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### February 20, 2010: Pawlenty's God is in charge

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Title: Pawlenty's God is in charge

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2/20/2010--The New York Times, Caucus blog, reported yesterday on Tim Pawlenty's address to the CPAC in Washington. Here is the entry in full: February 19, 2010, 1:57 pm Pawlenty's Principles: 'God's in Charge' By ADAM NAGOURNEY The Conservative Political Action Conference heard from another likely presidential candidate for 2012 on Friday – Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota. Mr. Pawlenty offered a series of what he called principles for the conservative movement that have become familiar here: Reducing the size of government, opposing President Obama's health care plan, denouncing Mr. Obama's handling of terrorists. But at a conference where there has not been a lot of talk about social issues, Mr. Pawlenty raised one as he laid out the principles conservatives should follow. The first one is this: "God's in charge," he said. "God is in charge." Mr. Pawlenty's remarks drew a wave of applause. "There are some people who say, 'Oh, you know, Pawlenty, don't bring that up. You know, it's politically incorrect.'" "Hogwash," Mr. Pawlenty said. "These are enshrined in the founding documents and perspective of our country. In the Declaration of Independence, it says we are endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights. It doesn't say we're endowed by Washington, D.C., or endowed by the bureaucrats or endowed by state government; it's by our creator that we are given these rights." At first glance, one is inclined to say that Pawlenty is like George Bush, inappropriately invoking God as a cover for a set of highly partisan political positions. However, upon further reflection, one can see that Pawlenty is actually using God-language to enunciate a view that almost all Americans share—that human rights don't have to be earned, they are innate. Further, our rights are not gifts from other human beings, whether kings or Parliaments. If that is what it means to assert that God is in charge, most secularists would assert the same thing (though they would not use God-language without care that they would not be misunderstood). It is very important that Pawlenty did not claim any special revelation to say what these rights are. Nor did he claim that his God is particularly active in the world. Nor did he say that humans should not act on their own. About all he did say is that government is not God. Who would disagree with that?