

LITERARY AND EXEGETICAL ISSUES IN THE STORY OF  
ADAM'S DEATH AND BURIAL (GLAE 31-42)

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This paper is concerned with the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (GLAE; also known as the *Apocalypse of Moses*) as a literary creation. Three aspects are treated: the *Life of Adam and Eve* as a specimen of the way much ancient literature developed in the course of history; the literary technique used in composing the *Life of Adam and Eve*; and the relationship of the *Life of Adam and Eve* to Genesis 1-4, the passage that provided at least the narrative framework for the apocryphon.

These aspects will be treated in connection with one particular passage in GLAE, the story of Adam's death, assumption and burial (§§31-42). It will be shown that this story contains numerous contradictory statements, which cannot be removed with the help of the various methods of literary criticism (I). Next, the writing's contradictions will be explained as a side-effect of the express intentions of its authors, who can be characterized as compilers of traditions without literary aspirations, but with a clear message (II). Finally, the relationship of this passage to Genesis 1-4 will be briefly discussed. It will be shown that the relationship is rather superficial. The authors wished to contrast death and life after death, and made use of Genesis 1-4 as they perceived it in order to convey their message. To the authors, the story of Genesis was the obvious context for the points they wished to make; they did not wish to explain or interpret Genesis 1-4, but merely exploited that story as a means for their own purposes (III).

I.

The literary history of the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* and its related text-forms in various languages is a perfect example of what Robert Kraft called "evolved literature"<sup>1</sup>. Numerous ancient writings must have

<sup>1</sup> R.A. Kraft, "The Multiform Jewish Heritage of Early Christianity", in J. Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty III* (Leiden 1975) 174-199, esp. 185: "some types of literature were not 'authored' in any normal sense of the word but evolved in stages over the years". See also M. de Jonge, "The So-called Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament and Early Christianity", in P. Borgen and S. Giversen (eds.), *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism* (Aarhus 1995) 59-71. In an attempt to incorporate this insight, I shall avoid the singular form

come into existence in a similar fashion: they underwent continuous change, by addition, by omission, by corruption and conjecture, as well as by drastic revision. Each new copy of such a writing became, in turn, the object of renewed adaptation and redaction.

In this way, many books developed during the centuries of their scribal transmission. Some of these at a given time became invested with authority, some of them even gained "canonical" status. That process sanctioned as definitive a particular stage in the development of the writing. From that time on, the literary development of the book came to a standstill, and the final form gradually ousted all other extant forms<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, literary and redactional criticism of such books as the Pentateuch and the Gospels is to a large extent a matter of hypothetical reconstruction. Prior stages of these books must be assumed, but they are in many cases not extant.

The *Life of Adam and Eve* in its various forms never came close to reaching canonical status, although it was popular and widely known. Both because of its apocryphal nature and its huge popularity (which resulted in very numerous copies of the writing in various languages), it is the ideal playground for literary and redactional critics. No version is identical to another, manuscripts transmit the text freely<sup>3</sup>. In the Greek textual tradition of the *Life of Adam and Eve* alone, twenty odd manuscripts represent at least five distinguishable recensions<sup>4</sup>. Unless it is

"author", but consistently use the plural "authors", meaning the succeeding generations of those who transmitted the *Life of Adam and Eve* and were responsible for its various recensions.

<sup>2</sup> This process has become visible, e.g., in the various recensions of the Book of Jeremiah (MT, LXX, and diverse Qumran fragments). See on this matter E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis/Assen/Maastricht 1992) 187-197, 313-349.

<sup>3</sup> This statement is made too absolutely, of course. For instance, there are only slight additional corruptions in the Greek manuscript J, which is a direct copy of manuscript I; see M. Nagel, *La vie grecque d'Adam et d'Eve. Apocalypse de Moïse I* (Lille 1974) 230.

<sup>4</sup> My own text-critical research so far, provisionally based on the material offered by Nagel, tends to distinguish the following recensions (I use the sigla proposed by D.A. Bertrand, *La vie grecque d'Adam et Eve* [Recherches intertestamentaires 1; Paris 1987] 41; see further M.E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* [Society of Biblical Literature, Early Judaism and its Literature 3; Atlanta 1992] 8-10): [1] a short Greek recension, represented by two text-critically distinguishable groups, viz mss. DS and mss. VKPGATLC; [2] a free paraphrase of this recension in ms. B; [3] a revision of the short recension, with one major expansion (29:7-13) in mss. RM (this revision also underlies the Slavonic *Life of Adam and Eve*; see Nagel, *La vie grecque I* 91-112 and the convenient summary of Nagel's conclusions in E. Turdeanu, "La vie d'Adam et d'Eve en slave et en roumain", in *Idem, Apocryphes slaves et roumains de l'Ancien Testament* [Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha 5; Leiden 1981] 75-144, esp. 80-82); [4] a further revision of the short recension, more freely expanded and often textually inferior to [1] in mss. NIJKHEWTFU; [5] an attempt to improve the literary and linguistic standards of [4] in mss. QZ.

demonstrated that no extant text form presupposes any of the other extant text forms<sup>5</sup>, it should be possible to reconstruct the outlines of this writing's literary history. Moreover, one should be able to find (or reconstruct) the "most original" form of the text, which accounts for all others<sup>6</sup>.

