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# A Study of the Sin and Death of Moses in Biblical Literature

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A STUDY OF  
THE SIN AND DEATH OF MOSES  
IN BIBLICAL LITERATURE

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of Ouachita Baptist University  
Arkadelphia, Arkansas

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Harry E. Woodall

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Recently Dr. Clyde T. Francisco, who is professor of Old Testament interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, suggested that one of the great mysteries of the Bible is contained in the sin and death of Moses. Inquiry into the subject has validated his statement, for the interpretation of Moses' sin and death has been subject to many theories and speculations. The following Biblical passages are concerned with the sin and death of Moses: Numbers 20:1-13; 22-29; 27:12-14; Deuteronomy 1:35-40; 3:23-29; 4:21-24; 32:48-52; 34:1-7. Other related Biblical passages include Psalm 106:32-33, Mark 9:2-13 and synoptic parallels including Matthew 17:1-13 and Luke 9:28-36; Jude 9 plus allusions found in II Peter 1:16-18 and II Corinthians 3:18.

#### II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Preliminary statement of the problem may be made in the form of a series of questions:

1. Just what was the nature of the sin of Moses? In Numbers 20:12 his sin was recorded as unbelief in God, resulting in a failure to sanctify God before the people. In Numbers 20:24 Aaron seems to have shared in the guilt and punishment for what was called "rebellion" against God's commandment at the waters of Meribah. This same judgment was reflected in 27:12-14 where the sin was classified as rebellion against God's command to sanctify him at the waters of Meribah. On the other hand, Deuteronomy 1:35-38; 3:23-29 and 4:21-24 seem to reflect a completely different context which follows the return of the spies rather than events at the waters of Meribah. These passages seem to reveal that Moses shared in the punishment of the people rather than the experience of personal punishment. Then the passage in Deuteronomy 32:48-52 comes back to the context of the passages in Numbers in which Moses was forbidden to enter Canaan because of his sin at Meribah. Psalm 106:32-33 can be understood as taking both views, that both Israel and Moses were responsible for the judgment of God. Therefore, part of the problem is to attempt to determine the nature of Moses' sin.

2. What events were connected with the death of Moses? Study of the passages concerned with the death of Moses and of Aaron show a direct relationship. Both were

forbidden to enter Canaan, and each was forewarned of his approaching death that had been hastened because of sin. Aaron was commanded to ascend Mount Hor (Numbers 20:22ff.) and Moses was told to ascend Mount Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:1ff.). Aaron was stripped of his robes, and died. Moses was allowed to view Canaan before he died at the command of the Lord, who supposedly buried him. No details were given as to the manner of death. It is significant that Moses' eyes were not dim, neither his natural forces abated. Moses and Eleazar witnessed the death of Aaron, but Moses ascended Nebo alone. The record testifies that no one knew his place of burial, yet the mystery remains as to the origin of the account of his death and burial. Jude 9 indicates that Michael the Archangel was involved in Moses' burial, a passage which has no Biblical parallel. The third question has direct relationship here:

3. What influence should extra-Biblical writings have on the interpretation of Jude 9? The problem arises concerning the source of Jude's remark, since it is not found in the Old Testament. Study and research in extra-Biblical writings reveal many legends and doctrines concerning Moses' sin, death and burial. Thus, Israel had two parallel traditions, the sacred and the profane. Before A. D. 395 countless documents were circulated with claims

for divine inspiration. Even today Catholicism and Protestantism are divided in their authentication of canonical scripture. Yet it is significant that while this study was being made, there was progress toward a common Bible. Also, new and more exacting advances in the sciences of archaeology and form criticism may well lead to new knowledge of the oral and written traditions preceding the scriptures. Hence, to attempt to determine the nature and extent of relationships between the Biblical and non-Biblical references to Moses' sin, death and burial was a part of this study.

4. What significance, if any, does the appearance of Moses in the Transfiguration of Christ have in reference to Moses' death? The most common interpretation given to explain the presence of Moses and Elijah in this event is that they symbolized the Law and the Prophets, verifying the fulfillment of their work in Christ. It is possible, however, that they appeared to refute false ideas then current about Moses and Elijah. There seems to be ample evidence in most of the New Testament writings to indicate the desire of its authors to decrease Moses and to increase Christ. This matter has been dealt with in the body of the study.

