On April 12, 1961, Soviet Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to travel into space and the first to orbit the earth. In a speech following the historic flight Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev proclaimed, "Gagarin flew into space, but didn't see any god there.” At the time, Russia was an atheistic government bent on dismissing everything supernatural as superstitious. The following Sunday a Baptist preacher in Texas replied, “If that Communist cosmonaut had walked outside his ship without his spacesuit on, then he would have seen God!” During the Cold War many American leaders referred to Russia as a land of godless communists.

But now, fifty years later, the head of Russia is calling Europe and America godless. Russian President Vladimir Putin said, “Many Euro-Atlantic countries have moved away from their roots, including Christian values.” He warned this will cause the world to slip into “chaotic darkness.” Mr. Putin’s views of the West were echoed this month by Patriarch Kirill I of Moscow, the leader of the Orthodox Church, who accused Western countries of engaging in the “spiritual disarmament” of their people. “We have been through an epoch of atheism, and we know what it is to live without God,” Patriarch Kirill said. “We want to shout to the whole world, ‘Stop!’”1

How did this happen? Some may blame the media. Some say it’s the politicians. Some complain about what is taught in our schools. Some may even see the roots of this in our Founding Fathers like Thomas Jefferson who said, “Question boldly even the existence of God.” Regardless of who is to blame, as we grow from child to adult we close our minds to the supernatural and focus only on what our senses tell us. We are trained and taught that only the natural world, what can be touched, tasted, heard, seen, smelled and sensed, is real. The supernatural world, we are told, is unreal. It’s a fairy tale.

But then we leave school and experience life. We run into situations and forces which are beyond our explanation and beyond our control. And within us we experience emptiness, a vacuum, a hole, which is not filled or satisfied by any natural explanation. Now, as we sail deeper into the third millennium, I see two equal and opposite errors. One I call “the natural approach.” From the time our nation was founded until the end of the 20th century, the dominate view was that only the natural world is true. But since the end of the last century we’ve seen the rise of “the supernatural approach.” Contrary to what the Russian leaders say, there is a rising fascination with the spiritual world. A survey in 2012 found:

- 55% of Americans are "certain" miracles happen (a 20% increase from 1991).

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• 80% believe that miracles "certainly" or "probably" occur.

• 42% of Americans with no religious affiliation believe in miracles (compared to 32% from 20 years ago). In other words, the strongest gains in openness to miracles were reported by those who attend services infrequently.

• 75% said they prayed to God to receive healing from an illness or injury.

• 85% prayed for someone else's healing.²

Now you might think this search for the supernatural and the miraculous is great news for Christians. Yes and no. When I asked some Woodside people what comes to mind when they hear the word “supernatural,” they replied, “ghosts, fortune tellers, mediums, Crossing Over, Tarot cards and Ouija boards.” For most people the supernatural is spooky. It’s the paranormal. For many it’s also the New Age movement or the growing popularity of Wicca – what used to be called Witchcraft. Half of those who say they have "no religion" frequent New Age bookstores, and they are especially prone to believe in ghosts, Bigfoot, and Atlantis. Stats like these led religion scholar Jeffrey J. Kripal to declare, "Americans are obsessed with the supernatural."³ So the modern natural approach is to close your mind to anything beyond the senses. But the postmodern supernatural approach is to swallow nearly everything that’s spiritual.

The Bible offers a third option. **God is the Creator of the natural and supernatural.** Colossians 1:15-17 says,

> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

I love it when, after studying this passage, it suddenly dawns on people that we believe in a supernatural God. If God is supernatural then there must be a supernatural world as well as a natural world. God is the creator of both. There is no reason to choose one or the other. God is present in both.

The conflict arises when we try to use the tool from one world to investigate the other. One Christmas I asked for a circular saw. My wife said, “I hope this is the saw of your dreams.” The next Christmas I asked for a compound miter saw with a laser sight. She probably thought I needed to be put in a compound. But she got it for me. The next year she asked, “What do you want for this Christmas? Another saw?” “No, of course not.” “Good.” “This year I want a 150 psi pancake air compressor and three nail guns.” She said, “You’ll shoot your eye out.” I had to go buy it myself. But she did give me something: all the medical reports of nail gun injuries. Now I would not think of using a

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² David Briggs, "Belief in miracles climbs in the age of Oprah," Association of Religion Data Archives (10-27-12)

circular saw to put two pieces together and I would never use a nail gun to cut them apart. Each tool has its proper and improper use.