Quite possibly, no extant text coincides with this most primitive form. In that case it must be reconstructed from different forms which can be explained as separate developments of a hypothetical original. In the case of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, however, it is likely that the so-called short Greek recension represents the earliest traceable form in many instances<sup>7</sup>. One of these instances is the story of Adam's death and burial in GLAE 31-42, as I will now argue.

The story of Adam's death and burial, in GLAE 31-42, is preceded by Adam's farewell discourse, vicariously delivered by Eve. In this farewell speech (15-30), Eve relates how she and her husband were seduced by the devil to eat from the forbidden fruit. Attention is also paid to Adam's attempts to have their punishments mitigated, which were to no avail.

The story of Adam's death and burial describes how Eve bewails the dying Adam and confesses her sins, apparently in order to exculpate Adam (31:1-32:2). Next, the angel tells Eve to go and witness the assumption of Adam's spirit (32:3). Eve then sees a chariot of light descending to the place where Adam is lying, and angels offering frankincense and praying on Adam's behalf (33), whereby Seth explains to his mother what she sees (34-36). After that, an angel blows his horn, signaling the (favourable) outcome of God's judgment; the angels praise the glory of the Lord, a Seraph washes Adam in the Acherusian lake and God commands the archangel Michael to bring Adam to paradise, into the third heaven, until the final day of judgment (37).

This story is immediately followed by another story of related content. The latter story is clumsily attached to the former: Michael is portrayed as crying to the Father for the sake of Adam<sup>8</sup>; a proper

<sup>5</sup> A growing number of scholars, it seems, tend towards this conclusion; cf. the summarizing comment by G.A. Anderson, "The Penitence Narrative in the *Life of Adam and Eve*", *Hebrew Union College Annual* 63 (1992) 1-38, esp. 2: "A better way to approach this material ... would be to see the variety of textual witnesses as evidence of a constantly evolving document, thus making the recovery of a single form of the most primitive text all but impossible." This statement probably concerns the practical difficulties only, not a theoretical impossibility.

<sup>6</sup> It goes without saying that I do not wish to claim that this most primitive form coincides with the original GLAE, which is indeed irrecoverable.

<sup>7</sup> Recension [1] as described above, footnote 4.

<sup>8</sup> Almost all modern translations show remarkable liberty in rendering διὰ τὸν Ἀδᾶμ; see L.S.A. Wells, "The Books of Adam and Eve", in R.H. Charles (ed.), *The*

connection with what has just now been related about Adam is not made. God then commands the angels to stand in order. God himself takes his place on a chariot and, preceded by the winds, the Cherubs and the angels, descends to earth, where the body of Adam lies<sup>9</sup>. When the heavenly party arrives in paradise, all plants secrete fragrances, which make all mortals, except Seth, fall asleep (38). After that, God speaks to the body of Adam, voicing his regret about Adam's fall and promising him that, in the eschatological future, he will make Adam sit on the throne which the devil used to occupy (39). Next, we are told how the angels prepare Adam's body for his funeral; an excursus explains why Abel is buried only now, together with his father (40). God again speaks to Adam's body, promising him his own resurrection and that of all people (41). Finally, God seals Adam's grave and all celestial beings return to their abode (42:1-2).

It seems that two related stories are combined, one on the heavenly afterlife of Adam (paradise being located in heaven), the other on the burial of Adam near the earthly paradise and the promise of his eschatological resurrection. Since the Greek text fails to make an explicit connection between both stories, the question may be asked whether both or only one of the two belong(s) to the most primitive text form. This question is all the more urgent, because the Armenian *Penitence of Adam* contains the second story only which, at least at this point, makes the narrative flow considerably smoother. If it could be demonstrated that the Armenian text does not depend on the longer version as represented by the Greek, the chances are that the shorter Armenian text is more original.

Since the Greek text is suspect, the reasons for suspicion must be analysed before the relationships between the Greek and the Armenian texts

*Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* II (Oxford 1913) 123-154: 151, "concerning the laying out of the remains"; Bertrand, *La vie grecque* 101, "pour son corps"; N. Fernández Marcos, "Vida de Adán y Eva (Apocalipsis de Moisés)", in A. Díez Macho e.a. (eds.), *Apócrifos del Antiguo Testamento* II (Madrid 1983) 319-352: 335, "por los cuidados del cadáver"; C. Fuchs, "Das Leben Adams und Evas", in E. Kautzsch (ed.), *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments* II (Tübingen 1900) 506-528: 526: "um die Beschickung der Überreste [Adams]". These translations rest on a conjectural reading by C. Tischendorf, *Apocalypses apocryphae Mosis, Esdrae, Pauli, Iohannis, item Mariae Dormitio* (Leipzig 1866) 20, in ms. B, a manuscript notorious for its paraphrastic character: περί τῆς ἱκεθδειαζτ [ms.: καρδίας] τοῦ λειψάνου. None of the translators mentioned give a justification for their preference for ms. B; aside from Bertrand, none of them mention Tischendorf as the *author* of the conjecture, either.

