Chapter 3: And in the world to come, life everlasting

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> I am going to die and I want to live for ever. I can't escape the fact and I can't let go of the desire.
>
> Damien Hirst[1]

> We're always thinking of eternity as an idea that cannot be understood, something immense. But why must if be? What if, instead of all this, you suddenly find just a little room there, something like a village bath-house, grimy, and spiders in every corner, and that's all eternity is. Sometimes, you know, I can't help feeling that that's probably what it is.
>
> Svidrigaylov[2]

Introduction

The mapping of the human genome has raised a wider set of questions than most had envisaged when the project began. This chapter concentrates on one specific issue: the possibility of greatly extending human life-span. Should we settle for three score years and ten? What would be the practical, ethical and religious implications if some people lived for hundreds of years? Can this be seen as a restoration of antediluvian longevity or would it be mere hubris? And what if we could live forever? These questions raise wider issues about the determinacy of human genes, the relationship between religion, science and technology, the good life, the nature of personhood and what, if any, should be the limits on scientific research.

The practicalities of greatly extending longevity

In 1900 the UK average life expectancy was about 52 years in women and 49 years in men. By the end of the twentieth century it had grown to about 79 years for women and 74 for men, increases of just over 50% for both sexes. Most of us (i.e. humans) are living longer – though this really depends on

when we measure 'us' from. If 'us' is taken not from birth but from conception or some point in the first couple of months of pregnancy, the substantial rises in the abortion rates in many countries over the last few decades considerably decrease these figures. The rise in average longevity is also much more evident in some countries than in others. Indeed, as is widely known, several sub-Saharan countries have seen major falls (around a decade) in average life expectancy as a result of AIDS[3], as have some of the countries in the former Soviet Union subsequent to the collapse of communism.

But my focus is not so much on the impact of socio-political events, or even infectious diseases such as AIDS, on average life expectancy; it is rather the age to which someone fortunate enough to be protected from such vicissitudes might expect to live. And here, as is also widely known, things have changed remarkably little over the centuries. When Jeanne Louise Calment died in 1997 she was the first human to have lived to a verified age of 122. But people have been living into their hundreds, albeit in far smaller numbers than nowadays, for centuries or longer. Maximum lifespan has not increased very greatly. One hundred years ago Thomas Emley Young, a former President of the Institute of Actuaries in Britain, verified the age of someone who had lived to 113.[4] So maximum lifespan has perhaps increased by only some 8% in the last hundred years.

The reason for the difference between the increases in average and maximum lifespans is that while sanitation, better nutrition and medical care have greatly contributed to increases in average life expectancy, little can, as yet, be done to fight off old age for long. But might this situation change? I don't want to spend very long on the practicalities of greatly extending longevity partly because attempts to predict scientific and technological developments far ahead are almost never successful and partly because I am more interested in what the social and theological consequences of this might be and in whether such greatly extended longevity would be desirable. But, nevertheless, it is worth spending some time on the practicalities.

One can envisage two main ways in which human longevity might be greatly extended (say, to several hundred years). One would be in some way to slow the ageing process so that someone aged 200 might look rather like a healthy 50 year old today. The second way would be for a person to receive various transplants as they aged.

The first possibility can itself be imagined in various ways. For a start, we already know of several ways in which alterations to the environments of non-humans can lead to animals living longer. For example, severely restricting the diet of small mammals can lead to increases in longevity of around 20-40% while feeding certain chemicals that destroy harmful free radicals to nematode worms (much experimented on by today's biologists) increases longevity by around 50%.[5] There is also the evidence that ageing is at least partly accounted for by the gradual loss of telomeres, the ends of our chromosomes, over successive cell divisions. It is not inconceivable that this loss might be prevented or restored in some way.