When you explore the natural world, your five senses are the proper tools to use. You can sometimes pick up traces of the supernatural world with your senses. But the appropriate tool to use with the supernatural world is not your senses but your spirit. To say there is no supernatural world because I can’t study it with my senses is not only close minded, it is foolish. Prayer, worship and Scripture are the best tools to use when you study the supernatural world.

We also learn that **The Natural and the Supernatural are Overlapping**. Most of us might conclude that the natural and supernatural realms are separate – we live in the natural now and the supernatural after we die. But the Bible teaches us that “visible and invisible” are not separate but overlapping. Jesus began his ministry by saying, “The time is come. The kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:15). In the Sermon on the Mount He told us to

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks the door will be opened (Matthew 7:7-8).

Now is the time to seek our Supernatural Father through His Son Jesus Christ. C. S. Lewis once said that we humans are really amphibians. Like frogs that can live in and out of water, we are constantly living in both the natural and supernatural worlds whether we know it or not. We have a physical body and five senses which help us relate to the natural world and a supernatural spirit which allows us to interact with the supernatural world. When we cut ourselves off from the supernatural realm, we deprive ourselves of the supernatural strength and power God longs to give us to deal with our troubles. And what many people do not realize is that the Church is far more than a physical institution. The Church is a supernatural family. From a natural point of view it’s just a group of people. But from a supernatural perspective the Church is a living thing. It is the Body of Jesus Christ filled with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Don’t deprive yourself of the supernatural presence and power that God pours through His people. Become a part of the Body of Christ. If we ask, seek and knock we will receive, find and enter in deeper to the supernatural world.

Finally, **Jesus is the Supreme Place where the Natural and the Supernatural meet**. Colossians 1:19-20 says,

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

In Jesus, the Supernatural God came to us in a natural body, the Almighty God appeared in a helpless baby, the invisible God became visible and tangible. Other religions ask you to believe in gods who hide up in heaven. Our God came down and became so physical we could touch Him, see Him, hear Him, smell Him, and even drive a nail through Him.
This supernatural God became so natural that He endured physical torture. This supernatural God died.

And that’s exactly why He came. Only One who is fully God and fully human, who has one foot firmly in the supernatural and the other firmly in the natural can become the One to reconcile both worlds – things on earth and in heaven, visible and invisible, natural and supernatural. Jesus made peace by the blood of His cross.

Now the question is not, “do you believe in the natural or the supernatural” but “are you far from God or near Him”? Paul says

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation (Colossians 1:13-14, 21-22).

If you are wondering, “Is God real?” look at Jesus.
If you are wondering, “Is there more to life than this?” listen to Jesus.
If you are wondering, “How can I get through this pain?” touch and hold on to Jesus.
If you are wondering, “Can God possibly forgive this sin?” taste the forgiveness of Jesus.
If you are wondering, “Can God make me new?” receive the power of Jesus.
Let Jesus make you holy, spotless and free from all guilt.
Let Him rescue you from darkness and bring you into His Kingdom of Light and Love.

He is still regarded as one of the greatest scientists of all time. He was a pioneer in mathematics, solving problems as a teenager which puzzled the best minds of his day. He is the inventor of the first calculating machine, the first syringe and the first wrist-watch. He developed Paris’ first transportation system. His was an early defender of the scientific method. His work in probability and statistics make him one of the fathers of economics and the social sciences. Centuries later they even named a computer language after him. He discovered the scientific principles behind the vacuum.

But it was a vacuum in his own heart that led him to his greatest discovery. On the night of November 23, 1654, French scientist Blaise Pascal had a vision for two hours – a vision of Jesus that was so powerful he wrote it in his diary and carried a copy of it with him for the rest of his life. At the top of the page he wrote in big letters one word: FIRE. He met not the God of the philosophers, scholars and scientists but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He met God in Jesus Christ. He experienced “joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.” Peace flooded his soul. For the first time in his life he was absolutely certain of God. He wrote:

Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee. This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent
Jesus Christ I have fallen away: I have fled from Him, denied Him, crucified Him
May I not fall from Him for ever.  
Total submission to Jesus Christ  
I will not forget Thy word. Amen.”

Pascal dedicated the rest of his life and his incredible mind to know and to make known to others the God who became flesh in Jesus.

Seek Him and you will find Him as well.

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