<sup>9</sup> Compare the descending chariot in 33:2-3.

are investigated. It is clear that the stories about the death and burial of Adam are from different provenance, but that does not automatically imply that the combination is the result of secondary, redactional activity. It may well be that the combination is original: either story may stem from traditions or even written sources intentionally combined by the authors of the most primitive *Life of Adam and Eve*. The subject matters of both stories are related, to be sure, but not identical. The former speaks clearly of Adam's assumption into heaven, the latter unequivocally about the burial of his body<sup>10</sup>. Such a combination is by no means singular<sup>11</sup>.

On the other hand, there are important details which argue against the simple interpretation of this passage in GLAE, proposed by D.A. Bertrand in 1985<sup>12</sup>. Bertrand regarded both stories as distinct treatments of the *post mortem* fate of Adam's soul and body. He also divided both parts over different locations: the angels' intercessory prayer should be regarded as taking place in heaven, Adam's burial, however, on earth<sup>13</sup>. However, Bertrand has to adapt the text of GLAE to fit his interpretation. That procedure is, of course, unacceptable<sup>14</sup>.

The text of GLAE poses two major obstacles to a simple interpretation. First of all, no clear distinction is made between Adam's body and his spirit in the story of Adam's assumption. Notwithstanding the

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Nagel, *La vie grecque* I 4: "Il s'agit manifestement de deux traditions parallèles, mais contradictoires, la première décrivant une assumption d'Adam (sans distinction entre le corps et l'âme), la deuxième l'enterrement d'Adam." See also Bertrand, *La vie grecque* 51.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses. A Critical Edition with Commentary* (Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha 10; Leiden 1993) 270-285.

<sup>12</sup> D.A. Bertrand, "Le destin 'post mortem' des protoplastes selon la 'Vie grecque d'Adam et Eve'", in *La littérature intertestamentaire. Colloque de Strasbourg (17-19 octobre 1983)* (Paris 1985) 109-118; cf. Idem, *La vie grecque d'Adam et Eve* (Recherches intertestamentaires I; Paris 1987) 50-53; and J. Bonsirven, *Le judaïsme palestinien au temps de Jésus-Christ* I (2nd ed.; Paris 1934) 333.

<sup>13</sup> J.R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism. From Sirach to 2 Baruch* (Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplements 1; Sheffield 1988) 171 and 231, also assumes that the angelic intercession takes place in the heavenly sanctuary. Some indications do suggest this, other details contradict it. According to 35:2, Eve tells Seth to look at the seven heavens, and to see how Adam, surrounded by angels, is lying on his face; the chariot, however, which is said to hold still at the place where Adam is lying, has descended from heaven, presumably to earth (33:2-3). Again, therefore, the authors carelessly change the scene. Bertrand's suggestion (*La vie grecque* 136-137) that the chariot is not a vehicle for God, but for Adam's soul, is not supported by the text. Instead, one may compare Psalm 104:3-4: "you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind, you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers" (trans. New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Stone, *A History* 66.

introductory remarks by Adam and the angel in 31:4 and 32:4, it cannot simply be said that it is Adam's spirit which ascends to heaven, while his body, neatly distinguished from his spirit, would remain on earth to be buried near paradise. The confusion manifests itself most drastically in 34:1-35:2, where it is said that Eve asks her son Seth to "leave the body of his father alone", but instead watch the body (another, spiritual body, perhaps?) of his father lying down (possibly, but not necessarily in heaven).

Secondly, a major confusion exists about the geographical, or rather, cosmographical location of paradise. Whereas the story of Adam's death and assumption clearly states that Adam was taken up to paradise in heaven, the story of his burial seems to assume that paradise is somewhere on earth. But even in the second story mention is made of a paradise (another paradise, perhaps?) in the third heaven.

Although these facts prevent us from accepting Bertrand's interpretation, it is important to note that these difficulties exist in both passages. "Body" and "spirit" are almost promiscuously used for Adam in the story about his death and assumption. It is impossible, of course, to bury a spirit, so that this confusion is not present in the story about Adam's funeral. But the location of paradise is equivocal in both stories. Possibly, the authors of GLAE envisaged a spiritual and a material body and paradise respectively. In neither story, however, is such a distinction explicitly made.

It can be concluded that a closer inspection of the Greek text of GLAE 31-42 gives reason to suspect that the combination of two traditions or sources is intentional. The question whether the shorter or the longer text is more original now depends exclusively on the comparison of the Greek and the Armenian text forms<sup>15</sup>.

A number of facts argue for the secondary character of the Armenian *Penitence of Adam* as compared to the Greek text of LAE 31-42. First of all, the Georgian version has two stories, just as the Greek. In view of the close connection between the Armenian and the Georgian versions<sup>16</sup>, one cannot but assume that the Armenian is secondary here.

<sup>15</sup> The comparison of the Greek and the Armenian, as well as the other main text forms, is greatly facilitated by G.A. Anderson and M.E. Stone (eds.), *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve* (Society of Biblical Literature, Early Judaism and its Literature 5; Atlanta 1994).

<sup>16</sup> J.-P. Mahé, "Notes philologiques sur la version géorgienne de la *Vita Adae*", *Bedi Kartlisa* 41 (1983) 51-65; cf. the summary of Mahé's conclusions in Stone, *A History* 38-39.

