

10th August 2021

Emergency

**“I can see only one emergency following upon another
as wave follows upon wave.”**

H. A. L. Fisher, A History of Europe (1935)

Herbert Albert Laurens Fisher was an English historian and Liberal politician who served in David Lloyd George's 1916-22 coalition government. When he published his three-volume *History of Europe* in 1935, Europe was moving inexorably towards the second world conflict of the century. His assessment of what was ahead, therefore, though inevitably sanguine, was nonetheless realistic. And though we have avoided global conflict since the end of World War II, can we say that we have escaped “wave after wave” of emergencies in the process?

My grandmother was fond of saying that “tragedies come in threes”. I don't know what detailed research she'd carried out to prove her maxim, or whether she was just repeating an “auld-wife's-tale” of her time. But it's not surprising that when one emergency comes along on the back of another, we look for a pattern, maybe even anticipating a third, “one emergency following upon another” as Fisher suggests.

A few days ago, I reflected on a car crash I'd had on my way to conduct a wedding some years ago. It had been an emergency for me, but also for the couple who were to be married. Thankfully, a colleague had stepped in to “do the necessary”, and all was well. This past weekend I had to do the same for a friend by conducting an “emergency wedding” in her church. She's been laid low by Covid (and doesn't “wave follows upon wave” seem apposite for our current situation too?) Emergency wedding? Yes, in one sense it was, given that arrangements had to be changed at the last minute. An emergency – because a problem needed to be solved.

I hope you're not in the midst of an emergency. If you are, you'll not know whether it's a one-off, one of three, or whether it'll be “wave follows upon wave” for you. But I hope you'll find that there are people who'll step in to help you in your emergency, whatever it is, as I've found and as I've done. And, you never know, *you* might be the person who needs to stand in readiness to help someone when their next emergency comes.

A prayer for today

Lord, if this is just an emergency prayer, it shows I believe you can help. Amen

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