Then, of course, there are always genes. The Human Genome Project, in particular, has led many to an oversimplified view of the functioning of genes.[6] I was fortunate enough when an undergraduate in the late 1970s to be taught animal behaviour by Pat Bateson, among others. Pat sometimes likened the role of genes to the role of a recipe in making a cake. Genes and recipes are essential but it makes little sense to ask what proportion of a good (or a bad) cake is due to the recipe. Nowadays, unfortunately, we live in an age when the role of genes is still widely misunderstood and frequently overemphasised.[7] Genes do, of course, play a major role in almost everything about humans that makes us interesting, including, as I shall consider below, our longevity. But most of the important things about us – such as our personality, appearance, intelligence and longevity – are likely to be determined not by a single gene or even a collection of genes but by a collection of genes operating in interaction with our environment. And part of the especial feature of being human is that our environment consists not just of such physical entities as our diet and the presence and absence of diseases but also of such cultural phenomena as our education, the beliefs in our societies and our own individual aspirations. Further, we have some control over our environments, just as our environments have some consequences for us. Disentangling all this into 'genes' and 'environment' is not merely difficult but of limited meaning and value.

Having said that, the role of genes in human nature often has been and sometimes still is underestimated. A few decades ago psychoanalysts attributed autism only to failures in the environment, typically mother-child relationships.[8] Nowadays we find it easier to accept that there may, at least

sometimes, be a genetic basis to autism. Not in the trite sense that there is a single faulty sequence of DNA bases that deterministically and inevitably causes autism, but that certain such sequences make it more likely that a child will develop autism, perhaps as a result of some environmental injury, just as smoking cigarettes (roughly speaking an environmental effect) makes it more likely that a person will develop heart disease or lung cancer, while having one of 'the genes' for breast cancer makes it more likely that someone will develop that disease.

One notable example of an earlier failure to appreciate the possibility of genetic differences between people was the way in which powdered milk was often sent by Western aid agencies to countries where we now know that almost everyone is lactose-intolerant because they lack the gene that allows people to digest lactose in milk. It is now thought that this lactose intolerance is the ancestral condition. The ability to digest lactose probably only evolved in societies that kept cattle for their milk.

Interestingly, many of the pressure groups that campaign against the new genetics (whether manifested in GM foods or genetic tests for certain conditions such as cystic fibrosis) oscillate somewhat schizoidly between either reifying the gene to the point of demonisation – in the process attributing more to genes than do most molecular biologists and sociobiologists – or maintaining that genes have no role in their contribution to such human traits as intelligence and personality.

So how important are genes in contributing to (a better term when discussing gene action than 'determining') longevity? We still don't know for humans. But my prediction would be that within a decade we will find (a) that there are dozens of genes that influence human longevity; (b) that no one of them is overwhelmingly important; (c) but that the combined effects of about four of them make a difference of around plus or minus 10-15 years to both average and maximum longevity (and it may not be the same four genes for both these). In 1998 a gene was found in the nematode worm *Caenorhabditis elegans* that protects against premature ageing and later the same year a gene, dubbed *methuselah* – yes, an attenuated memory of religious tales lives even in today's laboratories – was found to enable the fruit fly *Drosophila melanogaster* to live 35% longer. By and large, the message of human genetics

over the last few decades is that genes act in a similar way in us but that the results are rarely as dramatic as in other species.

However, it is difficult to imagine that improving our environments or our genes is really going to even double our longevity, let alone enable us to live for many hundreds of years. Which takes us onto the second possibility: transplants.

We are already used to the idea of transplants greatly extending the lifespan of individuals. Indeed, that is pretty much the entire point of them, whether we are talking about blood transfusions or the technically more difficult transplants of whole organs. The early heart transplants provoked both hype and controversy. Success rates were extremely poor; new definitions of death (brainstem death) were introduced in some countries – an interesting example of the interaction of technology, science and ethics – and some regarded the practice as meddling with the essence of human life. Malcolm Muggeridge referred to it as "the final degradation of our Christian way of life".[9] Over the years, though, most people, Christians and others, have come to regard transplants not only as ethically unproblematic but as near routine.

The most extreme form of transplant that can realistically be envisaged at present is what is sometimes termed a 'whole body transplant'. Most people would call this a head transplant except that our notions of personhood are nowadays tied to the brain so that head A on body B is presumed to be (pretty much) person A. Actually, the small amount of near-anecdotal data on the feelings of the one or two people who have had hand transplants suggests that some people may not divorce themselves from their bodies quite as absolutely as this. Nevertheless, for my purposes here I take it that one could envisage over time with reference to the same individual, A: (a) head of A receiving a succession of bodies B, C, D ...; (b) and head of A receiving new cataracts, lenses, hearing aids and other extra-brain, above-neck restorations; (c) and brain of A itself receiving various treatments (chemical, surgical, psychological) including localised transplants (e.g. using fetal cells) from other individuals. The medical details need not concern us further. Stem cells and so-called therapeutic human cloning may be all the rage today[10] – and may indeed prove the crucial answer – or something else may crop up in a decade. It might, though to some this may sound too much like science fiction, be the case that memories and other aspects of personalities will be

able to be stored and transferred to new, younger brains, allowing 'me' (*sensu* my mind) to persist indefinitely through a succession of bodies and brains – cloned or otherwise – or even one day in inorganic form.