Summary. This study has been concerned with the sin, death and burial of Moses in Biblical literature. What was his sin? How did he die and who buried him? What possible significance do extra-Biblical tradition and literature have concerning his death, and concerning the interpretation of Jude 9 and the Transfiguration of Christ? Was there a theology of Moses current during the era of New Testament writing, which theology the New Testament authors felt obligated to refute, and which culminated in other theologies such as that of the Essenes and the Samaritans?

### III. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

A satisfactory answer to any one of these aforementioned questions would justify study. If nothing more has been accomplished than to draw together the various concepts and doctrines pertaining to the sin, death, and burial of Moses, this labor has not been in vain.

### IV. RELATED STUDIES

The only known study related to this theme is concerned with the death of Moses in synagogue liturgy, made in 1963.<sup>1</sup> Though the death of Moses has been the subject

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<sup>1</sup>Leon J. Weinberger, "The Death of Moses in Synagogue Liturgy" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, 1963).

of numerous comments and concepts in Jewish, Christian and Moslem sources, a comprehensive and comparative study had not been made.

## V. SOURCES

The list of Biblical passages in reference to Moses' sin and death has already been given on page one of the introduction. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations of these and other Biblical passages have been made from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. An attempt has been made to gather the various interpretations of commentaries and writers pertaining to these passages before this writer has drawn his own conclusions. Some attention has been given to several translations of certain difficult passages. Though there has been some use of original languages in preparation for this study, no direct references were utilized in the completed work. Some attention has been given to extra-Biblical references where they are related to the Biblical passages. Finally, a brief mention has been made of the impact which Moses' life and death contributed to the religious doctrine of Jews, Samaritans and Moslems. The sources of this information include Rabbinic writings, Samaritan documents and pertinent books and articles on these religions.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SIN OF MOSES

#### I. THE SIN OF MOSES IN NUMBERS

The following is the first passage in Numbers that has dealt with the sin of Moses:

And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there. Now there was no water for the congregation; and they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people contended with Moses, and said, "Would that we had died with our brethren before the Lord! Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? And why have you made us come out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain, or figs, or vines, or pomegranites; and there is no water to drink." Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tent meeting, and fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them, and the Lord said to Moses, "Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water; so you shall bring water out of the rock for them; so you shall give drink to the congregation and their cattle." And Moses took the rod from the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their cattle. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you



shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." These are the waters of Meribah, (that is, contention) where the people of Israel contended with the Lord and he showed himself holy among them.<sup>1</sup>

Most likely the year of this assembly was the fortieth year of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness,<sup>2</sup> about thirty-eight years following the mission of the spies,<sup>3</sup> the first month being April. Most likely there was a close connection between this event and the movement of the people to Mount Hor (Numbers 20:22) where Aaron's death occurred forty years after the Israelites left Egypt (cf. Numbers 33:38). The only extant record of events from this period in Israel's history is found in Numbers 16-17 which may have occurred earlier in the period.<sup>4</sup>

Some interpreters believe this account to be a parallel repetition of Exodus 17:1-7, or a second of the

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<sup>1</sup>Numbers 20:1-13, The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version. Unless otherwise indicated all Biblical quotations are from this version of the scriptures.

<sup>2</sup>George F. Genung, The Book of Numbers. An American Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume IV (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1906), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup>George Williams, The Student's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1949), p. 88.

<sup>4</sup>David W. Kerr, "Numbers," The Biblical Expositor, Vol. I. Edited by Carl F. H. Henry (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1960), p. 171.

same event.<sup>5</sup> Others hold that, just as the previous generation of Israelites had murmured against God at Rephidim (Exodus 17:1), likewise did their descendents.<sup>6</sup> In this passage Moses' sin was referred to by God as unbelief and as failure to sanctify God before the people. After the smiting of the rock the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land. . . ." (20:12). Bible scholars have made many attempts to define and to spell out what can constitute unbelief and failure to sanctify God in these verses. The following is a summary of the major theories:

1. Unbelief in God's willingness to satisfy a rebellious people. Many interpreters have defined Moses' unbelief as a doubt that God was really willing to satisfy such a rebellious people. In his words, "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (20:10), Moses saw them as unworthy of the miracle; and he was therefore reluctant to

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<sup>5</sup>For example, see A. H. McNeile, The Book of Numbers, The Cambridge Bible Schools and Colleges, Vol. V (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1911), p. 106.

