

Our God Truly



Our entire perspective of our worth and our destiny is altered for good when we come to understand that we are God's children and that we can become like Him.

BY ELDER DOUGLAS L. CALLISTER
Of the Seventy

In Moscow, Russia, a young sister spoke to me of her friendship with a troubled boy from a communist home. He frequently inquired of her, “Where is God?”

Men and women of all generations have asked where God is. The Prophet Joseph did so from Liberty Jail, asking, “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?” (D&C 121:1).

The Lord often counseled the suffering Saints, “Be still and know that I am God” (D&C 101:16; see also Psalm 46:10). Even the Savior, in the concluding hours of His atoning sacrifice, cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

People of all ages have delighted in pitting the strength or wisdom of their gods against that of their neighbors’ gods. One of the most interesting contests took place over 2,500 years ago on Mount Carmel between the Lord of Israel, represented by His prophet Elijah, and the Phoenician god Baal, represented by his 450 prophets. How piercing was Elijah’s challenge, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).



The heavens silently ignored the appeal to Baal’s idols. Elijah mocked, “Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened” (1 Kings 18:27). Man-made gods never fared well in the presence of real Deity.

When it was Elijah’s turn, he prayed openly, “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant” (1 Kings 18:36).

Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and licked up the water that was in the trench. The people fell on their faces and proclaimed, “The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.” (See 1 Kings 18:38–39.)

Is God

In their preoccupation with worshipping a powerful and respected god, ancient civilizations often fashioned multiple deities as the objects of their reverence. It didn't occur to them to have no God. That sin was left to our more sophisticated society.

Recognizing the Lord's Hand

Naturalism's explanations of the origins of life and the miracle of our bodies often appear convoluted when placed side by side with the simple truths of the revealed word and divine scripture.

With its 107 million cells, connected to the brain by over 1 million neurons, the eye is more perfect than any camera ever invented. It caused Charles Darwin to humbly admit, "That the eye with all its inimitable contrivances . . . could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest sense."¹

The Psalmist wrote, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 53:1). Such a foolish disbeliever ought to look at his hands. Seventy muscles contribute to hand movements. Much of the rest of the body is devoted to optimizing the complex function of the hand. There are no muscles in the fingers. The sole purpose of the

To observe a miracle, look at a baby's creased hand. Shortly after the child's birth, the hand will be able to grasp, curl, push, lift, sense hot and cold, respond to pain by withdrawing, heal itself, and display great strength and extraordinary sensitivity.

forearm, its muscles and bones, is to move and position the hand.

said: "In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God's existence."²

Paul Brand, renowned orthopedic hand surgeon, wrote: "We use our hands for the most wonderful activities: art, music, writing, healing, touching. Some people go to concerts and athletic events to watch the performance; I go to watch hands. For me, a piano performance is a ballet of fingers—a glorious flourish of ligaments and joints, tendons, nerves, and muscles."³

The infant Son of Man once possessed tiny hands.



The doubter asks us to believe that the miracles of eyes and hands and DNA and order in the universe all happened by chance. The passage of time is not a "cause" and provides no answers without an intelligent designer.

His hands, too, grew to accomplish their intended purposes. He used them to touch and heal the blind and infirm. His hands threw the money changers out of the temple. His hands reached upward in prayer, outward in blessing, and downward from the cross.

The fool proclaims in his heart that there is no God, but our eyes, hands, hearts, and souls unhesitatingly testify to the contrary.

One of my brothers is a physician. During medical school he was assigned to study anatomy in companionship with an agnostic. Their education eventually required that the two of them carefully examine and dissect a cadaver. They studied the incredibly complex yet harmonious systems of the body. They noted the body's power to correct its own deficiencies and to send healing antibodies to the place of injury or infection. They learned of over 150 trillion cells within the body. If set end-to-end, these cells would encircle the earth more than 200 times. Today medical students learn of more than 1 billion miles (1.6 billion km) of DNA in one human body. My brother and his fellow student learned of a brain that continually receives signals from 130 million light receptors in the

eyes, 24,000 hearing receptors in the ears, 10,000 taste buds, and hundreds of thousands of receptors in the skin, with specialized commissions to recognize touch, vibration, cold, heat, and pain. My brother and his friend became silent as they contemplated the miracle they were examining. Sensing the moment was right, my brother challenged: "Coincidence is a marvelous thing, isn't it?" His

agnostic classmate responded, "You win."

This earth departs from its orbit of the sun by only one-ninth of an inch (2.82 mm) every 18 miles (29 km). If, instead, it changed by one-tenth of an inch (2.54 mm) every 18 miles, we would all freeze to death. If it changed by one-eighth of an inch (3.18 mm), we would all be incinerated.⁴ Did this all happen by accident?

Alma spoke to us, as well as to Korihor, testifying, "Yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator" (Alma 30:44).