How long should we live for?

Would greatly extended longevity be a good thing? Given that the overwhelming majority of people have always had a wish to live a long and healthy life, that most people, if physically and mentally at least reasonably well, would like to live longer and that only a small minority of people, whatever their age, truly wish to be dead, the most immediately obvious answer is 'yes'. Actually, the question should be phrased more precisely: 'Would it be a good thing to permit people to live far longer than at present if they wished to?'. After all, no-one is proposing or even very likely to propose that it would become a legal requirement for each of us to have a succession of transplants or take the required medication for greatly enhanced longevity. Indeed, the growing practice of 'nursing care only' and 'do not resuscitate' notices, living wills and so on would be likely to proliferate if we really could live for hundreds of years. So what we are talking about is something close to 'Should we forbid people from living very long healthy lives?' and, more immediately, 'Should we forbid researchers from trying to find out ways of enabling us to live for very long periods of time?'.

Put like that it seems more difficult to answer 'yes'. I have considered elsewhere the arguments for and against allowing researchers to carry out certain types of research.[11] Suffice it here to say that I consider it (a) extremely unlikely that research intended to extend human longevity will be banned with the exception, in certain countries, of certain forms of it (e.g. that requiring state funding) which require what are regarded by some as unacceptable procedures whatever the putative desired outcomes (e.g. the use of human fetal tissue for transplantation and the use of human embryos for somatic cell nuclear transfer); (b) difficult to defend a widespread ban on research intended to extend human longevity.

A number of arguments have been advanced as to why greatly extended longevity might not be a good thing. It has been argued that it would be counter to global justice (i.e. that it wouldn't be fair for some people to live

very long lives while others are denied the opportunity), that it would lead to too few people earning enough to support large numbers of pensioners, and that future people would be denied the possibility of coming into existence (i.e. there either wouldn't be room for them or the wish for them). Such objections, and some others, are carefully considered by John Harris and generally found lacking.[12] For example, Harris argues against the global justice argument by pointing out that this objection holds for any new complex and/or expensive technology and asserts that this objection "requires that strenuous and realistic efforts be made to provide the benefits of the technology justly, not that the benefits be denied because of the impossibility of ensuring adequate justice of provision" (p. 6). Although some distributive justice arguments, whether consequentialist or otherwise, would conclude that, at least in certain circumstances, the result of widening inequalities mean that forbidding technological developments is the right way forward, Harris makes the interesting point that it may well be more appropriate for the particular issue of greatly extending human longevity to think of it as a side effect of treating various illnesses. It is difficult to imagine arguments that would be convincing (whether ethically or politically) which restrict (let alone prevent) research into cancers, heart disease, mental impairments and so on on the grounds that such research might lead to people living too long.

There have been a number of science fiction writers and others who have explored some of the consequences of extended mortality. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Lemuel Gulliver meets the *Struldbrugs* or *Immortals*. Before he does he waxes lyrical about how he would like to live for ever. However, on meeting a group of *Struldbrugs*, he soon realises the burden under which they suffer. The reason is that, aside from not dying, all the other consequences of old age attend them:

> At ninety they lose their teeth and hair, they have at that age no distinction of taste, but eat and drink whatever they can get, without relish or appetite. The diseases they were subject to still continue without increasing or diminishing. In talking they forget the common appellation of things, and the names of persons, even of those who are their nearest friends and relations.[13]

A far fuller fictional assessment of the consequences of greatly extended longevity is provided by Shaw in *Back to Methuselah*[14] where both positive and negative consequences are presented. John Wyndham's *Trouble With Lichen*[15] features the amusing interview of Miss Diana Brackely, proprietor of Antigerone, an extract of a rare lichen that doubles or trebles longevity, with the hapless Mr Rupert Pigeon of the BBC. (It also includes a worried telegram from the General Council of The Brotherhood of British Morticians to the Home Secretary.) James Blish's four-book series *Cities in Flight*[16] explores further some of the consequences of greatly extended longevity as does Robert Heinlein's *Time Enough for Love.*[17]

