

some kind of special relationship with their Creator, a belief held in primitive societies for ages. Someone has said that it is no coincidence that God spelled backwards is Dog. One charming folk tale among the Kato Indians of California has God traversing his new creation filling it with all its familiar wonders. However, there is no mention of the dog. Why? Because God already had a dog who was accompanying him on his creation walk. Apparently, the Katos could not even imagine God going about without a dog by his side.

There is obviously a substantial and wondrous connection between us and our dogs. They are capable of loyalty, shared experiences, calculated play, serious responsibilities, and genuine camaraderie. To go even further, any long association with dogs convinces us that dogs can exercise reason, discern problems, figure out solutions, and communicate their intended action. Is this claiming too much for the household pet without being charged with anthropomorphizing? Not at all. It happens that dogs and humans share the same general nervous system structure, brain organization, and transmitter chemistry. We also share an evolutionary history notably manifested in much canine behavior that demonstrates our high level relationship. While not yet proven by strict scientists, (if it ever can be), we cannot claim conclusively that dogs possess consciousness, forethought, moral intelligence, and therefore, souls. However, these attributes *are* plain to us who live year after year with consecutive Scotties. Our dogs constantly exhibit behavior that we *understand* on an intelligent or emotional level. My Scotties have wants, likes and dislikes, expectations, hopes, fears, disappointments, and joys. They can express both grief and exultation appropriately. The data is compelling. Two necessary components, consciousness and intelligence, augmented by historic breed instincts, is altogether an impressive package which include having a sense of right and wrong. That surely opens to door to heaven.

I know a few people who try to silence their dogs as completely as they can, even using shock collars. Little do they suspect that the tendency to bark made the dog the most valuable animal on the planet to early humans. A barking dog is the perfect warning system even today, more efficient than fancy electric security systems, and that is the opinion of our neighborhood policemen. In the dangerous world of cave dwellers, the best barkers were no doubt the survivors in the camp. Those dogs who did not provide the watchdog service well, may have been eaten rather than bred for domestication. Scottish Terriers rank in the top three breeds for well-functioning watchdog duty, and my two Scotties prove that pudding. Barking is a vital feature bred into these dogs, and while instinct may incite barking, the household Scottie soon learns to hold his fire or limit his barking to his own territory. In other words, intelligent discernment enters his decisions, and he rarely does random or nuisance noise. Early human beings gave the dog spiritual powers by which both angels and devils were detected. A barking dog