

## Is it dehumanizing to call children born with disabilities 'divine'?

My brother was born with Down's syndrome and for most of his life, people have been making it a point to talk about how he is a divine gift – as if his extra chromosome somehow gives him a direct line to heaven.

Of course, not all divine connections are light and glory. Early Scottish folklore believed that elves or fairies would take away desirable children and in their place leave a changeling – an elfin child, who would grow up peevish and malcontent. The reality behind those myths, which are pervasive in many western European nations, is that changelings were often children born with Down's syndrome or other disabilities like Prader-Willi syndrome, cerebral palsy and spina bifida.

Recently, geneticist and pediatrician Judith Hall noted in an interview: "In the same way that ancient societies viewed [people] with differences as a pathway to the divine, I see them as a pathway to access the knowledge of nature." Hall further explains that by tracing genetic anomalies, worlds of scientific knowledge have been expanded.

Hall is not alone in this belief. In his book [\*Freaks of Nature: What Anomalies Tell Us About Development and Evolution\*](#), Mark Blumberg posits that when genetic variance occurs in nature it is called evolution; when it's in humans we regulate our differences to a sideshow.

People have interpreted anomalies in babies as messages from God for centuries, and modern scientists are attempting to link genetic differences to our chemical-laced lifestyles. These overlook one simple fact: the human life before them.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Seeing the divine in children born disabled ignores their very real humanity](#)**