In addition, it may be noted that the Armenian text still contains remains of the story about Adam's assumption. For instance, the words used in GLAE 31:1 to introduce the story of the assumption also occur in the Armenian version ("one more day remained of his life and Adam's soul was going forth from his body")<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, the confusion as to the location of paradise appears in the Armenian text as well. In the entire story in the Armenian version, paradise is almost consistently treated as an earthly region where Adam's body is buried. In 40:2, however, it is said that God commanded Michael to bring three linen cloths from the Garden of the third heaven; virtually the same words occur in GLAE 40:1. This mention of the heavenly paradise is best explained as an editorial lapse (artfully avoided in 40:7)<sup>18</sup>.

In conclusion, it is the longer version of GLAE which must be regarded as the more original story. The conceptual confusions in this more original story have now to be looked at in more detail.

## II.

As indicated above, neither the anthropology nor the cosmography of GLAE are developed consistently. This fact warrants the conclusion that these issues were not of prime interest to the authors of the writing.

It is necessary to make this simple statement, because it explains why an interpretation of GLAE 31-42 such as Bertrand's is inadequate. Interpreters of this passage are tempted to search for some point of view which makes the story logical or at least less inconsistent in these

<sup>17</sup> It can be argued that the Armenian text uses this and similar phrases only to indicate Adam's death. However, they are unmistakably used in the Greek text to announce the story of Adam's assumption (cf. Bertrand, *La vie grecque* 135). Therefore, this story appears to be safely embedded in the Greek version of the book. These phrases can be taken as an argument for the originality of GLAE, but cannot be used to prove the reverse.

<sup>18</sup> Redaction is also apparent in the transition from 33:1 to 38:2 in the Armenian version. In GLAE 33:1 it is said that "Eve arose" and saw the chariot of light descending. Then follow the passages about the angelic intercession and Adam's assumption. In 37, Michael is said to cry to the Father for the sake of Adam. In response, God commands the angels to stand before him, and they all descend to earth (38:1). The Armenian version contains the very words "Eve arose", but continues with "and all the angels assembled before her", that is, Eve. Next, the Armenian runs parallel again to the Greek in relating that God and the angels descended to earth (cf. M. de Jonge, "The Life of Adam and Eve. Working Paper for Society of New Testament Studies Seminar 'Early Jewish Writings and the New Testament'" (Madrid, October 1992) 12: "It jumps from one descent of the divine chariot in 33:2 to the next in 38:2-3."). This connection is best explained as a deliberate attempt by the Armenian to repair the transition from "Eve arose" to the descent of God.

domains. I think it is fair to say that as far as the distinction between body and soul, and the location of paradise are concerned, the story does not aim at consistency. This in itself is most instructive for those interested in popular religion, if we may so schematically equate unreflected ideas and popular religion<sup>19</sup>. In any case, we are forced to acknowledge that what may appear to us as inconsistent is indeed what the authors of the most primitive *Life of Adam and Eve* produced.

Before we reach any conclusions concerning the interpretation of this writing, we must tradition-historically investigate the extent of the chaos. What notions exactly are intermingled, and how do they contradict each other? In this section I will analyse the statements in GLAE about Adam's *post mortem* fate. I will assume that all statements about the first man are meant to be extrapolated to humankind as a whole, insofar as Adam's offspring finds itself in situations comparable to that of their genitor<sup>20</sup>.

Death is thought to come about when Adam is said to leave his body (13:6; 31:1, 4; 32:3, 4; cf. 42:8). The idea underlying this image is the traditional notion of death being constituted by the separation of the spirit from the body<sup>21</sup>. But there are no clear comments in GLAE on the physical nature of the surviving part of Adam after he has died<sup>22</sup>. It can be designated as his spirit (31:4; 32:4) or soul (13:6; cf. 43:3), but it is certainly regarded as something material: it is capable of lying down (33:3; 35:2; 37:4) and of being washed (37:3). Once, the surviving part of Adam is even designated as a body (σῶμα, 35:2). In certain philosophical speculations about the nature of the soul it is said that the soul is some kind of a σῶμα<sup>23</sup>. However, outside such philosophical contexts,

<sup>19</sup> The unreflected combination of death as sleeping, a heavenly afterlife as well as a resurrection to life is also found in various epitaphs; see, e.g., P.W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 2; Kampen 1991) 117.

<sup>20</sup> Levison, *Portraits of Adam* 171. Adam's burial near paradise, for instance, is excepted from this general meaning of GLAE 31-42.

<sup>21</sup> Chrysippus, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* II 790: ὁ θάνατος ἐστὶ ψυχῆς χωρισμὸς ἀπὸ σώματος (similar words in Plato, *Phaedo* 64c; Philo, *Legum allegoriae* I 105); compare in Jewish literature, e.g., Sirach 38:23; 1 Enoch 22:7; 4 Ezra 7:78, 100; Ps.-Phocylides 107-108; Philo, *Legum allegoriae* I 108 (referring to Heraclitus); Flavius Josephus, *De bello judaico* III 372; VII 348.

<sup>22</sup> Against, e.g., H.C.C. Cavallin, *Life after Death. Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Cor 15 I* (Lund 1974) 73, commenting on GLAE: "Death itself means a separation between the body and the soul."