<sup>6</sup>The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, Vol. I: Genesis to Deuteronomy (New York: Published by G. Land and C. B. Tippet, 1847), p. 679.

perform it.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps Moses and Aaron doubted that God would again give them water from the rock as he had done at Rephidim (Exodus 17:1-7), and unbelief caused them to share the fate of their generation.<sup>8</sup> This unbelief may have been restricted to God's willingness to provide water for an ungrateful people, and not unbelief in him or his power. In other words, Moses and Aaron may have doubted that God would continue to hear their prayers, thus believing more in his punitive justice than in his goodness, mercy and fidelity.<sup>9</sup> Another says that Moses doubted not only God's willingness, but his power, resulting in severe punishment because of unbelief and failure to uphold God before the people.<sup>10</sup> In his disbelief, Moses had forgotten God's

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<sup>7</sup>John Gill, An Exposition of the Old Testament, Vol. I (London: William H. Collingridge, City Press, Long Lane, 1851), p. 642. See also Robert Jamison, "Genesis-Deuteronomy," A Commentary: Critical, Practical and Explanatory on the Old Testament, Vol I: Genesis to Psalms. Edited by Robert Jamison, A. R. Fausset and David Brown (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, Company, No date), p. 243.

<sup>8</sup>John E. Steinmueller, Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia of the Old Testament, Vol. II (New York: J. F. Watner, Inc., 1959), p. 736.

<sup>9</sup>P. P. Saydon, "Numbers," A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture. Edited by Dan B. Orchard, Edmond F. Sutcliffe, R. C. Fuller and Dan R. Russell (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1953), p. 254.

<sup>10</sup>A Commentary on the Holy Bible. Edited by J. R. Dummelow (New York: The MacMillan, 1935), p. 111. (Writer not given).

patience in people, a patience which he himself as God's servant should have reflected; but failure to do so prevented the exhibition of God's holiness.<sup>11</sup>

Edersheim said that the people had rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and they in turn rebelled against the people. At the bottom of this common rebellion lay unbelief in God. The people had looked on Moses and not on God as their leader, so they rebelled. In turn Moses looked on the people as they were, rather than upon God who led them, and he too rebelled in despair.<sup>12</sup> In general, this group of scholars has concluded that the language and action of Moses was not consistent with his usually calm faith in God.<sup>13</sup> This was a new generation of people, yet they proved to be as rebellious to God as those preceding them. Still the divine favor was not cut off, but Moses

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<sup>11</sup>The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. I. Edited by F. D. Nichol (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953), p. 892. (Writer not given).

<sup>12</sup>Dr. Edersheim, The Exodus and the Wanderings in the Wilderness, Vol. II (Chicago: F. H. Revell, No date), pp. 186-187.

<sup>13</sup>The International Bible Commentary. Edited by C. H. Irwin (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1928), pp. 53-54. (Writer not given).

and Aaron acted so improperly before them as to be denied further leadership and entry to Canaan.<sup>14</sup>

2. Unbelief revealed in smiting the rock. Another group of scholars has interpreted Moses' unbelief as more objective than subjective; that is, it was revealed in his smiting the rock and in speaking harshly to the people. The command was to "speak to the rock;" but in smiting it instead and in saying to the people, "hear now ye rebels," he expressed violent irritation.<sup>15</sup> Moses smote the rock not once, but twice in impatience, as if he were trying to secure water by physical strength rather than by spiritual word and divine power. In this way he displayed want of faith, disrespect and disobedience to God's command.<sup>16</sup> The smiting of the rock went beyond the divine command.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Matthew Henry, A Commentary on the Holy Bible, Vol. II (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, No date), p. 385.

<sup>15</sup>T. E. Epsin and J. F. Thrupp, "Numbers," The Holy Bible According to the Authorized Version, Vol. I. Edited by F. C. Cook (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1871), pp. 721-722.

<sup>16</sup>Charles Wordsworth, The Holy Bible in the Authorized Version, Vol. I (London: Rivingtons, Waterloo Place, 1872), p. 141.

<sup>17</sup>Henry Cook, "Numbers," The Self-Interpreting Bible, Vol. I: Genesis to Joshua. Edited by J. W. Lee (New York: N. D. Thompson Publishing Company, 1896), p. 448.

