thought and action. For all life is interconnected, and our actions, because they will have an effect on so many other species, must be well thought out and done in concert with each other and with Christ.

What actions are we to take? What will guide us in our dealings with other lives? This is now the flesh made Word. It is the sayings of Jesus that will not pass away. It is the sayings of Jesus that will serve as our guide in life. It is the sayings of Jesus that will enter into and animate our spirit, our soul. It is the message of love and compassion put into practice. That is our touchstone—the love and compassion in the Sermon on the Mount. Love and compassion actively shared with all. An affirmative sharing of love and compassion made universal.

And how do we do that? Through a reverence for life, the ethos of affirmative caring for all life given us by Dr. Schweitzer. By adopting a reverence for life we bring the love and compassion of Jesus to bear on all life with which we interact. By following a reverence for life we see all life as an end in itself, never as a means to satisfy human greed or need for amusement. By adhering to a reverence for life we seek to reduce suffering where we find it, eliminating it if we can. By modeling a reverence for life we set an example of ethical behavior for others to see and emulate. By sharing a reverence for life we help Jesus continue His life's work here on earth.

What have we learned? That life is sacred, hallowed, divinely created and blessed. That Jesus came, among other things, to reinforce that notion through His own existence, sayings, and work. That Jesus demonstrated that His great objective was to show us the road down which to travel in life. That traveling down that road is possible only by acts of love and compassion. That Jesus left us to complete His work, to go down that road and bring all life along with us. And that by actively living a reverence for life we bring the spirit of Jesus into us and positively assist Him to continue His labors.

That's what we've learned, or rather relearned, because we knew it all along.

Chapter 18

The Last Reading

The last item read in many an old rite has traditionally been the opening of John's Gospel. All readers are urged to become acquainted again with the marvelous and powerful imagery in John's words. Here are a few lines that will have analysis and arguments later.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was nothing made that has been made... And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...”

Some thoughts on the last gospel from the National Catholic Register website are these: “Why was this Gospel read... We are called to make incarnate, to make flesh, the Eternal Word who was from the beginning, allowing Him to live in us...”

And this excerpt from a sermon preached by Dr. Schweitzer bears repeating.

“Let me explain it in my way. The glorified body of Jesus is to be found in His sayings. For He said of these ‘Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.’”

Schweitzer reminds us again of the critical importance of the words of Jesus, why we must study them, heed them, embed them in our consciousness. Through his words His spirit can reach us, can touch us, can direct us, if only we'll be attentive to them. Through His words Jesus is present with us today, now, setting goals for us, placing demands upon us, seeking obedience from us. Through His words Jesus lives in us, and if we have the courage to listen, those words will fill us with love and joy. Those words will give us the strength to bear His demands and attain His goals. Those words, when acted upon by us, bring to life Jesus Christ and allow us to share Him, His love, with our neighbors with all of God's creation.

Let us begin our analysis and argument with John and end with Dr. Schweitzer.

“He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” From this marvelous language comes, among many ideas, the idea of the all-encompassing presence of Jesus. Jesus was not only present on earth, if only for a short while, but He is to be found in all creation, all life. Not only did He dwell among us, but His life touched, and still touches, all other lives on this planet. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Jesus came to accomplish certain purposes while he dwelt here. It isn't just that He lived for a time on the earth; the key question is why He came at all. Surely part of the answer is in the early portion of John's Prologue. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made. The presence, the very essence of Jesus is to be found in all life. John says that without Jesus there would be no life, no creation. His purpose in coming then, was not simply to dwell among us. His purpose must have been, at least in no small part, to instill in us a love of life, of all life, of all that He brought about.

For Jesus to have chosen a life on earth greatly sanctified life in general and our lives in particular. For Jesus to have chosen to share our lives is a direct indication of just how sacred and holy He deemed life to be. For Jesus to have dwelt among us is a divine signal of the reverence for life that was, and still is, His essence. His choice to live on earth with all that life on earth entails is His way of making certain that we fully recognize and accept the importance of life, that we view life as divinely inspired, and as such, that we clearly see our roles to protect and enhance that creation. We are in effect agents and representatives of Jesus, with a commission and mandate to keep all life holy and sacrosanct.

