

Lord, What Was Man*Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*

Lord, what was man when made at first,
 Adam the offspring of the dust,
 That thou should'st set him and his race
 But just below an angel's place?

That thou should'st raise his nature so,
 And make him lord of all below;
 Make every beast and bird submit,
 And lay the fishes at his feet?

But, O, what brighter glories wait
 To crown the second Adam's state!
 What honours shall thy Son adorn,
 Who condescended to be born!

See him below his angels made,
 See him in dust amongst the dead,
 To save a ruin'd world from sin;
 But he shall reign with power divine.

The world to come, redeem'd from all
 The miseries that attend the fall,
 New-made, and glorious, shall submit
 At our exalted Saviour's feet.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***That Dog Won't Hunt***Kevin T. Bauder*

Kristi Noem, the governor of South Dakota, recently stirred up controversy when she admitted in print to shooting an unmanageable dog. The story is in her new book, *No Going Back: The Truth on What's Wrong with Politics and How We Move America Forward* (Center Street). It is one of multiple stories that involve Noem killing farm animals.

Predictably, the story provoked hysteria from liberal pundits. What Noem probably could not have guessed, however, was how harshly leading conservative figures would judge her. Writers at *National Review* have singled her out for repeated excoriation. The incident puts a serious cloud over her aspirations to become Donald Trump's pick for Vice President.

Not that I think she would make a good selection. Noem is the Republican governor who vetoed a bill that would have kept biological males from participating in women's sports. People who believe in protecting actual women and girls find this veto incredible, and that is an issue of substance.

What is not a substantial issue is Governor Noem shooting the dog. The canine in question was a 14-month-old wirehair that had been raised for hunting. According to Noem, the dog not only wouldn't point game, but actually disrupted the hunt. Furthermore, it attacked and killed a neighbor's chickens. When Noem attempted to restrain the dog, it turned on her and tried to bite her. Subsequently, Noem took the dog to a gravel pit and killed it.

Several observations should be offered here. First, many of Noem's critics are castigating her for shooting a "puppy." In certain respects, a 14-month-old dog is still juvenile, but it has substantially reached its adult strength and stature. To call this dog a *puppy* is the equivalent of calling an armed 17-year-old gangster a *child*. The emotional content of the word does not match the reality of the case.

Indeed, this case is about emotion versus reality, and misplaced emotion at that. People are not wrong to love dogs and other animals. Quite the contrary, there is a proper degree and kind of love for everything that God has made, as there is for God Himself. The problem arises when people begin to love things to an improper degree—either more or less than God loves



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them—or with a wrong love. The result of a wrong love is either brutality, which occurs when we love a thing too little or too coarsely, or sentimentalism, which occurs when we love a thing too much or too sweetly.

An example of brutality occurs in individuals who abuse animals and do not care about their pain. An example of sentimentality occurs in individuals who anthropomorphize animals, treating them as if they had human value. A century or so ago, brutality to animals may have been the more common problem. Now sentimentality clearly is.

Typically, sentimentality in one area leads to a corresponding brutality in another. For example, a civilization (if it can be called that) might grow indignant at the swift and painless killing of beasts but defend as unalienably right the butchery of partially-born infants. Predictably, when animals are elevated to near-human status, certain human beings will be demoted to the bestial.

I suggest that the reaction against the killing of Kristi Noem's dog is sentimentalism run amok. Furthermore, I suspect that the hue and cry against Noem has been raised by people who have little experience of rural life. In farm country, animals are not usually pets. They are property. Often, they are tools. Dogs in particular are tools, used for hunting, herding, and guarding.

Treating animals as tools is unquestionably moral. God Himself killed animals to acquire their skins. He gave animals to humans as food after the Flood. He required the blood of animals in sacrifice. Jesus recognized the right of humans to own and control animals when he prepared to ride the donkey's colt into Jerusalem—which was itself a use of an animal as a tool.

Kristi Noem's dog proved to be a severely defective tool. It would not perform the task for which it was intended. Furthermore, it became destructive, not only to Noem but to others as well. When a dog in farm country starts to kill stock, there can be only one outcome. The dog is never going to stop on its own. If that dog turns vicious with its master, then it becomes a threat to be eliminated.

The task of humans is not to preserve the natural order but to improve it. To do that, they need tools. Sometimes they make tools out of inanimate materials. Other times they use animals as tools. In either case, the tool must perform or it will be scrapped.

What Kristi Noem did is an aspect of human dominion within the natural world. She eliminated a threat to her neighbor's property and to her own personal safety. Might she have found an alternative way to deal with the problem? That is only an important question for those who have already anthropomorphized animals. Every imaginable alternative would have been more costly and time-consuming. The alternative that she pursued

was cheap, painless, quick, and effective. To argue otherwise is to commit oneself to an untoward sentimentalism.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