Others have read into the smiting of the rock allegorical explanation of the sin of Moses. It has been concluded that the waters from the rock in Horeb typified the sanctifying, comforting influences of the Holy Spirit which have since been communicated through the atonement of Christ. This theory involves the idea that Christ was the Rock of Exodus 17, and this Rock having been once smitten, needed only to be spoken to the second time in order to cause the water to flow forth.<sup>18</sup> First Corinthians 10: 1-4 has influenced this interpretation where Paul said, "Our fathers . . . drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ." Thus the rock smitten by Moses thirty-nine years before at Rephidim (Exodus 17) was a type of Christ, from whom the waters of salvation flowed for Israel. But Christ cannot be smitten twice for sin; it is henceforth by speaking to him that grace and mercy flow.<sup>19</sup>

3. Unbelief and failure to sanctify God in taking personal credit for the miracle. A third interpretation

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<sup>18</sup>Thomas Scott, The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments, Vol. I (Philadelphia: W. W. Woodward, 1804), page not given.

<sup>19</sup>Charles Simeon, Horae Homileticae, Vol. XII (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1833), p. 110. Also see B. H. Carroll, The Book of Numbers to Ruth, Vol. III. Edited by J. B. Cranfill (New York: F. H. Revell, 1914), p. 59.

of Moses' sin has been seen to be his assumption of personal credit for the miracle. In his words "must we fetch water . . ." (20:10) Moses called attention to himself and Aaron instead of God. They had cast themselves in God's role,<sup>20</sup> failing to take a subordinate position. Thus, they took to themselves honor and provision belonging to the Almighty.<sup>21</sup> This interpretation sees Moses' sin as human assumption of divine attributes, a human attempt to rival God. Gray noted that this was an error upon which has been based many of the tragedies of early western literature and the myths of Greece.<sup>22</sup>

4. Belief in God replaced by belief in the rod. Francisco gave a literal translation of Numbers 20:12 as follows: "Because you believed not in me. . . ." <sup>23</sup> On the basis of this translation he concluded that Moses had

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<sup>20</sup>K. A. Kitchen, "Moses," The New Bible Dictionary. Edited by J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. 847.

<sup>21</sup>A Dictionary of the Bible. Edited by J. D. Davis (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1898), p. 495.

<sup>22</sup>Phillip Gray, "Tragedy of the Fuhrer: Moses the Indispensible," The Christian Century, Vol. LXII (October 17, 1945), p. 1183.

<sup>23</sup>Clyde T. Francisco, The Book of Deuteronomy. A Study Manual (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), p. 110.

transferred his faith from God to the rod. It had become a magic rod. When he stood before the people, God's name was not mentioned. Rather he said, "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (20:10). God received no credit, for all that the people saw were Moses, Aaron and the rod.<sup>24</sup>

5. Unbelief seen in the misrepresentation of God. It has also been asserted that Moses' sin lay in obscuring what God intended to reveal to Israel. After years of discipline in the wilderness it was God's intention to teach Israel a great lesson in forgiveness and mercy. But Moses spoiled things by punctuating his own anger instead of God's grace. As the representative of God, he misrepresented God.<sup>25</sup>

6. Unbelief not revealed in this passage. Still another group of interpreters has decided that this passage does not spell out what God meant by calling Moses' sin unbelief. Snaith has concluded that probably the actual sin was lost, possibly deliberately. He has not

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>George Gritter, "The Sin of Moses," The Banner, Vol. C. (February 12, 1965), p. 2.



seen in the text any convincing reason to exclude Moses from Canaan and still less for Aaron.<sup>26</sup>

Some have said that since the Book of Numbers was edited, the compiler had toned down his sources.<sup>27</sup> Smith suggested that if all were known, it would be seen that some serious aggravation would appear which has not been disclosed in the text.<sup>28</sup>

The second and third references in Numbers to the sin are as follows:

And they journeyed from Kadesh, and the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, "Aaron shall be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the people of Israel because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron shall be gathered to his people, and shall die there." Moses did as the Lord had

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<sup>26</sup>Norman H. Snaith, "Leviticus-Numbers," Peake's Commentary on the Bible. Edited by Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1963), p. 264. See also The New Century Bible, Vol. III. Edited by A. R. S. Kennedy (New York: Henry Frowde-Oxford University Press, No Date), p. 301. Writer not given. Also Kemper Fullerton, "The Last Days of Moses," The Biblical World, Vol. XXX (August, 1907), p. 133.

<sup>27</sup>John Marsh, "Numbers," The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. II (Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 238.