So, the Word became embodied to demonstrate to us the sacredness of life. More than simply existing on earth, Jesus sent us a message. His life is a road sign to us, a map showing us what is important, a guide leading us safely down the proper path. Jesus chose to live on earth to be that guide, to be sure that we might find that path and not stray from it. That path is a respect for life, a love for creation, an awe-inspired humility in the face of what Jesus made. The Word made flesh occurred so that we could understand that life belongs to God. It is given to us to be used in the way Jesus wanted it used.

And what way is that? Schweitzer gives us the answer. “The glorified body of Jesus is to be found in His sayings.” The Word was made flesh to show us the sacredness of life, and through the sayings of Jesus the flesh is transmuted back to words that we might forever protect and nurture that sacredness through the words of Jesus. His life passes into the human spirit, energizing us and showing us the way.

Of all the words of Jesus found in the Sermon on the Mount these are among the most affecting. “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and does them, I will compare him to a wise man who built his house upon the rock: and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house, and it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.”

And which words in particular? There are many on point in the sermon which have paramount importance for us. Let’s focus here on just a few, first from the Beatitudes.

“Blessings on the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. . . . Blessings on the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” And perhaps most importantly: “Therefore, whatever you want people to do to you, you also do to them. . . .”

The key word here is “whatever.” In all we do, with all lives with which we interact, let us treat those lives as we’d be treated. The Word arrived, became flesh to show us the importance of life, then became Word again to provide us with guidance on how to live that life and how to treat other creatures trying to live theirs. Let us make the love of the Sermon on the Mount universal. Let us realize that all life is a miracle, all life was blessed by Jesus when he assumed human form, all life deserves as much compassion and care as we can muster. When we truly make that our ethos, then we will have acknowledged the importance of the life of Jesus, and we will help Him complete His life’s work by following His very words.

Chapter 19

Marching Orders

And now come our final marching orders. We've learned that a reverence for life, the love and compassion of the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus made universal, is our chosen philosophy, our ethos. A reverence for life will guide us in our relations with all life, especially with other animals, if we allow it to do so. But what are we to do? Are there indeed marching orders that will dictate our behavior? Is there a set of written rules setting forth right and wrong behavior between humans and other animals? Is there a prescribed code of conduct for us that we can print, frame, and hang on a wall for all to see?

The answer is "No!" A reverence for life is spiritual, not legalistic. A reverence for life exists in our souls and hearts, and our brains, too, but not as a codex of laws. A reverence for life is an attitude toward all other creatures that we must consciously and continuously choose and strive to follow. It is about having the spirit of Jesus in us, directing us toward acts of love and compassion. Perhaps Albert Schweitzer puts it best: "Philosophy wants to imagine ethics as a well-ordered system of duties and commandments which can be fulfilled... Love cannot be put into a system of rules and regulations. It issues absolute commands. Each of us must decide for himself how far he can go toward carrying out the boundless commandment of love without surrendering his own existence and must decide, too, how much of his life and happiness he must sacrifice to the life and happiness of others."

There is a change in the offing that is shifting how humans view our place in the world. While most religions and philosophies celebrate the primacy of humans, more and more of us question how this can be. How can humans be considered in a strictly positive and adulatory light when the human race through its many depredations has become the supreme destroyer. The Sixth Extinction is upon us, and it is the result solely and totally of human action and inaction. Our "rap sheet" is almost too much to bear. We slaughter

and ingest hundreds of billions of innocent animals each year. We destroy countless habitats to the tune of 160,000 square kilometers annually. The destruction of each such square kilometer brings with it the attendant loss of wildlife, all life within that boundary. We over breed domesticated animals and use them solely for our amusement and profit, tossing them on the dung heap of existence when we are through with them, when they can not earn another penny for us. We pollute the biosphere, pollute the land, pollute the oceans, and even have left our debris in space and on the moon.

