

# MOMENTI MORI

1 Corinthians 15:1-57

## I. INESCAPABLE—"it is appointed to man once to die" (Heb 9:27);

- A. Persuasive evidence! Sin's penalty (Ro 6:23 cf. Gn 3:3)
- B. Predictable stages: Elizabeth Kubler-Ross: 1) denial; 2) anger; 3) bargaining; 4) depression; 5) acceptance

## II. UNIQUELY HUMAN CONCERN

- A. Self-consciousness entails death-awareness
  - 1. Fears widespread—e.g. Hamlet's soliloquy: "to be, or not to be"
    - a. Soldiers as likely to retreat as to charge! Need officers, discipline, courage
    - b. 2020 pandemic hysteria (unlike response to Hong Kong Flu 50 years ago)
  - 2. Hopes irrepressible—"intimations" re Happy Hunting Grounds etc.; cf Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*
- B. Burial sites indicative (N.B. Biblical Patriarchs' concern for burial plot, Gn 24:10 re Abraham & Sarah)
  - 1. Evident reasons:
    - a. Hallow remains of departed—"these hallowed grounds" (Lincoln re Gettysburg)
    - b. Symbolize hopes for hereafter—tools for journey & future life; headstones testify
    - c. N.B.: relatives of persons killed usually desperate to retrieve body of beloved & rightly revere it
  - 2. Evidence available:
    - a. Ancient: Egyptian pyramids; American Indian mounds widespread
    - b. Jewish: Jerusalem graveyards (e.g. Jesus' tomb) & concern for proper burial
    - c. Christian: graves hallowed from earliest days—thus churchyard graves
    - d. Modern: growing secularization evident in cemeteries, cremations
- C. Funerals revealing
  - 1. Ubiquitous mourning ceremonies
  - 2. Pagan rituals—sometimes accompanied by cutting; Hindu custom of burying wife
  - 3. Jewish & Moslem rites—graves important
  - 4. Christian tradition: solemn, grief-acknowledging; Christ-centered; Cappadocian Fathers re mother, sister
  - 5. Current trends
    - a. Many secularists eliminate ceremonies
    - b. Many churches eliminate Christ-focus so as to celebrate life & virtues of departed
- D. Aesthetic responses
  - 1. Graphic arts—scenes in cathedrals & museums
  - 2. Literature—poems (Dylan Thomas—"do not go gentle") & songs (Bob Dylan—"death is not the end")
- E. Philosophical reflections
  - 1. Plato's *Apology* & final dialogues
  - 2. Stoic's record—Seneca; Aurelius
  - 3. John Donne's musings—*Devotions Upon Occasions & Death's Duel* (provoked by serious sickness)
  - 4. Albert Camus (cf. *The Plague*) & Existentialists often discuss
- F. Life-After-Life data

## III. DIVERGENT ATTITUDES:

- A. Refusal/Denial (Christian Scientists deny!); cf Ernst Becker's *Denial of Death*
  - 1. Euphemisms (several hundred) revealing
  - 2. Fantasy funerals—levity rather than sobriety
- B. Resignation
  - 1. Stoic tradition
  - 2. Darwinian determinism
  - 3. "Dying with dignity" & physician assisted suicide rationale
- C. Relief/Rejoicing
  - 1. Suffering cessation
  - 2. Buddhist Nirvana—extinction goal
- D. Reincarnation
  - 1. Hindu position—yet, as V.S. Naipaul discovered, no consolation
  - 2. New Age mantras
- E. Resurrection Hope—I Corinthians 15
  - 1. Monotheistic religions, positing Creator, generally hope He will reestablish things
  - 2. Christianity, especially, declares Risen Savior