Of the science fiction books it is Heinlein's that most fully attempts to deal with the issues of living a very long time (some 2300 years in this case) though a somewhat cruel, though perhaps accurate, commentary on Heinlein's book is that it is more about the hero having enough time to have a lot of sex (some of it with his grandmother) than about having time enough for love. But the title is an excellent one. For there are surely two main families of arguments in favour of greatly extended human longevity – one to do with the benefits (if benefits there are) for those who live much longer, the other to do with the benefits their extra years might have for others.

Of course, there are those who doubt that benefits would accrue to people able to live for hundreds of years. Perhaps we would get bored. As Kass[18] puts it:

> Would professional tennis players really enjoy playing 25 percent more games of tennis? Would the Don Juans of our world feel better for having seduced 1,250 women rather than 1,000? Having experienced the joys and tribulations of raising a family until the last had left for college, how many parents would like to extend the experience by another ten years? Likewise, those whose satisfaction comes from climbing the career ladder might well ask what there would be to do for fifteen years after one had been CEO of Microsoft, a member of Congress, or the President of Harvard for a quarter of a century?

It is difficult to imagine that many will find this argument convincing. After all, watching John McEnroe and Jack Nicklaus along with countless other

seniors and veterans makes it evident that there are plenty of professional (let alone amateur) sportspeople who would really enjoy playing 25 percent more games of tennis or 'just one more round' of golf. Then, as Harris[12] points out "if more of the same does not appeal, there is always the opportunity to try something different" (p. 16). Indeed, one optimistic interpretation of boredom is that it is a way of our telling ourselves that there is more to life than what we are currently doing. Even if we accept Kass' argument that being President of Harvard for longer than 15 years is, quite literally, a fate worse than death (which is what his argument requires), a greatly extended longevity might allow each of us to find more rewarding ways of passing our time.

I doubt that we can learn a great deal about whether or not it would be good to live greatly extended lives from considering those organisms (e.g. many trees, some fungi, giant Galapagos tortoises) that can live hundreds or even thousands of years. Even less is to be gained from considering those asexually reproducing organisms (e.g. many one-celled creatures, certain plants, even a few species of lizards) that, in a genetic sense, do live forever (well, millions of years). It is virtually certain that none of these various creatures has any more than the most rudimentary degree of self-awareness and reflection and I doubt very much that they have any notion of the passage of time, of their ageing or of their mortality. We are reduced, therefore, to thought experiments and to examining what life is or has been like in societies, past or present, with far higher rates of mortality.

I think it is possible that one disadvantage of greatly extended longevity would be that people would be more fearful of death. People with few possessions don't lie awake at night worried about burglars. It is difficult to imagine that, as a parent, I would be even more fearful of my child's personal safety if I knew that a fatal accident would rob them of not 70 but 700 years of life, but it is possible that as a 70 year-old I might be more likely to decide never to fly the Atlantic worried that a crash would rob me not of a few years but of most of my life.

For myself, though, the thought of more time sounds wonderful. On a personal level I could get to know many more people well and know those whom I know well even better; as an academic I could spend far longer thinking and researching before rushing into print; I would have had longer

to enjoy the company of my grandparents; perhaps I might become a better person, and so on. Of course, given long enough I might develop the ennui the thought of which evidently so oppresses Kass but, to emphasise the point made earlier, I could then choose not to postpone death much longer (cf. Isaac Asimov's *The Bicentennial Man*[19] and Doris Lessing's *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8*[20]). I accept, though, that while greatly extended longevity might magnify in someone the virtues of wisdom and love, it might in someone else magnify such vices and shortcomings as selfishness and narcissism, though there would be more time for someone to see, or be persuaded of, the error of their ways – but then there would be more time for others to fall from grace! Old age does seem to bring either the best or the worst out in many people, but then that is true of all of life.