<sup>28</sup>J. Patterson Smith, The Bible for School and Home, Vol. II (New York: G. H. Doran Company, 1922), p. 150.

commanded; and they went up Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation, and Moses stripped Aaron of his garments; and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel wept for Aaron thirty days.<sup>29</sup>

Numbers 33:38 has confirmed that this event took place in the fortieth year after Israel came out of Egypt. In the above quoted passage Moses' sin was referred to as rebellion, and Aaron seemed not only to bear a mutual responsibility, but was sentenced to a mysterious, untimely death. At the command of the Lord he walked up the mountain, was stripped of his robes of authority and died! How does a man just die at the command of the Lord? In the second passage a similar fate was indicated for Moses:

The Lord said to Moses, "Go up into this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the people of Israel. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was gathered, because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin during the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes." (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin).<sup>30</sup>

It is interesting to note that at this point when one expects the account of Moses' death to follow, the story has

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<sup>29</sup>Numbers 20:22-29.

<sup>30</sup>Numbers 27:12-14.

broken off, and it was not recorded until the last chapter of Deuteronomy.<sup>31</sup> In both of these passages God defined the sin of Moses and Aaron as rebellion against his command at the "waters of Meribah" (20:24) in the "wilderness of Zin" (27:14). The sin was again called rebellion in Moses' failure to sanctify God before Israel (27:14), whereas in 20:1-13 it was called unbelief. Arden has seen in Numbers 20:1-13 the sin of unbelief and failure to sanctify as lodged against Moses, while Aaron was accused of being a rebel; however, it seems plain that God spoke exclusively to Moses here and not to Aaron.<sup>32</sup>

Others have acknowledged that the sin was rebellion, but that it was either unexplained,<sup>33</sup> or that its character cannot be clearly elucidated.<sup>34</sup> It has been suggested that the words "Shall we bring forth water out of this rock?" (Numbers 20:10) were the words of Moses spoken to God, who, in turn replied, "Hear now ye rebels," and then

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<sup>31</sup>Lindsay B. Longacre, "Numbers," The Abingdon Bible Commentary. Edited by F. C. Eiselen, E. Lewis and D. G. Downey (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1929), p. 313.

<sup>32</sup>Eugene Arden, "How Moses Failed God," The Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. LXXVI (March, 1947), p. 52.

<sup>33</sup>Snaith, op. cit., p. 264.

<sup>34</sup>Martin Buber, Moses (Oxford and London: East and West Library, 1946), p. 196.

proceeds to command him to strike the rock.<sup>35</sup> One other approach was to avoid any attempt to define the so-called rebellion and conclude that since Moses had been forbidden to enter Canaan, his death must precede the conquest,<sup>36</sup> and a successor which was Joshua must be appointed (cf. Numbers 27:15-23).<sup>37</sup>

## II. THE SIN OF MOSES IN DEUTERONOMY

The next passages on the sin of Moses are found in Deuteronomy. These accounts are decidedly different from those in Numbers except 32:48-52. Generally, the differences may be defined by pointing out that, whereas in Numbers Moses and Aaron were barred from Canaan because of personal sin, in Deuteronomy theirs seems to be a vicarious punishment in behalf of the people. The following is the first passage:

The Lord was angry with me also on your account, and said, "You shall not go in there; Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter; encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit

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<sup>35</sup>May O. Pelton, "Numbers," The Twentieth Century Bible Commentary. Edited by G. H. Davies, A. Richardson and C. L. Wallis (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 148.

<sup>36</sup>Marsh, op. cit., p. 238.

<sup>37</sup>S. R. Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1894), p. 68.

it. Moreover your little ones, whom you said would become a prey, and your children, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall go in there, and to them I will give it, and they shall possess it. But as for you, turn, and journey into the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea."<sup>38</sup>

In this passage some scholars feel that Moses has shifted the blame from himself and Aaron to the people for not being able to enter Canaan. Driver has noted that Moses as well as the rest incurred God's wrath and was included in the same sentence which befell Israel. He has concluded that neither the position nor the content of these two verses can be explained unless they refer to some incident which took place immediately after the return of the spies, rather than in reference to Moses and the rock.<sup>39</sup>

Luther believed that Moses finally fell into unbelief because of ruling so sullen a people, and that the wrath of God fell on Moses because of them.<sup>40</sup> It may be that Moses was pointing out the fact that the quarreling

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<sup>38</sup>Deuteronomy 1:37-40.

