

OpenTheo

Conversations With An Ebullient Natural Law Theorist

April 22, 2021



For The King - Rocky Ramsey

How far can natural law stretch in society? What is the use of natural law to the Christian?

Natural law are the laws that are self-evident to all humans as being endowed by their creator by virtue of their being made in God's image, however, this law is only as good as it matches up to revealed laws of God found in scripture. Christians should understand natural law but it has been lost to 21st century Christianity almost entirely. Hopefully this will help get you started in understanding such an important topic. Some application of natural law include, rights afforded to mankind, international law, laws of war, etc.

Key Texts: Romans 1,2 and 10

Inquiries to forthekeepingpodcast@gmail.com

--- Support this podcast: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/rocky-ramsey/support>

Transcript

This serves as a preface to this conversation with one of my good friends, Noah, who's been on the podcast multiple times. We were driving somewhere together and we had free time. So we thought, hey, let's just film a podcast real quick and discuss natural law more.

So we hope you guys enjoy this and get something out of it. And go read that Romans 10 text that we bring up. I also want to say that the view that I hold on when Noah and I get to the salvific nature of natural law, I think there's no salvation whatsoever in natural law.

I think it only comes through the word of God of the good news of Jesus Christ. I don't think that the creation and the laws of nature can ever bring one to salvation. So that's my official stance on this and you guys can hear out what Noah says.

And if you're convinced, then by all means, but I would encourage you to go search the scriptures and see if that is a possibility. So enjoy this podcast. Sorry that the audio is atrocious.

Hopefully you can still hear it. I, you know, we were in a car, so I had to kind of take out some of that background audio, which may have messed up some of the other audio. So hopefully you guys can still make out what's being said.

I know I can kind of make it out, but then again, I know what we were talking about. So make sense that I would. So enjoy this podcast.

So you're ready for my bombshell about natural law. I guess. I think I'm going to turn your world upside down.

I'm just kidding. I was listening to a report of the podcast. I'm doing it right now.

Are you really? Yeah. The whole conversation. Now I'll just cut out things that are like this.

Right now. I apologize. Right now.

Okay. So I was listening to Apology Studios and they were talking about natural law and the constraints of it. And I think sometimes, especially a lot of people, we read.

So like, lock and. Hobbs. So I won't be trying this.

Like a lot of the I try is that much. So they. You know, they have a good understanding of natural law, but I think what they do is they conflate the revelation of God and what's been revealed to humans.

A human Christian society that we take for granted that actually isn't based on natural law. And they try to base it in natural. So.

Well, I. And I do think that sometimes you do that to conflate it and then stretch natural law too far and kind of have it supersede what Scripture actually does without realizing that it's it's scripture. And you just say it's natural because they should agree 100 percent. They agree.

And natural law is intuitive to humans. Sometimes it like Paul says in Romans. Romans chapter two, right? It accuses them or excuses them.

And it's not an infallible knowledge of human reason. Like human reasoning, like it can get you to these principles. The law of nature, the law that's written on the heart.

You can understand these principles from reasoning and the human mind. I get that 100 percent. But I think sometimes what's been revealed throughout a Christian culture that

sometimes these philosophers conflate with that should just be the revelation of God.

So like what I think natural law is. You have any examples? Well, I'm going to get there just a second. So like I want to tell you why I think natural law, how far it stretches.

Well, I see being a true example of natural law and then be some and then I'm going to give some examples of philosophers or political theorists. In a Christian nation, it's actually stretched natural law through far. So in the Amazon jungle or Africa, it's little like small tribes in Africa.

You know, there's that. Have you ever heard of that island off the coast of India that has the only like noncommunicating group in the world? Have you heard of that? In a missionary took a boat out to the island to try to evangelize them and they shot him with arrows and killed him. Like they're just they have no contact with the outside world.

They're literally on an island all by themselves. And you know, these societies like that. I think that is natural law that within their society.

They do cannibalize. They eat each other. They do all sorts of furnace things.

Sometimes it accuses them. Sometimes it excuses them. It's ambiguous.

But what they do know, some of the principles are easier than others just based off of logic reason. So like, you need reason to understand natural law. Exactly.

Yeah. 100 percent. People are increasing their 30.