A better country

For a creature with no self-awareness, the difference between living for a very long time and for eternity may only be one of degree. But for creatures such as ourselves, the difference is surely far greater. It was Woody Allen who quipped 'I don't want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it by not dying'. No biologists are seriously talking about immortality. Those, such as Michael Rose of the University of California who was reported in a newspaper in 2001 as saying "I believe there are already immortal people"[21], probably don't really mean that or haven't thought carefully about the issue. The distinction between not yet dying and living for ever may not be as great as the distinction between being big and being infinite in size but it is a distinction of kind, of essence. One thinks of the beings in Abbott's *Flatland*[22] who simply couldn't understand the appearance of spheres in their world.

Several reasons why immortality might not be desirable have been proposed, most notably by Leon Kass[18], though John Harris[12] has again incisively criticised most of Kass' arguments. Harris, though, does use the term very broadly:

> In the remainder of this discussion I shall talk predominantly of "immortality" and "immortals" and mean these terms to cover all

> stages from quite modest life extending therapies to truly indefinite survival" (p. 2)

From a theological perspective I prefer a narrower, more precise understanding of 'immortal', namely living for ever. As a biologist I cannot conceive (in this world) of humans being immortal in this narrow sense. The nearest we might get would be to a situation where only accidents would lead to loss of life. One could then imagine people living to be thousands of years in age, apparently ageless (cf. Ayesha in Rider Haggard's *She*[23]) yet perhaps, in some instances, with the wisdom of ages.

Hiving off theological analysis into a section all to itself could be construed as being implicitly an acknowledgement that theological issues matter only to a minority of people. And there are many for whom a theological treatment of any subject is, at best, meaningless. Yet, unsurprisingly, most of the literature on what it might be like to live for ever is explicitly theological. However, it isn't recent. Although the new genetics in general[24-27] and the Human Genome Project in particular[28-30] have attracted theological analysis, almost nothing has been written about the implications of these for understandings, Christian or otherwise, of the theology of mortality and immortality.

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, we can start with scripture itself. The early chapters of Genesis[31] portray a world in which the Lord God walked with Adam and Eve, in which humans were naked without being embarrassed, in which agriculture required little toil, in which women could give birth without pain, in which there was no need to eat meat and, perhaps above all, in which there was no death. To the fundamentalists[32] this is read literally; for most of us it is to be understood more figuratively. But to all with a belief in the scriptures it holds up an ideal.

When I turned to Richardson and Bowden's *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, I found that the article on 'Life after Death' had very appropriately been written by John Hick[33], who in his *Death and Eternal Life*[34] provided what is still surely the most intellectually satisfying defence of the doctrine of life after death and one that is not restricted to the Christian tradition but draws deeply on Hindu and Buddhist ideas. To cite from his dictionary entry:

> What is the basis for the Christian belief in life beyond death? ... Today we believe as Christians in 'the life everlasting' for two basic intertwined reasons. One is that Jesus believed this. ... The other reason centres upon the Christian understanding of God as our loving heavenly parent. If God loves each one of us and is seeking to draw us into a perfect relationship both with one another and with the divine Thou, does it not follow that God will hold us in being beyond the end of this short earthly life? Could it be an expression of infinite love to create us with immense spiritual potentialities but with so short a career, and often in such inauspicious circumstances, that those potentialities are normally destined never to be fulfilled? (pp. 331-2)

Unsurprisingly, written twenty years ago, Hick needed to take no account of the (logical) possibility that life everlasting might not require life beyond death. And yet the second reason Hick cites for the life everlasting might even be satisfied by a very greatly extended lifespan, let alone immortality in this life. As for his first reason, arguing on the basis of what Jesus believed is often somewhat problematic if only because while much of what we have recorded as being from his lips is clearly intended to be understood literally, some of it is evidently metaphorical or intentional hyperbole. Furthermore, as we hear in the more modern versions of the absolution, we are to be kept in, rather than brought to, eternal life. We may still be far from the kingdom of God, yet it has come upon us.[35] Such an understanding of our positions in time would only serve to underline the appropriateness of an existential worldview in which, using Heidegger's term[36], our *Dasein* (being) is that into which we grow over time, and for which we have some potential for authenticity, for life in all its fullness, for becoming true to ourselves.