<sup>23</sup> E.g., Epicurus, *Epistula ad Herodotum* 63: ἡ ψυχὴ σῶμα ἐστὶ λεπτομερές; Chrysippus, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* II, 790-791 (compare 792-800): σῶμα ἄρα ἡ ψυχὴ (igitur corpus anima).

it is highly unusual that the spirit or soul is called a  $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha$ , even if it is widely regarded as (very subtly) corporeal. In GLAE the nature of the surviving part of Adam is in no way the object of speculation. Apparently, all that the authors wished to do was to speak about Adam who was in some way alive after his death.

Adam is taken up to heaven by the archangel Michael (37:5; cf. 32:4). The survival of the righteous spirit or soul in an agreeable place is also a well-known concept, stemming, it seems, from the Greek world<sup>24</sup>. Often this concept takes the form of astral immortality<sup>25</sup>. Quite surprisingly GLAE displays familiarity with the purification of the dead in the Acherusian lake (37:3)<sup>26</sup>. Michael's function as a psychopomp is well-known from other sources<sup>27</sup>.

In GLAE Adam's heavenly survival is temporary, in anticipation of the eschatological day of judgment (37:5; this day is called the day of resurrection in 10:2 and 42:3)<sup>28</sup>. The day of judgment is an old Israelite prophetic idea which in the Hellenistic period came to be taken as the decisive stage in the eschatological scenario. The prophets had conceived this final day as the day on which God would bring about happiness for his people or for the righteous ones. In later writings, this day sometimes was associated with the resurrection of the dead, either to participate in the joy promised to the righteous<sup>29</sup>, or to undergo the definitive judgment<sup>30</sup>. In combination with the concept of the immortal soul, it was sometimes thought that these souls were not exempt from

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the material offered by E. Rohde, *Psyche. Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* I-II (2nd ed.; Freiburg im Breisgau, Leipzig and Tübingen 1898) I 308, 314-316; II 127-130, 162; 204-213; in Jewish literature, e.g., Flavius Josephus, *De bello judaico* II 155 (cf. VII 344).

<sup>25</sup> Compare the comment by Rohde, *Psyche* II 384: "dieser Glaube an die Erhebung der körperfreien Seele in überirdischen Regionen [muss] wohl als der in späteren Zeiten unter solchen, die sich bestimmteren Vorstellungen über ein jenseitiges Dasein hingeben mochten, am weitesten verbreitete gelten." Compare in Jewish literature, e.g., Daniel 12:3; 1 Enoch 104:2, 6; Psalm of Solomon 1:5; Wisdom 3:7; 4 Ezra 7:97, 125; 2 Baruch 51:5, 10.

<sup>26</sup> See Plato, *Phaedo* 113d and cf. various authors, "Acheron", in G. Wissowa (ed.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* I (Stuttgart 1894) 217-219.

<sup>27</sup> E.g., Testament of Abraham A 20 (B 14); cf. M. Delcor, *Le Testament d'Abraham. Introduction, traduction du texte grec et commentaire de la recension grecque longue* (Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha 2; Leiden 1973) 173.

<sup>28</sup> Compare, e.g., 4 Ezra 7:75-99 (cf. M.E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra. A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* [Minneapolis 1990] 238).

<sup>29</sup> 1 Enoch 92:3-4.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel 12:2-3; *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 3:10.

the eschatological judgment<sup>31</sup>, although they may have undergone some kind of advance judgment immediately after death<sup>32</sup>. This coalescence of originally unrelated concepts led to the idea that the heavenly survival of the soul was temporary<sup>33</sup>.

The temporary abode of Adam's soul is called paradise in the third heaven (37:5). A heavenly paradise is also assumed by the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 12:2-4, and in 2 Baruch 4:6; 59:10-11.

The place where Adam's body is buried is called paradise as well. It is clear, however, that this is the earthly paradise, the garden from which Adam and Eve were expelled. When the body is buried in the earth, dust returns to dust (40:7-41:2)<sup>34</sup>. Paradise as a region on a high mountain, somewhere on earth, is known from 1 En. 24-25 (cf. Ezek. 28)<sup>35</sup>.

In order to mitigate the contradictions regarding the location of paradise, one might suggest that the authors of GLAE knew a tradition about the simultaneous existence of two paradises: one in heaven for spiritual beings, the other on earth for beings of more massive matter<sup>36</sup>. However, the logical advantages of such a tradition are not exploited in the writing. It is more likely that the authors knew two separate traditions concerning the location of paradise, and telescoped them without attempting to harmonise them. It may be noted in passing that in the Greek literary and religious tradition, too, the location of the Elysian fields, for instance, is often left unclear<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> 4 Ezra 7:32-36.

<sup>32</sup> 4 Ezra 7:78-99; cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 113d-114c, and the material collected by Rohde, *Psyche* I, 309-314; II, 367-368, 382-383. For a discussion of the connection between resurrection and judgment, see J. Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia. A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Cor. 15:20-23* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 84; Leiden 1996) 123-130.

<sup>33</sup> W. Bousset, H. Gressmann, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter* (Tübingen 1926) 286-289.

<sup>34</sup> Levison, *Portraits of Adam* 173, unjustifiably harmonises the statements in GLAE 41 when he says that this passage implies that "Adam was composed of dust from the regions of paradise which are in the third heaven".