That's true. We would say that's unreasonable. But the course of human nature left to its own devices without any revelation of God will manifest in.

Well, for instance, you have like the Aztecs. They had no exposure to the word of God. Yet they had like what you know, like they're at Chantalana or whatever that major city was like the Rick City.

They had billions of people in it. It was like the size of the animals. It was millions and millions of people in Mexico.

The Aztecs and you know, they were cannibalizing each other. They were eating each other. They were more sophisticated.

So I think they sacrificed. They did. And you know, like all of these societies also are heavily influenced by Monica.

Yeah. Negative. So I guess I don't see it here.

I think human reason can be like human reason can be taught and encouraged and matured and even individual. For instance, babies are born. They're a reason.

They're irrational animals. Babies are irrational animals. They don't reason at all.

As they grow up, they learn. If you don't teach a baby how to reason and how to basically be a functional member of society, they can remain in a very low level of reason, low level of natural law understanding what's right and what's wrong. Basically have to remain under government.

Exactly. Yeah. So I do think it can be increased and matured in society and in human individuals, all that kind of stuff.

But I think sometimes some of the blessings of understanding the revelation of God and what God has told us that some philosophers pushed you far for, they call it natural law when it's actually just, hey, you live in a Christian society that's had this revealed to them from the revelation of God. That was risky. And I think it's something like... Okay.

Those societies I kind of named off, they understand thou shall not work. But there is a time where those societies will, like I said, cannibalize or like you said, you would sacrifice, all that kind of stuff. They are negatively impacted by demonic forces that probably mess up their ability to reason naturally.

But I think knowing not to do something like that is a blessing of the revelation of God. That's why all the cultures around Israel had something like that. The Canaanites, the pagans, I think even Greek mythology had stuff like that where there was human sacrifices given like that.

That seems to be as far as natural law kind of stretches in that revelation of God kind of tells us to do not murder the sense of sacrificing a human to a false god, a god that doesn't even exist, that kind of stuff. And to me it kind of reminds me of some of the arguments for God's existence, like just based off of logic and reason, you can get yourself to God's existence. I'm a presuppositional apologetic person.

I think the human reason and rationale and logic can give you a lot of answers, but I don't think it gets you as far as knowing God, the true God, knowing that's possible. That's why in Romans chapter 1 Paul says that things about God can be seen, that he's powerful, that he's eternal, all that stuff. But you can't actually know him, you can't know Jesus.

That's why later on in Romans he says, how can they believe in him who they haven't heard? You have to go out and preach the gospel, you have to share the word of God for people to be this knowledge to be revealed. He also says immediately after, have they not heard? Yes they have, they quote Psalm 19 that says all of creation points to the Lord God. So I think you can come to understand that there is a God.

Obviously you can't know about the person of Jesus Christ without someone preaching to you, but God can absolutely reveal himself to somebody without human intervention,

although obviously humans are his primary instrument in revealing the gospel. I think in heaven there will be people who never heard about Christ, but God opened their mind to actually worship and serve him. Because as humans we innately do understand the difference between right and wrong, so it snaps the law.

Sometimes you can come to have an understanding of who God is because God is love. Don't you think that collapses in Universalism? Why did God send Jesus? I don't understand. Yes he had to pay the penalty of sin, but if he's the only way, the truth can collide, doesn't that open the door for Universalism? Even the Amazonian doesn't need to be evangelized, they can figure it out, they have natural law, they have human reasoning, they'll be able to figure out there's a God eventually.

You know what I mean? The escape kind of leaves the door open for everybody can be saved without Jesus. No, because otherwise he wouldn't have commanded us to go and evangelize people, and the Holy Spirit wouldn't be moving in us to go and evangelize people. At what point are you trying to make that... If he commands us to do that, doesn't that mean that it's actually possible for them to come to a saving knowledge? Not necessarily.

Because I just think that was like... I'm just trying to make sense of what Paul is saying. First of all, let me go see what he says right after that verse about how will they believe. Pardon us.

Okay. How will they... This is starting at 14. Oh wait, I'll start at 13.

For everyone who calls in the name of the Lord will be saved. How will they call in him who they have not believed? How are they to believe in him who they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent as a description of how beautiful are the feet of those preaching good news? But they have not all obeyed the gospel for Isaiah says, "Lord who has believed what he has heard from us so faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ." And then I think here's your song. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, but their voice has gone out to all earth and their words to the ends of the world.