Religions, being anthropocentric as they are, all too often blithely ignore all this carnage in celebration of the human being. Human responsibility for the Sixth Extinction, for the harm we have caused the biosphere and all who live within it, is seldom dealt with by any religion. It is merrily ignored in the name of human triumphalism, and many people, young and old alike, are realizing that this state of affairs cannot continue; it is not sustainable. More and more people have come to the conclusion that the human race is not the be all and end all of existence; rather, we are a part of life on this planet, charged by our intellect and organizational capacity with an obligation of stewardship for all life. We must be guardians of life, accepting a responsibility of an active compassion for life, rather than its exploitation as usurpers and butchers. Schweitzer identified this cause a century ago in his philosophy of a Reverence for Life. What is needed is an ethic of universal love, the marvelous and limitless love of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount made universal, applied to all life, not just humans. To quote Schweitzer: "a [person] is ethical, only where life, as such, is sacred to him, that of plants and animals as that of his fellowmen, and when he devotes himself helpfully to all life that is in need of help."

If religion is to survive and thrive it will find ways of weaving Schweitzer's Reverence for Life into its ethical and credal fabric. Those religions that accomplish this will survive and grow in the twenty-first century and beyond. Those that don't will end up on the list of failures subsumed under the rubric, "a creed outworn". Perhaps Pope Francis says it best for our time: "All creation has an intrinsic value that is independent of its usefulness." Or perhaps even better is the message of his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi: "God requires that we assist the animals, when they need our help. Each being (human or creature) has the same right of protection."

Then how do we deal with animals? Let's return to the litany of horrid human behavior presented in Chapter 14. One approach would be to compile a list of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" and post it for all to see. That is diametrically opposed to a reverence for life. That simply won't work for many reasons.

One, life is seldom that simple, seldom a matter of black or white. Two, no list could possibly cover every situation or give reasonable, actionable guidance for every case. There are too many possibilities and permutations to be encountered in life to reduce each one to a written dictum, and most importantly, only a reverence for life calls upon us to apply love and compassion across the board, acting affirmatively to render assistance or otherwise better a situation we encounter. Acting out of conscious love, not out of written commands. A reverence for life calls upon adherents to get involved in every situation, in every encounter, not simply avoiding certain behavior or certain occasions but always choosing to act in a positive way with the welfare of the subject of our acts uppermost in our minds.

Then, without hard and fast rules, what are we to do? A reverence for life leaves it up to us. We are called to acknowledge the inherent value and worth of every life, to view every life as an end in itself rather than a means for human purposes, to promote and enhance life rather than take it, restrict it, or abuse it, and to practice affirmative acts of compassion, caring, and relief of suffering to the maximum extent we can.

What does all this mean for you? Simply this: You are, each one of us, an autonomous individual who must make moral and ethical judgments, sometimes many of them, every day. No one else can do it for you. Ultimately each one of us is responsible for his actions or failures to act. Each situation is different, and it calls upon us to assess the situation with a critical eye, open mind, and compassion filled heart. Take ownership of your life. Be certain that every act reflects the moral underpinning of a reverence for life, and do the best you can.

Some broad examples as regards treatment of animals? Sure. Should I eat meat or animal flesh? That's your choice, your decision. You must assess the ethics of taking an innocent life for your wants. You must assess the state of animal agriculture, mindful of the horrible, often cruel treatment accorded fellow creatures by humans. You must decide whether, if you are to adhere to a reverence for life as your guide, you can ingest the

product of such life taking and life cruelty with its attendant degradation of the environment. You must make the same type of analysis for horse and dog racing, animal parks and zoos, trade in wildlife and attendant slaughter, destruction of habitats for human wants, animal fighting and over breeding, and the list goes on as we've previously seen.

And now here are just a few specific examples of cruelty toward animals that we are called to oppose and combat. These are excerpts from past ruminations and are presented to give the reader additional ideas on how to approach and analyze this difficult topic.

Changes in animal agriculture will result only in response to consumer changes. If meat, dairy, poultry, and pork consumption decrease, agriculturalists, who are not stupid, will shift to those crops and foods that consumers are eating. The more that people shift to a vegetarian or vegan diet, the fewer cattle, dairy, poultry, and pork slaughtering and rendering facilities we will have. As the number of those facilities dwindles, presumably the environmental issues they create will dwindle as well, and humans may yet live another century or more without having totally fouled our own nest, without having totally destroyed our own earth.

