In an article published in 1988, I examined the expression “manna mildost” as applied to Moses and Beowulf in Old English poetry as well as to God in Old High German poetry.\(^1\) Moses, it seemed, was to be found in very exalted company: a Germanic hero on the one hand and God Himself on the other. I drew several parallels between Beowulf and Moses, with both men as leaders and rescuers, and I pointed out that both of them strongly rely on the help of God. My main objective at the time was to see Beowulf in a typological light, and the identical formula applied to both Moses and Beowulf seemed to allow such a typological reading. Back in 1988, I was not too concerned about the way in which Anglo-Saxons in general interpreted Moses and did not even ask how an exegete such as Bede or a prolific poet such as Aldhelm would have regarded this Old Testament figure. I commented on Mary Richards’ conclusion that “the closing eulogy to Beowulf [is] a statement of his essential Christianity,”\(^2\) and since this eulogy contains the formula *manna mildost*, which is also applied to Moses, I stated that “Moses, though a good man, could at best hope to be a type of Christ rather than a Christian”\(^3\) without exploring whether any of the Anglo-Saxons ever explicitly drew the typological parallel between Moses and Christ. To my knowledge, no one in the meantime has explored Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards Moses.\(^4\) This essay intends to do so, and in doing so...

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4. One of the latest books examining the Anglo-Saxons’ attitude towards Jews in general is Andrew P. Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004). Scheil has many references to Moses, but never attempts a synthesis of Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards him. This, of course, is not the aim of his book. I consider it worthwhile nonetheless to examine whether his conclusion of Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards Jews in general also applies to one Jew, namely Moses, specifically. This is what he concludes: “Jews are not simply or unproblematically the despised embodiment of alterity, the great hated ‘enemy within’ of the Christian West; they are also the model, elder people. Honor and hatred, desire and fear, at every step” (333). The essay hopes to show that, as far as Moses is concerned, there is a middle way between...
so attempts to determine whether Anglo-Saxon literature in both its Anglo-Latin and Old English manifestations confirm the heroism Moses seems to possess on account of sharing a poetic formula with both Beowulf and God.

In order to outline the Anglo-Saxons’ view of Moses, we must first take into account the New Testament’s attitude toward Moses, since the New Testament would pave the way for either acceptance or rejection of this Old Testament figure. A priori, it would seem, Moses is a highly acceptable figure. According to the concordance, he is mentioned by name more frequently in the New Testament than any other patriarch. His name appears eighty times; Abraham, the next closest patriarch is mentioned seventy-two times, Elijah thirty times, Jacob twenty-six times, Isaac twenty times, and Noah eight times. Numbers, of course, do not mean everything, but Moses’ preeminence in the New Testament is also clearly demonstrated by the “transfiguration” scene in Matthew 17, in which Moses and Elijah are speaking to the transfigured Jesus. And if Moses has to share the spotlight at this point with Elijah, he does not have to do so in John 5:46, where Jesus says about him: “Si enim crederetis Moysi, crederetis forsitan et mihi: de me enim ille scripsit.” (“For if you had believed Moses, you therefore would have believed in me: for he wrote about me.”) There can be no doubt that this patriarch caught the imagination of the evangelists and of the writers of the epistles.

To what extent, however, did the Anglo-Saxons share the New Testament’s acceptance of Moses? To find the answer, I shall look at both the Latin and Old English literature produced by the Anglo-Saxons. Literature is here broadly defined and includes all forms of writing such as exegesis, hagiography, historiography, and letters, regardless of whether these texts are written in poetry or in prose. Space considerations prevent an examination of every single mention of Moses in Anglo-Saxon literature, but I hope that the texts I do examine provide a representative sample of Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards Moses. I shall begin with the best-known trio of Anglo-Latin writing, namely Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin, briefly examine references to Moses in the Old English poetic corpus, and end with the Old English Exodus.

“honor and hatred” and “desire and fear”: this middle way seems to consist of a reluctance to speak about Moses, of limited acceptance, and of ambivalence.