But I ask that as you'll not understand. So it seems to me like that comes right on the heels of Romans chapter 9, which is talking about how God has got... Has the unfaithfulness of Israel messed up God's faithfulness towards his ruin? He says, "No, Israel isn't completely cut off. God is still faithful to Israel.

There's a remnant." And then he goes straight to Romans 10 saying, "They have her. The Israelites have her. They know." You know, Abraham had faith.

That's kind of the whole point of the book of Romans is like Abraham by faith believing

God was kind of in his righteousness. So I think that's the argument that he's making. Not that creation can tell somebody that there is a God and that's enough to be saved.

I think what he's saying there is the Jews have heard from all the earth. They understood. So what do you think he's talking about? He does, but does it have the power to save? Does creation have the power to save? No, God has the power to save.

How is...understanding that there's a creator from creation, how would that get someone saved? Like where's the repentance? Where's the belief in Christ? For God. I don't know what you said. It's the same way anybody else has saved.

God does it super-natural. That's true. I mean, yeah, it is always super-natural when someone's saved.

You can hear Jesus' name and believe in Jesus. Yeah, obviously. If you know Christ, if you have the Bible, there are people that are saved that can't read the Bible.

Yeah. It's been up to hearing. It was taught to them.

So we are able to study God's Word and know Christ. God has so much better means to communicate the gospel. It's not quite completely clear.

You can say things that are true. Jesus is the way the truth relies on the Father's interest. It's the light of the world.

We don't even fully understand what they mean, but they're absolutely true. God can use the foolishness of what we say to bring people to repentance and save them. Yeah.

I think it's possible that you can do that with creation itself. So then what is your motivation to not preach? Is it just because God created us or because it's necessary? I mean, both. There are people that wouldn't be saved unless they called the gospel.

Yeah. That means that there are my brothers and sisters who I'm going to spend eternity with. That it's my duty to be a steward of the message that is not only mine because it was delivered to me, but it's passing through me.

There's going to be generations after me to save Christ for his name. We'll need to carry on with that. But it's like if anything is probably an anomaly or a far outlier.

If that ever happens. See, I could be saved through this creation. That's not frequent.

I mean, I'm sure Christ for a real himself, you won't dream. There's no method you can't use and save any person wherever they are. But it's absolutely true that there's no way Christ is God.

God is Christ. They're inseparable. I mean, there is an element of God's word, the

creation, the smoke of the creation.

Creation is the word of God in a sense. I do think that taking a line of thinking like that does give way too much credence to the human's ability to reason. Yes, we can reason, but I think we need to remember that when Adam and Eve sinned, they had perfect natural law.

They were perfectly able to reason in the garden. And then something happened. They sinned.

Sin is irrationality. It is going against what makes sense, common sense, what is right. But it's really not that clear all the time.

I think it was absolutely clear that Jesus would break the law. Yeah, exactly. In a sense, it was a rational act of their will to sin.

But it's also irrationality because they've been told what was good. Yeah, it's fair to see. So I do think that the fall impacts our ability to reason more than probably what you would think and what a lot of philosophers would claim by natural law.

And I think that the only way to actually understand natural law is to have to be Christian. You have to have your conscience healed so you can actually reason well once again, rather than your sin getting in the way because we have wrong desires. So we won't be able to reason well because our desires will always be for sin unless we're saved in Christ.

So that's kind of like why I take the line of thinking. Honestly, I do think that Paul is not saying there that the whole world has no God spoken. I think he's talking about Israel's herd there.

Yeah, I don't know. He also quotes Isaiah saying, "Who has believed what he heard from us?" Like, not everybody who lives, as Paul says in Romans 1, is clear to them through God's divine nature and eternal power that there is a God. They will fully choose to reject the knowledge of God.

Yeah. And so they're condemned forever just to just punish them. Yeah.

Yeah, I think I see what you're saying. Who is she? Cool. I definitely feel like maybe that's more true today just because natural law isn't at all commonly understood nowadays by hardly anybody to find very few people that even know what natural law is.