Ah, but there's the rub, for the earth is not ours, despite anthropocentric leanings to the contrary. Humans are one species out of millions, called by our incredible intelligence and equally incredible organizational skill to be stewards of our world. It is high time that the human race made the transition from usurper of earth's bounty to its protector. Let us then, particularly young people who will shape the future of this planet, pledge drastically to reduce meat consumption, not only because it is good for our health and for our environment, but for the simple reason that cruel, inhumane treatment as well as any unnecessary killing of a living thing is wrong.

And that's the most important point of all. It is galling to note how many people are upset at the trade in dog, cat, and horse meat outside the United States, but those same people don't care a whit for the millions of other domesticated animals who are tortured and butchered right here for our pleasure. This is the most pressing issue for humanity to deal with; namely, the barbaric, inhumane treatment accorded farm animals throughout their miserable lives. This must stop. We humans must evidence a reverence for life, all life, taking those actions that enhance and promote life, and avoiding those actions that

hinder or harm life. In this way, one by one, we will change not only the practices of animal ag, but our relationship with all life within the biosphere. Another crucial issue with regard to treatment of animals deals with breeding. To help guide our thinking, here is a quick analysis and argument on horse breeding and one of its main offshoots, horse racing.

With a reverence for life as our ethos, we need some basic standards to help reduce the number of unwanted horses and to provide better care for those that are bred. Again, breeders must first agree that animals are not commodities, but rather are lives worthy of reverence and compassionate stewardship, meaning that horses shall be bred for companionship only and only when their proper care is assured. We must have further restrictions on breeding, which restrictions include at a minimum casual breeding licenses, a strict limit on the number of times a mare can be bred, veterinarian oversight and certification of the breeding process, and a license provision permitting county animal control officials to inspect the mother, offspring, and facilities where breeding is taking place should those officials have reason to suspect the horses are not in good health or otherwise not humanely cared for.

While we push for an end to horse racing and thereby breeding for horse racing (one of the chief causes of the unwanted horse population), due to money and memes a reversal of the status quo is unlikely soon, so let's work for some achievable results. There are tens (perhaps hundreds) of thousands of unwanted horses from the racing and rodeo sports that end up slaughtered. Far too many horses, those bred for racing and in general, end up unloved and neglected. Many more are neglected or otherwise maltreated before being moved on from the industries that brought them into being. Horses are costly, so once they become money losers many are slaughtered, abandoned, or otherwise barely cared for, if at all.

Again, these are creatures brought into the world largely due to human volition and action, so, at the very least, we owe something to the creatures we have created for our own needs and then abandoned when those needs were no longer met. Part of the license fee for breeding horses must include a sizable amount payable to the county where the horses are kept to pay for a horse sanctuary. This place would afford all those horses who are no longer wanted, for whatever reason, a place of safety and compassion where they

can live out their lives. The license fee would also help pay for vet and farrier care, food, and sanctuary upkeep. Those horses that could be adopted out should be given that opportunity (with proper safeguards to ensure the adopting party will care for the horse lovingly and not ship it directly to the slaughterhouse), but any abandoned horse will be welcomed and tended to.

A look around any part of the world, or our beautiful state, will confirm that we humans live in a throwaway society. When an item is no longer useful or pleasurable, we discard it with scant heed to the consequences. Sadly this philosophy pervades our dealings with horses. These animals are viewed as things to be used and then discarded when no longer useful. We must start seeing these creatures as lives with their own intrinsic value, and because of that possessing under natural law a right to exist, to be cared for, and to live their lives to the fullest. As it is we humans who have brought these horses into this world, we owe them that and so much more. Under the aegis of a reverence for life, let us treat these horses with compassion and stewardship all through their lives.

