



"Shall we continue to stagger like drunken men? Shall we still fashion a divinity that shall serve our utilitarian ends? Shall we amuse ourselves with idols? Or shall we return unto God?"
—J. Gresham Machen

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Equilibrium

[God](#) has endowed His creation with a self-adjusting mechanism that, unless altered by cataclysmic forces, brings things back to a state of equilibrium. For instance, here in the South, when we endure years of significant drought, at some point, the skies will darken, the rains fall, gutters and drains fill, flashfloods rise, creeks overflow, and fender-benders occur. The drought will then be officially declared over, and the region will busily make up for the lack of precipitation. The natural balancing laws ensure a return to normal.

This is not only true over the short term but the long term as well. What environmentalists gloomily call "global warming" or "climate change" is nothing more than the planet's built-in mechanism to bring temperatures back to a mean. Several hundred years ago, the earth endured a "mini ice age," and since then, global temperatures have been rising ever so slightly to balance matters. We can expect these temperatures to rise and fall by a few tenths of a degree over our lifetimes, with more drastic changes occurring only once or twice in a millennium.

This kind of equilibrium also occurs in other areas of nature. For example, in any ecosystem, the ratio of predators to prey remains relatively constant. If in a bountiful year prey species multiply rapidly, predator births also increase. However, once the prey population declines to a point that it cannot support the large number of predators, competition increases and deaths of predators also increase, establishing equilibrium once again.

The law also functions among human activities, though the relationships may be harder to spot and substantiate. However, we can perhaps see this best in economic patterns like stock-market cycles. Generally, free markets are self-correcting. Booms are followed by busts, bulls by bears. For instance, until late 2000, the United States had enjoyed nine years of unrivaled, sustained growth. Anyone aware of this law of equilibrium should have been able to predict that the economy would correct itself by shrinking, which occurred through the first quarter of 2003. Then, the pendulum began to swing the other way, a rise of almost 24% in the Standard & Poors 500 index in a single quarter, signaling a major move upward. A graph of U.S. markets over time shows this up-and-down movement around a mean.

We can see equilibrium at work politically, too. In America, Democrats and Republicans vie for votes, and the electorate swings between liberal and conservative poles. Who holds the presidency and Congress shifts between parties as one or the other attempts to steer the nation's course, usually following their ideology too far. Distrustful Americans then vote the out-of-power party in to correct the course. Until recently, these frequent changes kept the country fairly well-centered between the ditches of national policy.

Nations also have a moral cycle that maintains equilibrium so that God need not frequently intervene directly and spectacularly in their affairs. This may be most easily seen in God's record of the Israelites during the period of the judges. After Joshua died, a cycle began that lasted for about four hundred years, as described in [Judges 2:11-19](#):

Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals. . . . And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies

all around. . . . And they were greatly distressed. Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out the hand of those who plundered them. . . . And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods.

This cycle of idolatry-subjection-deliverance-prosperity is still at work today, though it may be more difficult to see in our modern world. Were it not in effect, humanity would never have lasted this long; we would have committed genocide long ago. We can be thankful that God has included this self-correcting mechanism within His creation so that there is a promise of a brighter tomorrow.

However, a time is coming—and maybe soon—when the natural cycle will not be enough to bring humanity back to equilibrium. [Jesus Christ](#) will have to step into world affairs to stop mankind from killing all life on earth ([Matthew 24:21-22](#), 29-31). He warns us, "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him" (verse 44). The question is, then, have we, as God's people, stepped outside the natural cycle of moral equilibrium and committed ourselves totally to righteousness?

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Doctrine of Israel \(Part Three\): A Cycle of Rebellion](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

National traits are simply family traits applied to an entire people. God variously characterizes Jacob's offspring as stiff-necked rebels and perpetual complainers, often deceitful and disloyal. Because the Children of Israel had absorbed so much pagan culture in Egypt, in the process losing sight of patriarchal standards of right behavior, God "added" a law to the Old Covenant, struck with the people at Sinai. Historically, Israel perennially cycled through (1) rescue at God's hand through a chosen leader, (2)

apostasy through idolatry and immorality, (3) divine chastening of some sort, and (4) the peoples' repentance and restoration, a rescue which was sure to be followed by apostasy by a later generation. Characterizing Israelite waywardness to this day is her burning desire to be like gentile nations (I Samuel 8), rejecting God's law and way of life. Instead of being a light on a hill to gentiles, an example of a nation serving God and blessed by Him, Israel has become worse than the gentiles, utterly flouting God's law. Only the destiny-changing transformation which comes through God's living in individuals will remedy Israel's destructive penchant for apostasy.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Striving for Balance](#)

by Staff

What is Christian balance? Some would say that it is, in essence, not being too far out of the mainstream. When it comes down to it, Christian balance means living up to God's standards!

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