<sup>39</sup>S. R. Driver, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy," The International and Critical Commentary, Vol. V (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), pp. 26-27.

<sup>40</sup>Martin Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. IX. Lectures on Deuteronomy. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), p. 23.

of the people occasioned the wrath of God to fall on him.<sup>41</sup> Some have seen in the passage an undeveloped germ of the concept of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and the atoning work of Christ.<sup>42</sup>

Still other scholars take a different approach to the passage. For example, it has been pointed out that Deuteronomy is the record and contents of a second legislation delivered by Moses to Israel at the close of their wanderings between Egypt and Canaan.<sup>43</sup> In the verses preceding 1:37 Moses had been reviewing Israel's wanderings. In vv. 34-36 he repeated God's sentence upon Israel in the second year of the Exodus following the return of the spies. Then in v. 37 he said that God was angry with him also. It is here that Moses can be interpreted to be combining his own rejection in the fortieth year of the Exodus with that of the people in the second year.<sup>44</sup> It was not

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<sup>41</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. III. Translated by James Martin (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949, p. 190.

<sup>42</sup>Marsh, op. cit., pp. 339-340.

<sup>43</sup>George Adam Smith, "The Book of Deuteronomy in the Revised Version with Introduction and Notes," The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Vol. XI (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1918), p. x.

<sup>44</sup>C. H. Waller, "Deuteronomy," The Handy Commentary, Vol. V. Edited by C. J. Ellicott (London: Casswell and Company, Ltd., No date), p. 27.

at the same time, but at the same place nearly thirty-eight years later, that Israel thus provoked him to speak unadvisedly,<sup>45</sup> therefore making this verse a parenthesis.<sup>46</sup> Scott,<sup>47</sup> Wordsworth<sup>48</sup> and Epsin<sup>49</sup> held similar views. Robinson<sup>50</sup> believed that the event of Numbers 20:1-13 (cf. Deuteronomy 32:51) belonged to the closing period of Israel's wanderings, but Deuteronomy 1:37, 3:26 and 4:21 to the opening period, thus resulting in two forms of the tradition in the same spot, but with a thirty-seven year interval.

One other interpretation of the phrase "for your sakes" is interesting. It has been suggested to mean that in the sense of Moses' sin going unpunished, the people would have been hardened in their own transgressions. Therefore, "for their sakes" it was impossible for God to

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<sup>45</sup>Gill, op. cit., p. 702.

<sup>46</sup>Jamison, op. cit., p. 271.

<sup>47</sup>Scott, op. cit., no page given.

<sup>48</sup>Wordsworth, op. cit., p. 207.

<sup>49</sup>Epsin, op. cit., p. 805.

<sup>50</sup>The New Century Bible, Vol. IV. Edited by H. Wheeler Robinson (New York: Henry Frowde-Oxford University Press, no date), p. 64. (Writer not given).



overlook it.<sup>51</sup> Verses 35-38 most likely allude to Numbers 14:30 where God declared that "Not one of . . . this evil generation shall see the good land which I swore to give to your fathers except Joshua . . . and Caleb." It seems significant that in this passage Joshua and Caleb are specifically mentioned as the only two of this generation permitted to enter Canaan. The omission of the names of Moses and Aaron suggests that at the return of the spies they shared a common guilt with the people.

The second passage in Deuteronomy says:

"And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, 'O Lord God, thou hast only begun to show thy servant thy greatness and thy mighty hand. . . . Let me go over, I pray, and see the good land beyond the Jordan. . . .' But the Lord was angry with me on your account and would not hearken to me; and the Lord said to me, 'Let it suffice you: speak no more to me of this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes . . . and behold it with your eyes: for you shall not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him; for he shall go over the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land which you shall see. So we remained in the valley opposite Bethpeor.'"<sup>52</sup>

This passage appears also to remain in the context of the story of the spies, Israel's rebellion, God's anger with them, possibly including Moses, and the appointment

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<sup>51</sup>A Commentary on the Holy Bible. Edited by J. R. Dummelow, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>52</sup>Deuteronomy 3:23-29.



of Joshua as the successor of Moses. Likewise the following:

"Furthermore the Lord was angry with me on your account, and he swore that I should not cross the Jordan, and that I should not enter the good land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance. For I must die in this land, I must not go over the Jordan; but you shall go over and take possession of that good land. Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make a graven image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God."<sup>53</sup>

It should be noted at this point that Deuteronomy is mostly oratory, consisting of a series of speeches said to have been delivered by Moses to the Israelites in a period of about forty days between the close of the wilderness wanderings and the entrance into Canaan.<sup>54</sup> In Deuteronomy 1:1 to 4:43 he rehearsed in broad outlines Israel's wanderings between Horeb to Moab, exhorting the nation to steer clear of idolatry. Obviously in the passage quoted above he addressed the new generation while making reference to the old, but it cannot be said with certainty whether his sin was that of striking the rock in the fortieth year, or one shared with Israel in the

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<sup>53</sup>Deuteronomy 4:21-24.

