

was therefore not to be silenced in case a human life was in danger from an evil spirit.

Our dogs are so much more than anatomy and instinct. We have come a long way from Descartes' biological bag of reflexes that feels no pain, but dog behavior remains inscrutable to a large extent. Few behaviorists are denying that they have a moral sense, individual personality, trust (have faith), and feel a variety of "human" emotions. We share much genetic heritage with dogs, leading Mark Bekoff to believe that what we share extends into the spiritual realm. "If we have souls, our animals have souls. If we have free choice, they have it. If we can't know this for sure, let's give them the benefit of the doubt." (from a *Denver Post* interview). We still wonder why dogs are so devoted to the human race, why they seem to delight in our company even if it is not ideal, and accord us with limitless affection and fidelity.

We have come to the crux of the matter: the question of personality. That we give our dogs the very characteristic of *personality* is telling. There is no other way to describe the distinctive temperaments and styles of activity each dog even of the same breed exhibits. They are all as different as our own children are. And if this is personality, the dogs surely have souls that warrant entry into the Creator's abode at the end of their earthly lives. How dare we humans claim exclusivity when not only legend, lore, and spiritual intuition say otherwise? The biblical promise also includes animals in a life after death. In Genesis 9:9-10, the Creator makes a covenant with the animals as well as with Noah after the Flood, saying, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and *with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you...*" That is inclusive, and now we use the Rainbow Bridge as a symbol of the original sign God set in the clouds.

The first Bible verse most of us learned in Sunday School because it was short and to the point was, "God is love." Love is love, a divine dispensation from wherever it comes. One of the requirements for a healthy emotional life is reciprocal love. We have a basic need to love and be loved. Dogs can fill that need nearly as well as human beings, some would say, just as well. We should neither fantasize nor romanticize our relationship with our dogs. Their function is not simply to fill some need of ours.

Consider the endowments of dogs: they have instincts and heightened senses, hear voices and see things we do not, intuit climates of emotion, exercise inscrutable wisdom, and obey inaudible commands. They have a sanctified innocence, and inherent dignity of their own, and are capable of self-sacrificing love and loyalty rarely found among human beings. They do not consistently abuse, ravage, and kill their own species. They are not an inferior sub-species, but as Henry Beston has noted, (animals) "are other nations... caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the