<sup>35</sup> Compare the identification of Mount Zion with the place of the future paradise in Isaiah 51:3 (cf. Isaiah 25:6 and Jeremiah 31:12); see further G.A. Anderson, "The Cosmic Mountain. Eden and its Early Interpreters in Syriac Christianity", in G.A. Robbins (ed.), *Genesis 1-3 in the History of Exegesis. Intrigue in the Garden* (Studies in Women and Religion 27; New York/Queenston 1988) 187-224.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Stone, *The Fourth Book of Ezra* 68.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 108c, and see Rohde, *Psyche* II 370-372. In Jubilees 4:23, it is said that Enoch was taken away from the sons of man, into the garden of Eden; nevertheless, the garden of Eden is pictured somewhere on earth according to Jubilees 4:26. See further J. Jeremias, "παράδεισος", in G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* V (Stuttgart 1954) 764-766.

Buried in the earth, the body awaits the resurrection of the Last Day (41:3; cf. 37:5)<sup>38</sup>. Just as the surviving part of Adam in heaven, the body that will be raised can simply be designated as Adam (40:3, 5; 42:3, 4). When addressed by God, the body can even answer (41:1). Again, the importance attached to stressing the reality of life after death (in this case through the eschatological resurrection of the body) takes precedence over neat distinctions and consistency.

These are the main concepts concerning Adam's death and afterlife found in GLAE 31-42, and their traditional background. Hardly any attempt is made, it seems, to integrate the concepts taken from various traditions into a logically consistent view of life after death. Instead, the compilers have chosen to merely concatenate the elements they wished to adopt in their writing. The authors of GLAE envisaged Adam after his death both as a surviving entity of some kind, and as a body laid to rest in the earth, to be resurrected at the end of time. The dead body of Adam and what survives of him equally represent the whole Adam. This is intelligible only if everything related about Adam in GLAE 31-42 is seen from the perspective of one unifying point of view: the question of life after death.

The question the authors of GLAE wanted to address in 31-42 was what happened to Adam after he died. They answered this question by depicting Adam's afterlife in several ways. They did not care, however, about his soul or his body, they only cared about "Adam", in whatever way one might designate him after his death.

The spiritual survival and the bodily resurrection are originally different concepts with differing modes of life after death related to each. In GLAE, both concepts are simply combined<sup>39</sup>. The only trace of attempted harmonisation is perhaps the interim character of Adam's presumed stay in the third heaven. It is likely, however, that this harmonisation was present already in the tradition as the authors of GLAE knew it<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Cavallin, *Life after Death* 72-73, quoting GLAE 13:3b-6, a passage that, in my opinion, is secondary. The possibility that body and spirit will then be reunited apparently did not occur to the authors.

<sup>39</sup> Here the suspicion of R. Bauckham, "Resurrection as Giving Back the Dead: A Traditional Image of Resurrection in the Pseudepigrapha and the Apocalypse of John", in J.H. Charlesworth and Evans (eds.), *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement 14; Sheffield 1993) 269-291, is confirmed for GLAE: "It is probably correct to suppose that many writers had not so much a *concept* of resurrection, but rather a number of *conventional ways of speaking* of resurrection" (278).

<sup>40</sup> The idea of an interim abode for the souls of the dead awaiting the resurrection also occurs in 1 Enoch 22; 4 Ezra 7:32; 2 Baruch 30:2.

The writing thus shows itself as a repository of various traditions. Little effort was made to amend the resulting antinomies<sup>41</sup>.

Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to regard GLAE as no more than a collection of traditions concerning Adam without coherence<sup>42</sup>. The great majority of the story's components are clearly organised around the leitmotiv of death and its remedy. The first main part of GLAE, including Adam's farewell speech vicariously spoken by Eve, stresses on every possible occasion the irreversibility of death for humankind. There is no medicine against mortal diseases before the final resurrection (13:2-3), there is no forgiveness (27:3-4), no access to the fruit of the tree of life (28:3), but only death as the unending punishment for giving in to the devil (28:4), until the final resurrection. The second part, about Adam's death and burial, forms a positive contrast: death is not the end<sup>43</sup>. There is some form of survival for man, there is the possibility of his person being taken up to the heavenly paradise, there is the resurrection of the body at the end of time (cf. already 28:4), and the everlasting bliss. How, when, where will these things happen? These are questions the writing does not answer, because they were considered totally subordinate to that one theme: man must die, but death is not the end.

The authors of GLAE can be characterized as compilers of traditions. They adopted various views of the afterlife and put them together in a story, not bothered by literary aspirations or logical consistency. In their writing, they wished on the one hand to emphasize the inevitable reality of illness and death. In contrast to this recognition of everyday experience, they offer to the righteous the consoling prospect of a paradisiac afterlife immediately after death, as well as the resurrection of their bodies<sup>44</sup>.

Interestingly, this edifying tendency has drastically been changed in the Armenian text. In the Armenian recension, the passage about Adam's assumption into heaven has been removed. All that is left of the contrast

<sup>41</sup> This method of compilation is also apparent in the many excurses which do not contribute to the main points the authors wanted to make; see, e.g., the relatively lengthy excursus on Abel's body in 40:3-6.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Nagel, *La vie grecque* I 4, who suggested that GLAE perhaps originated as a collection of traditions concerning Adam's life (collected with a view to writing his biography), juxtaposing, in the way of haggadic exegesis, opposite opinions. Once the material was incorporated into a narrative, a lengthy process of harmonisation would have begun.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Levison's comment, *Portraits of Adam* 172-173: "The pardoning scene [scil. 32-37] is constructed to give hope to the readers... God responds with mercy in a way in which God refused to during Adam's earthly lifetime."

