



# On God and Dogs: A Christian Theology of Compassion for Animals

*Stephen H. Webb*

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Many of us keep pet animals; we rely on them for companionship and unconditional love. For some people their closest relationships may be with their pets. In the wake of the animal rights movement, some ethicists have started to re-examine this relationship, and to question the rights of humans to "own" other sentient beings in this way.

In this engaging and thought-provoking book, Stephen Webb brings a Christian perspective to bear on the subject of our responsibility to animals, looked at through the lens of our relations with pets--especially dogs. Webb argues that the emotional bond with companion animals should play a central role in the way we think about animals in general, and--against the more extreme animal liberationists--defends the intermingling of the human and animal worlds. He tries to imagine what it would be like to treat animals as a gift from God, and indeed argues that not only are animals a gift for us, but they give to us; we need to attend to their giving and return their gifts appropriately. Throughout the book he insists that what Christians call grace is present in our relations with animals just as it is with other humans. Grace is the inclusive and expansive power of God's love to create and sustain relationships of real mutuality and reciprocity, and Webb unfolds the implications of the recognition that animals too participate in God's abundant grace.

Webb's thesis affirms and persuasively defends many of the things that pet lovers feel instinctively--that their relationships with their companion animals are meaningful and important, and that their pets have value and worth in themselves in the eyes of God. His book will appeal to a broad audience of thoughtful Christians and animal lovers.

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