Now let us set forth one final analysis, one on dog fighting, to help you formulate your own analysis and subsequent ethos. Dog fighting is an illegal, underground blood spectacle in which selectively bred dogs fight each other to the death for the plaudits, pleasure, and remuneration of humans. These dogs undergo vicious, horrific training that includes beatings, deprivations, and often the injection of illegal, performance-enhancing substances. They “practice” on smaller dogs, cats, rabbits, even raccoons until their “trainers” believe they are ready for the ring. Losers are either killed outright or left to die. Statistics on dog fights are hard to come by, as this activity is illegal in every state, but animal groups estimate that there are 40,000 dog fighters in the United States with some 16,000 dogs dying annually. This means that there are probably hundreds of thousands of “spectators”, and all these figures may well be just the tip of the iceberg.

To breed, train, and force an animal to inflict damage and death on another creature solely for the enjoyment and financial gain of a few humans is simply abhorrent to all that is decent and compassionate. It is in complete violation of the philosophy of a reverence for life, of the belief that all life is sacred, and each life should be permitted to express normal behavior, not behavior induced and compelled by exploitative humans.

To cause harm in this manner is simply vile and utterly inhumane. These dogs by the way are usually quite gentle with humans. In fact, they have enough affection for their human handlers literally to die for them. To treat these animals as we do is the ultimate betrayal of trust.

Each situation of animal cruelty cited in Chapter 14 (and the limited examples discussed in the analysis and argument above) has hundreds if not thousands of current examples. We picked a representative few to detail the extent of the crisis facing us and to assist us in bringing a reverence for life to bear on these situations. How do we handle them?

In each case your duty is to assess clearly and openly the behavior toward animals by humans, often done on your behalf. Don't turn a blind eye, engage in wishful thinking or bowdlerization phrasing to hide the reality of what transpires. Then you must contrast that behavior with the behavior called for by a reverence for life (love, compassion, life enhancement and stewardship, the reduction of suffering), and decide honestly what you will do.

Our marching orders then are a model of simplicity. Filled with the spirit and buoyed by the words of Jesus, take the philosophy, the ethos of a reverence for life, and affirmatively bring it to bear in your world. Show and share the love and compassion of Jesus. View all life as sacred, as God's handiwork. Seek to utilize our extraordinary human abilities to enhance life, all lives, and to lessen the suffering of those lives when and where you are able to do so. As you step out of your door each day, resolve to put a reverence for life into practice. Do so and you will most assuredly be helping Jesus complete His life's work. God bless you.

AFTERWORD

At the outset of this book we posited a twin theme and goal of education and inspiration. I profoundly hope that the reader would be moved by the twinning of the philosophy of a reverence for life with its spiritual foundation to a stage of enlightenment regarding animal treatment. Through an analysis of the thought of Albert Schweitzer and the corresponding biblical underpinnings of that thought, here is a lucid and easily understood synthesis of reason and spirit regarding human duties toward all other life on this planet. From that synthesis would emerge an army of motivated people ready, through their own acts of kindness, to start to alter the horrific lives currently led by so many creatures, mainly due to human action and inaction.

It occurs to me, however, that my views are woefully myopic. The changes I posit and predict will indeed take place, but only because of literally billions of individual choices and decisions made by very large numbers of people. It will require time and effort for us to inculcate a reverence for life, and one must be candid and aver that our work will never be done. We will never be able to declare victory and go home, as each day will present us with challenges and opportunities, each day will find us facing our preconceived notions and prejudices regarding animals, and acknowledging and combating them.

The ultimate aim of this book is a concerted change in how we view animals (adopting a reverence for life as our ethos) followed up with an equally concerted change in our behavior toward animals based on our new ethos. I believe that while Dr. Schweitzer's philosophy is indeed the ideal toward which we must strive, it is our acceptance of the underlying spirituality of that philosophy that will provide the impetus to reify that philosophy into habitual action. We humbly invoke the spirit of Jesus to make this happen.

For the reader, then, do not expect this change in your behavior, or the behavior of others, to transpire immediately. Rather, armed with a reverence for life and believing in its forceful spirituality, every day seek to improve your performance, every day take at

least one step closer to being an entity filled with compassion, and that will be enough. I pray earnestly that the spirit of Jesus will suffuse itself in all you do and permeate your entire being. I look forward to hearing your stories of how you have brought a reverence for life to bear on your dealings with animals.

Most sincerely,

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