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Levison, *Portraits of Adam* 174.

of death and future life are some minor allusions to the eschatological resurrection (28:4; 39:2; 41:3). The contrast thus being removed, this recension gives only a tale of sin and failed repentance, concluded by a funeral. The narrative outline and the overall organisation of the book may have been improved by this intervention, but the edifying, moral thrust of the Greek recension is lost.

### III.

In the preceding sections, it has been argued that the most primitive form of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, as represented by the major part of the Greek manuscript tradition, contains two stories about the *post mortem* fate of Adam. It was also noted that these stories (GLAE 31-37 and 38-42) offer confusing details, contradicting each other, but that those responsible for the entire passage were not concerned about the contradictions. Their main concern was to emphasise the possibility of an agreeable future life, as contrasted to the inevitability of death in this world.

In this final section I would like to ask whether it makes sense to call GLAE a specimen of "the rewritten Bible"<sup>45</sup>. The use of the phrase

<sup>45</sup> The term "rewritten Bible" was coined by G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism. Haggadic Studies* (Studia post-biblica 4; Leiden 1961) who defined it as the midrashic insertion of haggadic development into the biblical narrative (95). The term "haggada" was already applied to GLAE by C.C. Torrey, *The Apocryphal Literature. A Brief Introduction* (New Haven 1945) 132 ("mainly pure haggada"), and survives in the characterizations of, e.g., J.H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research. With a Supplement* (Septuagint and Cognate Studies 75; Ann Arbor 1981) 74 ("haggadic midrash"), and Fernández Marcos, "Vida de Adán y Eva" 320: "una especie de midrás haggádico de Gn 1-4 y de 'Testamento de Eva'." In recent years, scholars tend to differentiate between "midrash" (or "haggada") and "rewritten bible" (see the short survey in F.J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo. Rewriting the Bible* [New York/Oxford 1993] 4-5). Scholars who categorise GLAE as "rewritten Bible" include G.W.E. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded", in M.E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum II, 2; Assen/Philadelphia 1984) 89-156: 110-118; D.J. Harrington, "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies", in R.A. Kraft and G.W.E. Nickelsburg (eds.), *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters* (Philadelphia/Atlanta 1986) 239-258; D.S. Russell, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Patriarchs and Prophets in Early Judaism* (Philadelphia 1987) 15; see further below. P.S. Alexander, "Retelling the Old Testament", in D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson (eds.), *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars* (Cambridge 1988) 99-121, would probably not include GLAE in this category, because he posits the formal criterion that rewritten bible texts "are narratives, which follow a sequential, chronological order" (116; cf. 117: "Rewritten Bible texts follow the Bible serially, in proper order"). The short recension of GLAE has the form of a farewell scene, and therefore does not qualify. Interestingly, the Latin *Vita Adae et Evae*, a thorough reworking of the writing, does qualify, because it has removed Eve's farewell speech and placed some of its contents in the beginning of the work (VAE 1-17), thereby restoring the biblical chronology. It follows, I think, that this formal criterion should be dropped.

"rewritten Bible" has in recent years gained some popularity, although the definitions vary widely. All definitions, however, seem to have in common that the rewritten Bible has something to do with exegesis. Most outspokenly perhaps, G. Vermes defined rewriting the Bible as follows:

The regular reading of Scripture and the constant meditation on it with a view to interpreting, expounding and supplementing its stories and resolving its textual, contextual and doctrinal difficulties, resulted in a pre-rabbinic haggadah which, once introduced into the scriptural narrative itself, produced a 'rewritten' Bible, a fuller, smoother and doctrinally more advanced form of the sacred narrative<sup>46</sup>.

If we would follow Nickelsburg's much more careful description of this type of literature, the rewritten Bible is literature "that is very closely related to the biblical texts, expanding and paraphrasing them and implicitly commenting on them"<sup>47</sup>.

What is meant, however, by "implicit comment"? Is it something as broad as intended by Charlesworth when he stated recently that "it is now widely recognized that the Jewish pseudepigrapha that antedate c. 135 CE represent a chapter in early Jewish biblical exegesis"<sup>48</sup>? If so, the terminology becomes so vague as to lose all meaning.

No doubt, when a work draws intensively on the Jewish Bible, a certain understanding of the source's contents is presupposed. This understanding is stamped by the social and cultural background of the authors who are using it posterially. Everybody reads the Bible within his own mental framework; nobody can read the Bible without the biases of his own time and culture. If that is meant by "implicit comment", I heartily agree. I doubt, however, whether this makes for a genre, and whether introducing this genre helps us to understand its representatives. For rewritten Bible, thus understood, would be no more than an unconscious reflection of a reading of the Bible<sup>49</sup>.

Jewish exegesis in the Hellenistic period exists, for instance, in the treatises by Philo of Alexandria, in the pesharim, and in the applications

<sup>46</sup> G. Vermes, in G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black, and P. Vermes, revision and edition of E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ III.1* (Edinburgh 1986) 308; see also D.J. Harrington, "Palestinian Adaptations" 239.

<sup>47</sup> Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded" 89.

