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THE GRANVILLE RAILWAY DISASTER

D.B. Knox

"The Protestant Faith"

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THE GRANVILLE RAILWAY DISASTER

We were all shocked and numbed by the rail tragedy at Granville and our thoughts and prayers go out towards those so suddenly bereaved. An overwhelming and sudden tragedy evokes unstinting help from those who are able to help and we all read with appreciation of the unremitting efforts of the rescuers. And a sudden disaster of this sort evokes questionings about life and about God who is the creator and controller of life.

I was rung up on the telephone on the day of the accident by an anonymous caller who said that he did not know anyone actually involved in the catastrophe but asked how could a God of love allow such an event to happen if he were omnipotent. It is an old question, and the Lord Jesus Christ answered it when people drew His attention to disasters which did not seem to be fair to those involved. A tower building in Jerusalem had suddenly collapsed and killed eighteen people and I suppose injured a lot more. Jesus told his hearers not to think of those who died as especially deserving their fate. They were not worse than anyone else in Jerusalem, but all would receive a similar fate unless they changed their way of life: "unless you repent you will all likewise perish" were Jesus' words. My anonymous caller did not like the thought that he and I deserved judgement from God, and yet we all do, because we do not do what we know to be right, for example we do not honour God as we ought in view of the fact that we have received everything from Him. We are not thankful. We do not love Him with our whole heart; in fact we hardly think of Him ever, and when we do it is as often as not to ignore His will and to stifle it in our mind. This attitude towards God is not right, and we will certainly not get away with it in the end. Disasters are the consequence of the sin of humanity as a whole, and they are simply a foretaste of the final disaster

of the judgement day which we will all be involved in if we do not repent.

Take, for example, our Australian nation, you may not think that we, as a nation, deserve God's judgement; God is gracious in so far as He gives us the opportunity of repenting before the final judgement overtakes us as judgement overtook the people of Jerusalem a few years later, within the life time of those who were listening to Jesus. The fact is that Australia is a God forgetting nation, it is taken up with greed and gambling, and the proposed casinos are only the most recent example, and it is taken up with pleasure seeking. We are greedy and pleasure seeking, that is to say, we are self centred. We do not think of serving one another as our first objective in business or in the home although this is clearly the right thing to do. And we are God ignoring as individuals. Nor do we think of serving God and being thankful to Him who is the real giver of our life, although this is so plainly the right attitude. If we do not change our attitude to the whole of life, and to God in particular, the judgement of hell is inevitable. This is very clear in the teaching of Jesus and although we hate the idea this does not effect its certainty. This was the lesson which the Lord Jesus Christ drew from the disaster of the collapsed tower in which eighteen people died and it came true with the destruction of Jerusalem. We ought therefore to follow the admonitions of the Lord Jesus and repent while we still have the opportunity. Every disaster should remind us that we are under God's judgement and should repent, that is to say, change our attitude with regard to God, ask Him to forgive us and to help us to follow the teaching of Jesus as our Lord and not only to repent as individuals in our own private lives but as a community in the sort of things we allow and tolerate among us. Let us act along these lines.

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