Yeah. I think in the past it would be different. Especially right after the fall, Adam was probably a very good teacher.

He probably passed down the knowledge of natural law pretty well for a while. Yeah. Well, and I do think that the reason why... I just finished that Just War Theory book and

they talk about international law and they talk about the beauty of the natural law.

And all of these just war theorists are always Christians. I mean, there are some other religions that have just war theorists, but not on the level of the way Christians have added to that conversation. And it's because Christians actually have a conscience that's made a lie to Christ where we can actually reason well.

So that's why all of our international law is based in Christian ethics because it's been revealed to us through God's word and that now we're able to reason again and continue on with national law. And that's why I think the most conscience is necessarily important. I see what you're saying, but it's definitely true that the only way to have a clear conscience is through being clung to Christ.

Yeah. But I don't think that that's necessarily true that that needs to happen for you to be able to reason well. Yes, it helps a lot, especially with a lot of people.

Yeah. I think if I hadn't been saved, I would not be nearly as reasonable as I am. But I don't think it's necessary to be a reasonable person.

So like, let's just say an atheist philosopher that is a rationalist here, assist all these things. Would you trust their ability to reason? It's natural law because they have an understanding of natural laws. Well, it's everybody.

Everybody understands it to some extent. Would you trust their ability to reason naturally and what is right and wrong versus an untrained and reasoned and logic Christian who just knows the word of God? Yes. You would trust the philosopher or the Christian? Yeah, because I mean the Christians, if they're not trained and reasoned, then they may as well be a child.

I'll trust the man, even if he's not Christian, over the child, which is why I absolutely think it's true that in our government, I don't want to put somebody in office who's a Christian but doesn't understand natural law. I would rather put in somebody who's not a Christian but does understand natural law or will protect our rights. Yeah, because that's their job.

Like in government, the job of a politician, I'm a politician, I'm an outdoor politician. The job of anybody in government of the United States of America is to protect the rights of the citizens. It's not to be a good question.

So did I say that the person was articulate in the word of God, they understood their competence in the word of God? Did I make that call on fire? So my understanding is that natural law is based in the ethic and rationale that is revealed to us in Scripture. Sure. So like if somebody is more prone to understand natural law.

Sure. Yeah, I understand the word of God, but it doesn't matter. Yeah, let's just say this person understands the word of God.

Like you would, like they're competent in the word of God, they understand that they've been strained. You know, like 2 Timothy 3.7. This is 3.17. That the 3.6, 2, and 17, that the word of God, it's breathed out by God that the man of God may be equipped for every good word. You're welcome.

Yeah. So if this person understands the word of God, is equipped for every good word, would you trust them to reason well with what's right and wrong morally, ethically, then the atheist philosopher who just has trained their formal logic, symbolic logic, reasoning, capabilities, like who would you trust more to like defend your rights? Probably the atheist. Before they go on this.

But aren't these rights that are being defended in the constitution they are given by God? Yes. So like if he doesn't even believe in God, he's just a rationalist. Or even we could talk about other religions too or whatever, like a Hindu or a theodipologist, a theodist that's not a Christian.

Like they can get closer. I think the atheists further his way because they don't understand that it's a doubt by their greed or they have no basis for why. You know, I wonder if they want to observe the true source of their beliefs or not.

Doesn't matter to me. Like if this person understands, like if he's rational, he understands my rights, what they are, I would trust him to defend me more than I would somebody who understands the word God but doesn't understand liberty and the principles of liberty. That's just a lot of trust that you've been raising and logic that I am comfortable with.

Just because I think the fall is a lot more pervasive and I don't think the atheists will be able to reason very well. Even if he's trained in the natural means of understanding what's right and wrong, it's still just so messed up. In my mind, the way not Christians will be able to reason to it, it's good.

Like if, if... I don't know, what do you think about other religions? Yes, domestic abuse is based on natural law. Domestic abuse is evil. Now we know from revealed scripture that that's evil from revealed scripture, but I think you can get there on natural law.

But that's evil. But the Muslim, although they're monotheists, they believe in God, they have some scripture, they have the natural law. It isn't in Allah, it's the same himself.