<sup>48</sup> J.H. Charlesworth, "In the Crucible: The Pseudepigrapha as Biblical Interpretation", in J.H. Charlesworth and C.A. Evans (eds.), *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplements 14; Sheffield 1993) 20-43: 22.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. P.S. Alexander, "Retelling the Old Testament" 117: "The intention of the texts is to produce an interpretative reading of Scripture."

of Old Testament prophecies to Jesus in the New Testament. These are instances, however, of explicit comment, and formally recognisable exegesis. No such thing occurs in GLAE. This writing makes use of Genesis 1-4; several difficulties in the text of Genesis 1-4 are implicitly resolved or ignored. That is only natural, precisely because the authors' aim was *not* exegetical. If it had been, they would simply have made a commentary of some form. It is highly implausible that, in a commentary that is not formally recognisable as such, we can ever be sure that "an intense, if silent, dialectic with the original" is carried on, and I protest against the view that "its full significance can only be grasped if the original is borne constantly in mind."<sup>50</sup>

Exegetical decisions necessarily underlie the way in which the authors of GLAE handled the story of the fall. It may be assumed beforehand that the decisions made were current in the traditional interpretation of Genesis 1-4. It is possible in many instances to trace these traditions in other writings. The study of these exegetical traditions is useful for understanding how certain people in certain periods read the Bible<sup>51</sup>. However, it is improbable that the basic decisions were made by the authors of GLAE. They used Genesis 1-4, but used it according to the interpretation they knew. When they read these chapters from the Bible, they read them in the way they had been taught, that is, in the way the book of Genesis appears in GLAE.

This does not imply, however, that the authors of GLAE wrote their book with a view to explain Genesis 1-4. It is evident that the passage just discussed was not written to that end. In no way can §§31-42 (covering about one third of the entire writing) be seen to comment upon the biblical chapters: the contents and tendency are taken from a complex of traditions that have no links with the traditions incorporated in Genesis 1-4. Even the thirty preceding sections which follow the Genesis-account much more closely, should not be called "exegetical". In these sections, the problem of death is discussed; its origins are recounted; but the main point is that the punishment is irreversible. That main point

<sup>50</sup> P.S. Alexander, "Retelling the Old Testament" 117. This principle is most consistently practiced by J. Kugel, see, e.g., his recent articles "The Story of Dinah in the Testament of Levi", *Harvard Theological Review* 85 (1992) 1-34; "Levi's Elevation to the Priesthood in Second Temple Writings", *Harvard Theological Review* 86 (1993) 1-64; see also G.A. Anderson, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in the Targums", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990) 21-29.

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., G.A. Anderson, "Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden", *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1982) 121-148.

does not stem, however, from the exegesis of Genesis 1-4, nor is it intended to offer "a fuller, smoother and doctrinally more advanced form of the sacred narrative". It is just a point which can be attractively presented with the aid of the Genesis-story (as perceived by later readers).

If we define the genre of the rewritten Bible by the criterion of exegetical intent, GLAE does not belong to the genre. Even if we allow this exegetical intent to be covert and implicit, GLAE does not qualify. Moreover, if, in general, the criterion of exegetical intent is so broad as to include implicit comment, its usefulness for designating a separate generic category becomes doubtful.

Moreover, the genre lacks a specific form, the prime criterion for the definition of a genre according to the modern standards of literary criticism<sup>52</sup>. Finally, we do not understand GLAE better if it is placed in this category alongside Jubilees or the *Biblical Antiquities*, which differ greatly regarding aim and contents.

The phenomenon of rewritten biblical texts, that is, of the extensive use of the Bible in other writings, only underlines the great awe in which the Bible came to be held<sup>53</sup>. This high regard does not imply, however, that those using it had the intention of explaining or even consciously modernising it.

The earliest traceable form of the *Life of Adam and Eve* represented by the major part of the Greek textual tradition, contains two stories about the fate of Adam after he died.

The former of these stories concerns Adam's assumption into heaven, the latter his burial near the earthly paradise. Although the stories are clumsily connected, there are sufficient grounds to suspect that the combination already figured in the earliest or "authentic" form of GLAE. It must therefore be concluded that the authors of the original *Life of Adam and Eve* were not concerned about anthropological or cosmographical details (domains in which this book shows great inconsistencies), but aimed only at stressing the possibility of life after death, as opposed to the necessity of death in this world.

<sup>52</sup> See, however, C. Barth, *Diessets und Jenseits im Glauben des späten Israel* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 72; Stuttgart 1974) 39, "Nach seiner Form eine midraschartige Ausgestaltung der biblischen Paradieserzählung"; M.D. Johnson, in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha II* (New York/London/Toronto/Sydney/Auckland 1985) 249: "in midrashic form".

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded" 89: "This tendency to follow the ancient texts more closely may be seen as a reflection of their developing canonical status."

This conclusion is drawn on the basis of the writing's contents only. It is clear that the authors of GLAE drew intensively on Genesis 1-4 (as they perceived it), but, as I have argued, their writing does not aim at explaining or interpreting that biblical passage. Therefore, GLAE cannot be regarded as a representative of the literary genre of the "rewritten Bible". In fact, the usefulness of introducing the category of this genre may be questioned, since a formal criterion is absent and another criterion, that of implicit exegetical intent, cannot be identified in the writings concerned.