

Natural Rights

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For Discussion: Senator mocked for saying, unlike Iran, US doesn't believe God bestows natural rights

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<https://www.jns.org/virginia-democrat-mocked-for-saying-unlike-iran-us-doesnt-believe-god-bestows-natural-rights/>

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.), a former Virginia governor and former Democratic vice-presidential nominee, drew ridicule from Senate colleagues and others when he said during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing that the belief that God endows people with natural rights is the sort of thing that the Iranian regime believes.

“The notion that rights don’t come from law and don’t come from the government but come from the Creator, that’s what the Iranian government believes,” the senator said. “It’s a theocratic regime that bases its rule on Shia law and targets Sunnis, Baha’is, Jews, Christians and other religious minorities.”

From where do we get the idea that the rights of American citizens come from God?

Ultimately from God’s Word, but certainly in the case of the USA, from the Declaration of Independence:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Senator Ted Cruz said the following about Tim Kaine’s perspective:

“I have to say it is stunning to me that the principle that God has given us natural rights is now deemed by Democrats some radical and dangerous notion, Mr. Jefferson was right when he wrote those words.”

What is the problem with the idea that human rights come from government?

If government can grant the rights, they can take them away.

What rights are we talking about that government should have no authority to take away?

A good start is what is described in the U.S. Constitution Bill of Rights... freedom of speech, assembly, & religion; right to bear arms; right to not house soldiers in homes;

right to not have unreasonable search and seizure; right to due process of law; right to a speedy trial by jury; right to not have unusual punishment

What are natural rights?

Natural rights are those rights that every human being possesses inherently because they are created in the image of God...

Genesis 1:27 – *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

These rights are not granted by any government or human authority; rather, they come directly from God, the Creator.

What does it mean that the rights endowed by the Creator are unalienable rights?

The term "unalienable" means that these rights cannot be taken away or transferred by human beings because they come from God. Governments exist not to give these rights but to recognize and protect them.

How does the fact that people are made in the image of God result in certain unalienable rights?

Because humans are made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), all people have inherent dignity and value such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Psalms 139:13-14 – *For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.*

How did the early leaders of this country apply the concept of natural rights to our founding documents?

They understood that the biblical role of human government is instituted to secure these pre-existing rights.

- They rejected the idea of the divine right of kings, which claimed that rulers had absolute authority above the law.
- Instead, they embraced a system where government power is limited and divided to prevent tyranny, and where rights are protected because they come from God, not from the state.

In summary, natural rights are God-given rights inherent to all people by virtue of their creation in God's image. Governments are established to protect these rights, not to grant or revoke them. Relevant Bible verses include:

What is natural law?

When Thomas Jefferson wrote, "We hold these truths to be self-evident..." he was referring to natural law.

- Natural law is the universal standard that directly reflects human nature and can be determined by considering the human condition.
- Jefferson considered the equality of man, and life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (purpose and livelihood) to be from the nature of humanity.

Natural law supported the health and well-being of society because it was only in a healthy, peaceful society that individuals could achieve "happiness"—contentment and purpose.

Why did God institute human government?

1 Peter 2:14 – *to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right*

Rulers are God's appointees to maintain order and promote righteousness in a civil society.

- In an ideal world, everyone would be internally ruled by natural law. Government would be all but unnecessary, and all humanity would be willingly subject to universal standards.

How has man's sin nature caused there to be confusion about natural law?

Mankind is unable to agree on the definition of natural law and thus has no hope of agreeing on how it should be enforced.

- Hobbes said the fulfillment of natural law was protection of the individual, Cicero said it was support of the state, and Jefferson said it was life and liberty—despite the fact that he owned slaves.

What is the difference between natural law and conscience?

Natural law and conscience are closely related because both deal with our inherent sense of right and wrong.

- Natural law provides universal moral standards, while conscience is the internal awareness that guides individuals to recognize and respond to these moral truths.

In essence, conscience acts as a personal, inner compass, shaped by the principles of natural law, but can be influenced by personal experiences, culture, and choices.

What does natural law reveal about the condition of mankind?

Natural law reveals the right way to live, and as such, it also reveals that men are not living that way. It shows that something is broken, that there is a problem.

What is the problem with natural law?

Natural law cannot explain why the order is broken. It cannot tell us the problem is sin or how it came to be. For that, we need God's special revelation, His Word.

- The Bible teaches the absolute necessity of God's grace and His plan of salvation.
- The only name by which men may be saved is the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

How can we discover the true natural law?

Natural law is given by Him who created nature, so we should look to God to know the true natural law...

Romans 2:14-15 – *For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.*

God made His law evident in the hearts of all mankind.

But, because we live in a fallen world with a sin nature, we are incapable of completely knowing what God's law is, and we cannot follow it (Romans 7:14-25).

- Therefore, God gave us His revealed law, inspiring the prophets and the writers of the Bible to explain how to live according to the natural law that we catch glimpses of, but can never really grasp.

How does God's revealed law compare to what most cultures would say is natural law?

It is fairly similar: procreate (Genesis 1:28) and respect life (Genesis 9:5-6).

How has Christianity refined natural law beyond just life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness?

And it's not the safety of citizens, the perseverance of states, or peace. It is this:

Matthew 22:37-40 – *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*

If that love entails personal harm (Matthew 5:27-30), removal of contentment (Matthew 5:39-42), dissension in the family (Matthew 19:29), we are to welcome it.

- Our spiritual nature is greater than our physical nature, so it supersedes even physical life.

What was the purpose of the Mosaic Law?

The law served as a guide to lead the people to Christ by revealing their sinfulness and their need for a Savior.

Galatians 3:24 – *Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith*

It was also meant for sanctification—helping God's redeemed people grow in holiness and live according to God's standards.

What was Senator Kaine doing when he denied there is natural law that comes from God?

- He was reflecting his atheistic, materialistic worldview.
- He was making government into an idol believing that the rights of the people are bestowed by government (blasphemy)

How is the materialism of Senator Kaine anti-God?

Materialism is anti-God because it fundamentally misplaces the source of value and meaning in life.

- When someone embraces materialism, they worship matter—things that have a beginning and an origin—rather than the Creator who made all things.

What prophetic trend is represented by Senator Kaine boldly vocalizing his objection to natural law?

It is yet another manifestation of lawlessness...

Matthew 24:12 – *And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.*

Jesus gave it as one of the birth pangs of His soon return in the Olivet Discourse.

How does rejecting natural law reflect the spirit of Antichrist?

Lawlessness is a rejection of God. Satan, who models the ultimate rejection of God, will one day empower the Antichrist, called “the lawless one” in 2 Thess 2:9.

- Daniel 7 speaks of this man as a “boastful” king who will “*try to change the set times and the laws*” (verses 11 and 25).

What prophetic trend is seen in the boldness of Senator Kaine voicing his objection to natural law?

We are seeing the maturing of the anti-God tares...

Matthew 13:30 – *Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.*

We have to be close to the time of the harvest when the antigod tares are becoming so easily distinguishable from the wheat.

- The rapture of the church will initiate the great harvest of souls for the Lord.

Is there any significance in the language of the Declaration of Independence being rejected today?

It reveals the growth of lawlessness in our country.

- What once was universally accepted is now controversial and cause for deconstructing what made America great.

What applications do we see from this discussion?

- America is great because our founders recognized natural law; those rejecting that seek to destroy America
- Boldly rejecting natural law is a sign of the times; the harvest has to be soon!