<sup>54</sup>Clyde T. Francisco, Introducing the Old Testament (Nashville: The Broadman Press, 1958), p. 39.

second year of the Exodus.

The final Deuteronomic passage states:

And the Lord said to Moses that very day, "Ascend this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the Land of Moab, opposite Jericho; and view the land of Canaan, which I give to the people of Israel for a possession, and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron . . . because you broke faith with me in the midst of the people of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin: because you did not revere me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel. For you shall see the land before you; but you shall not go in there, into the land which I give to the people of Israel."<sup>55</sup>

It seems that this passage is a continuation of Numbers 27:12-14 and was intended to complete the story which was concerned with Moses' sin and punishment at the smiting of the rock at Meribah (see p. 16). This account has reverted the reason for punishment back to Moses and Aaron personally, as do the accounts in Numbers. Moses did not sanctify God as he ought to have done before the children of Israel. Because of their unbelief and disagreeable behaviour, they failed to honor God before the people, and to cause him to be honored by the people themselves.

There is one Biblical interpretation of the sin of Moses in Psalms 106:32-33 which places the blame on both Moses and the people:

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<sup>55</sup>Deuteronomy 32:48-52.

They angered him at the waters of Meribah,  
and it went ill with Moses on their account;  
for they made his spirit bitter,  
and he spoke words that were rash.

Most scholars assign this psalm to the post-Exilic period,<sup>56</sup> but it must be dated earlier than the Chronicles for vv. 1, 47-48 are quoted in I Chronicles 16:34-36, thus pointing to the eighth century B.C. as the terminus a quo.<sup>57</sup> It appears to allude to both the striking of the rock and the return of the spies, stating that God was angry with Moses on account of the people as indicated in the first Deuteronomic passage. It also mentions the waters of Meribah, as do the passages in Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Summary: In Numbers 20:1-13 God indicated that the sin of Moses was unbelief and failure to sanctify him before the people. This unbelief has been interpreted in many ways. In Numbers 20:23-29 and in 27:12-23 God called the sin rebellion against his command and a failure to sanctify him at the waters of Meribah. In Deuteronomy 1:37-40, 3:23-29 and 4:21-24, the scriptures seem to state

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<sup>56</sup>W. S. McCullough, "Psalms," Peake's Commentary on the Bible. Edited by Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1963), p. 436.

<sup>57</sup>W. S. Anderson, "Psalms," The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. IV (Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 565.

that Moses was punished because of the sins of the people. Then Deuteronomy 32:48-52 reverts back to the charges against Moses as in Numbers 20.

The Bearing of the Documentary Hypothesis on the Sin of Moses in Numbers and Deuteronomy. Any reasonable conclusions concerning the sin of Moses must include consideration of form analysis for these and surrounding passages. This will necessitate a brief discussion of a historical-critical approach to the Pentateuch in general, as well as to Numbers and Deuteronomy in particular.

The consensus of modern critical scholarship holds that the authority of Moses stands back of the Pentateuch, but that he was not its final author. The broad outlines of this view will be sketched in the remainder of this paragraph. The Hebrew tradition of Israel's origins and early history were first crystallized into written form about the tenth or ninth centuries B. C., by a prophet of Judah identified by the symbol "J," because of his peculiar use of the word Yahweh for God.<sup>58</sup> Later, another writer of the Northern Kingdom identified as "E" because of his reference to God as Elohim, wrote down current traditions,

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<sup>58</sup>C. H. Turner, "Bible," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. III (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1959), p. 502.

traces of which begin in Genesis 15.<sup>59</sup> After the fall of Israel in 722 B. C. a Judean prophet combined extracts of J and E with his own source material and made a single narrative called JE.<sup>60</sup> This compilation has a distinctly prophetic character, and covers both the Patriarchal and Mosaic ages. During the time of Josiah in the seventh century, JE was enlarged by the addition of Deuteronomy.<sup>61</sup> Then the priestly sections known as "P" were later than either JE or Deuteronomy.<sup>62</sup> It is believed that J, E, D and P were finally combined in the fifth century B.C., forming the present Hexateuch.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the Pentateuch is a relatively late compilation, depending chiefly upon four documents written at different times, the present form being compiled over several centuries after Moses.