The doubter requires too much of us when he asks us to believe that the miracles of eyes and hands and DNA and

order in the universe all happened by chance. The passage of time, even long intervals of time, is not a “cause” and provides no answers without an intelligent designer.

The evidence of Heavenly Father’s existence is everywhere: in every newborn babe and in every system, part, and parcel of the unending and orderly universe, including our own bodies. He is evidenced in every sunset, work of art, and passage of music, all of which He has provided to gladden the heart and bring beauty to our lives. Richard Swinburne said: “God paints with a big brush from a large paintbox and he has no need to be stingy with the paint he uses to paint a beautiful universe.”⁵

It is not possible to contemplate the immeasurable vacuum and purposelessness that would exist in our lives if He were not there. We would regret the passing of every day and the passing of every loved one, knowing that neither time nor relationships could be extended. We would approach the autumn and then the winter years of life with crescendoing fear. Every day of our lives we should thank Him that He is there and that this life is not all there is.

Valuing the Agency of Man

Some ask where God is because there is pain on this earth, and He does not usually hasten to intervene. One flip-pantly approached this issue by suggesting that God ought to have made good health contagious rather than disease.⁶ However, such thinking misses the whole point of our mortal existence, which is probationary rather than paradisaical in nature.

If babies could talk and could remember their pre-earthly estate, their first utterances might express: “You came here to be tested. You agreed to that. The tests will be hard, in part because they are seldom the tests you anticipated. This is a closed-book test in that you will not

remember your premortal estate. God will not intervene and remove the tests until the close of the examination or probationary period.” That Heavenly Father does not hasten to intervene does not mean He is not there or does not love us. He has infinite respect for our agency and the purposes of earth life.

Agency is not just the right to select among good alternatives. When God granted agency, He necessarily contemplated the possibility of wrong choices. Because He knows best and esteems so highly our precious agency, He does not answer every prayer just as it is uttered. Nor does He always punish transgressors before there has been an opportunity or a space for repentance. This Divine hesitancy is to our advantage.



The Son of Man’s hands grew to accomplish their intended purposes. He used them to touch and heal the blind and infirm.

Understanding

Our Divine Potential

The same God who brings such order to the universe and inspires the prophets designed the time, place, and circumstances of your birth. Said the Lord to the Prophet Joseph, “Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less” (D&C 122:9). God’s love for you and awareness of your circumstances are of equal measure. Our relationship with Him is not that of Creator and created thing. It is of personal Father and child.

I had the privilege of being present when President Gordon B. Hinckley was interviewed by editors of the *Los Angeles Times*. An editor inquired about the rapid growth of the Church. President Hinckley chose to respond by emphasizing the miraculous transformation in the life of each individual who joins the Church. He spoke of a girl in Australia who was employed serving ice cream. She seemed inattentive to the message of the missionaries until one of them said, “Do you know that you are a child of God?” She replied, “Nobody has ever



fiery furnace, heated seven times more than it was necessary to be heated, because they would worship only the true and living God. When the king, Nebuchadnezzar, saw that they were not consumed in the fire, he said to his counselors:

“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. . . . There is no other God that can deliver after this sort” (Daniel 3:28–29).

Thereby all learned that our God *is* God.

This is the true answer to the query of the lad in Moscow who asked, “Where is God?”

I know that our God is God and that He lives. I know He is our personal Father with an appointed mission for each of us to perform. I pray that we will never lose our faith, testimonies, or virtue, that we may be worthy to receive the blessings of immortality and eternal life. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on November 8, 2005. For the full text, please visit www.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. As quoted in Bert Thompson and Wayne Jackson, *The Case for the Existence of God* (1996), 33.
2. As quoted in Paul Brand and Phillip Yancey, “The Scars of Easter,” *Christianity Today*, Apr. 5, 1985, 20.
3. *Christianity Today*, Apr. 5, 1985, 20.
4. See Bert Thompson and Wayne Jackson, *The Case for the Existence of God* (1996), 20.
5. *Is There a God?* (1996), 63.
6. See *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll*, 12 vols. (1900), 1:73.

She went to her room, got down on her knees, and inquired: “Are you there? Am I your child? Please let me know.”

said that to me before. I had no idea that I might be a child of God.” Thereafter she went to her room, got down on her knees, and inquired: “Are you there? Am I your child? Please let me know.” Then she said, “There came into me a surge of feeling that brought me the conviction that was the case.” She joined the Church.

Two weeks later she was asked to give a talk in a Church meeting. Her first impulse was to run from it. Then she thought, “If I am a child of God, I can do anything.” With this enlarged vision of who she was, she became a stalwart member of the Church.

Our entire perspective of ourselves, our worth, and what we can make of our lives is altered for good when we come to understand that we are God’s children and that we can become like Him.

Exercising Faith in the Living God

The book of Daniel includes the remarkable story of the three princes of Judah: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. They were cast into the midst of a burning,