But I'm just saying, in their holy book, it literally says domestic abuse is okay. So that's what I'm saying, these people that have alternative motives, like the atheist is a rationalist and a purist and a materialist. So he's going to have, based on his metaphysical understanding, he's going to have constraints on his ability to reason through what is ethically and morally good based on the laws of nature.

I think it'll be messed up because of the fall. It'll look different for a Muslim or a Hindu

because they have different allegiances based on their metaphysical claims about reality. So I just think it's going to mess up their ability to do that, which is why I would trust the Christian more than I would the trained atheist philosopher because he's going to have certain obligations that he will be able to find a basis in or get there for natural law.

It's going to mess up his ability to reason, probably at some point. I imagine it will be perfect, but I would be somewhat comfortable if they can root it well enough and give me a little bit of faith that they won't defend my rights. I would have to keep them out and hear how they improve all this stuff.

At the end of the day, I think it's just going to be their ability to reason, it's going to be messed up. I mean, nobody can reason perfectly because even the Christian, we see Christians fall around America who close their doors because the government calls them true. Yeah, it's unreasonable.

It's irrational. No, I do. I agree with that.

Even Christians have sin, still, a dwelling sin that's going to mess up their ability to reason perfectly as well. But because there's more righteousness in the Christian and a greater understanding of what sin is, I feel like the Christian is going to be able to at least have an easier path to understanding the law of nature. Yeah, I think that would make sense.

But I feel like they get there really quickly on a lot of the stuff just because they have it revealed in the scripture. They don't have to reason to try to figure out logically how it makes sense. It's just like, "Thou shalt not murder.

Thou shalt not lie." You can figure out not to lie based on the natural law, but it takes a little bit longer. I guess that's kind of what I'm saying. Yeah, if you have the foundation of Christ, the only firm foundation, the greatest foundation of the Lord of the Rings, you can pretty much anything.

If he wills it, you can figure it out. I did. You used to look very good.

Okay, I guess that's what I gotta say. I appreciate those thoughts. That's good.

I mean, I didn't go back to Greet 3, Romans 10. I know, I'm looking too. That's why I just turned a peak up on that little today.

Maybe this, this little wall here is still a little too far. I don't know. I just need to think about it more.

I need to read more and I'd like to pick up a lot to really start getting it better. I mean, I've had some training now in the natural law a little bit, but I need more. I would like to

think accurately on that because it is very useful.

I mean, natural law is a great force for good in the world. It's a way to understand what's right and wrong, to avoid from the infallible word of God. From a revelation, that's awesome.

That's useful for a society. I think if you understand natural law, you'll be much better equipped to understand the word of God. Yeah, because they call themselves exactly.

And that's also, it's encouraging because understanding God, knowing what God is doing, what God has asked of you is actually reasonable and logical. That's what's cool about it, is that they should match up perfectly, which should give Christians much joy because it's like, "Wait a second, based on my logic and reason, what God has commanded me to do is reasonable and logical." It's like, that's awesome. We don't have to be like, "God's asking me to do something that's too hard.

It doesn't make any sense." It's actually like, "Yeah, it's not unreasonable." Which is cool. Yeah, exactly. If it's unreasonable, you're not understanding.

The law of nature very well. Actually, it's not reasonable. It's probably reasonable.

So, yeah, it is just a way to discern God's world better because we know God is logical and reasonable. Yeah, and I do think some of it does pass logic and reason because it'll say, "Jesus says, deny yourself, pick up your cross daily." Without coming to understand what Jesus said of the cross, that request is illogical and rational. So, at the end of the day, it is logical and rational because if you want to lose your life, or sorry, if you want to gain your life, you must gain it.

And it's like, wait a second, that actually makes sense. I do want to follow Jesus. That's rational and logical.

I don't want to lose my life. But I do think it takes a little bit. It takes revelation sometimes to reach to a logical, rational place.

So, it's not all just in your own mind. I think it does the visioning. A lot of it, in the personates of God's words, like, "Jesus is with us to us, killing ourselves daily." It's like, why would I kill myself? Why would I deny myself? Because, you know, based on the reason I should be a heebie, if I were an atheist, I would be a heebie.

I would just try to get as much pleasure as I can, but what's cool is that we actually are pursuing life by killing ourselves. And that seems irrational at first until you literally give the life that's a prize to me. It's like, yes.

[MUSIC] For the King!