Certainly, were we to achieve immortality through medical advances in this life, there would be major consequences for the exercising of certain of the virtues – such as patience and hope. Clearly, true immortality would also devalue such virtues as physical courage but then true immortality, in the sense of not being able to die, is not going to be provided by technology. Indeed, it can be argued that there would be more scope to exercise the virtue of physical courage in a world in which one could still expect, if careful, to live for thousands more years. As Christopher Southgate puts it, death "gives to every breath before we get to work its intensity".[37]

Immortality may have been lost at the Fall but scripture records it as taking some considerable time for our present meagre lifespans to be reached. Adam lived to be 930 years; Seth, Adam's son, 912 years; Enosh, Seth's son, 905 years; and so on. As Jacob said to Pharaoh "The days of my sojourning are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning".[38]

An important distinction between everlasting life (in heaven in God's presence) and interminableness (in hell, where there is said to be 'much time') was made by Augustine and Thomas[39], while Hannah Arendt discusses the difference between immortality (in these sense of endurance in time and deathless life) and eternity (held by Plato and many Christian writers to be 'unspeakable', and so beyond time).[40] Arendt also develops the classical Greek idea that a person's essence only comes fully into being when they die.[41] In a related vein, early Christian writers discussed what would have happened to Adam as an individual had he not sinned. There would, it was generally held, still have been a need for a transition from this world to the next; from grace to glory.

Contrary to what some notable atheists assert, many of the world's oldest religions, including Judaism, did not, as is widely acknowledged, rely, in any obvious sense, in their earlier formulations on the promise of an afterlife. However one understands Jewish teachings about the resurrection, it was only with the rise of Christianity within its midst that Judaism gave birth, unambiguously, to a sect that fully embraced the notion of eternal life. Among Christians, of course, the mainstream understanding of this, whatever the precise meaning of a new heaven and a new earth and the other complications of Revelation[42], is of eternal life for all, whether as soon as we die or at the day of judgement. In the incomparable words of Paul:

> Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."
"Oh death, where is they victory?
O death, where is thy sting?"[43]

In the face of such words, we are surely bound to ask what possible connection can the 'promise' of endless transplants or medicines have with such a vision? And perhaps the answer is none – such a promise merely being that of a secularised eschatology.[44] Very probably all the technical advances of medicine may do no more for generations to come than enable a few very wealthy people to live to the age for which Jacob apologised to Pharaoh. More positively, perhaps many of us will be able to live longer, healthier lives than at present and then to have time for amendment of life and a good death.[45]

And yet the interpretation of prophecy is rarely straightforward. As those of us who take seriously the New Testament know, Jewish prophecies can be held to be fulfilled in ways that would have been inconceivable at the time. Consider, for example, how Paul re-interpreted teachings about Israel and circumcision. Today's technological advances could, if interpreted somewhat optimistically, have already be seen to have undone some aspects of the original curse. Many women no longer give birth in pain. Many farmers, for all their problems, no longer toil against thorns and thistles. Modern medicines, and to a lesser extent, modern agriculture, has often been seen as God's work. Might it yet be that biotechnological advances could help usher in the kingdom of God which, as we are told more than once in the gospels, is already among us?

Notes

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32 For example H. M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Welwyn: Evangelical Press, 1976/1977).
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34 J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1976/1985).
35 *Matt.* 12.28.
36 M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1927/1962).
37 C. Southgate, 'Writer's morning', in: *Beyond the Bitter Wind: Poems 1982-2000* (Beeston, Shoestring Press, 2000 pp. 4-5), p. 4.
38 *Gen.* 47.9.
39 I am particularly grateful to David Jones for discussions about the theology of death. In his DPhil, he valuably analyses the contributions to this field of Paul, Ambrose, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Karl Rahner. See D. A. Jones, *Death: A Good or an Evil? A Theological Enquiry* (University of Oxford: Doctor of Philosophy thesis, 2001).
40 H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

41 I am grateful to Bronislaw Szerszynski for this.

42 For example, R. Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

43 *1 Cor.* 15.51-5.

44 I am grateful to Celia Deane-Drummond for this.

45 Hauerwas points out that nowadays "most people when asked how they want to die say in their sleep or suddenly – i.e., in a manner that they do not have to prepare for their dying. In contrast medieval people most feared sudden death since such a death would prevent from preparing for their death both in terms of their social responsibilities and their eternal destiny" (S. Hauerwas, 'Religious concepts of brain death and associated problems', in: *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped and the Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988, pp. 87-99), p. 96.

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