

## Naturalism

So there is this great divide between those people who think that the universe we experience with our senses and study with our instruments is the be-all and end-all, and those who believe there is something more than that, something indeed surer, more lasting, more purposeful than that. We must not think that this great divide simply separates Christians from non-Christians, for of course it separates all believers in divine beings from all who are convinced that the universe does not allow for them. The latter can properly be called “naturalists.” Their creed is “Naturalism,” the belief that the world of time and space is the whole show, the belief that there is no life except the life of growth to death within the natural order.

Those who refuse to accept that the natural order is the whole show and insist that, at the very minimum, there is at least one being who was not born as you and I were born and will not die as you and I will die, can justly be called “supernaturalists.” They believe that there is something above (super) Nature and, in that sense, their creed is some kind of “supernaturalism.”

Christianity is of course a religion of the supernatural in that Christians reject the idea that the running-down world of time and space is the only reality, and that the life lived between cradle and grave is the only life ever to be experienced.

“Supernatural” is an easily misunderstood word. It tends to be used popularly of what are called paranormal phenomena. It conjures up in people's minds ideas of ghosts, mediums, table-tapping, poltergeists, and the like. This is a pity. There is a perfectly good word for such phenomena. They are “preter-natural”—that is to say, outside the apparent laws of the natural but not necessarily *above* them, and therefore not superior to the natural order in the way that the things of God may be superior. It would be better if Christians kept the word “supernatural” for the things of God, and used the word “preternatural” for seemingly non-natural manifestations that have nothing to do with genuine religion. Perhaps it would be better still if we also used the word “sub-natural” (*below* the natural) for non-natural manifestations that originate with powers lower, and not higher, than mankind.

(Excerpt from *On Christian Truth* by Harry Blamires, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, Guideposts Edition, 1983, 6-7)