Numbers gives evidence that its writer used the same sources as the rest of the Pentateuch, but he was most dependent on JE and P, which interwove Israel's early national history with later legislation and priestly

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

reinterpretation. Only a critical analysis of the passages pertaining to this study will be given here:

Numbers 20:1-13 - P<sup>64</sup>

Numbers 20:22-29- P<sup>65</sup>

Numbers 27:12-14- P<sup>66</sup>

Although closer critical analysis may disclose possibilities of JE being interwoven in these passages of Numbers,<sup>67</sup> most scholars of Biblical criticism assign them generally as P. On the other hand, Deuteronomy presents a different analysis:

Deuteronomy 1:37-40 - D<sup>68</sup>

Deuteronomy 3:23-29 - D<sup>69</sup>

Deuteronomy 4:21-24 - D<sup>70</sup>

<sup>64</sup>George Adam Smith, "The Book of Numbers," The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Vol. X (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1911), p. xi.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Snaith, op. cit., p. 266.

<sup>67</sup>Marsh, op. cit., p. 237.

<sup>68</sup>Carl H. Cornell, Introduction to the Canonical Books of the Old Testament. Translated by G. H. Box (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), p. 60.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

The Deuteronomy 32:48-52 - P<sup>71</sup>

Deuteronomy 34:1a, 8-9 - P<sup>72</sup>

Deuteronomy 34:1b-7 - J<sup>73</sup>

Since, according to this analysis 32:48-52 and 34:1a, 8-9 revert back to P, one can conclude that these passages in Deuteronomy had a basis of two distinct traditions or sources, namely P and D. The presence of two traditions could well serve to explain why Moses' sin was described in the P passages as rebellion, unbelief and failure to sanctify God, and on the other hand, in the D accounts of Deuteronomy as attributed to the people themselves. A pertinent question is to inquire whether they have not actually said the same thing in different ways.

In analyzing these passages it seems best to place emphasis on what God had to say about the sin of Moses and Aaron in Numbers, and what Moses had to say in Deuteronomy. In Numbers 20:12 God defined the sin as unbelief, leading to a failure to sanctify him before the people. In v. 24 he declared that Moses rebelled against his commandment.

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<sup>71</sup>Driver, The International and Critical Commentary Vol. V, op. cit., p. 382.

<sup>72</sup>Cornell, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

The charge of rebellion is repeated in Numbers 27:14. In Deuteronomy 1:37 Moses himself said that the Lord was angry with him on the people's account, and would not allow him to enter Canaan. This same charge was repeated in 3:26 and 4:21. In these Deuteronomic passages Moses seems to have referred not to the waters of Meribah in the last years of Israel's wilderness wanderings, but to the strife following the return of the spies in the second year. In Deuteronomy 32:51 the old refrain of Numbers reappears when God declared that Moses broke faith with him before the people at the waters of Meribath-kadesh and did not sanctify him.

Critical analysis reveals that P laid the sin to Moses himself and the sin was defined by God himself. But D can be interpreted as laying the blame on the people in the second year rather than the fortieth year of the wilderness wanderings.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

It seems reasonable to conclude that in the passages of Numbers God himself has spelled out the sin of Moses as unbelief, failure to sanctify God before the people, and as rebellion against the divine commandment. On the other hand, it seems unreasonable to conclude that these charges are spelled out in the context of the



passages. One can hardly believe that such a serious charge as unbelief and rebellion can be read into the smiting of the rock, or in speaking angrily to the people. These actions might serve to point out Moses' failure to sanctify God before the people, but even here they fall short of depicting the sin of Moses. These scriptures do not bear out the charges that God has brought against Moses and Aaron. The sacred writer records the sin, but not the interpretation of it.

Some scholars believe that the compiler has toned down his sources,<sup>74</sup> but this is to charge him with deliberately tampering with the facts. It seems hardly reasonable to believe that if he were to reveal God's charge against Moses, he would deliberately alter the explanation of the charge. A better conclusion would be to say that he chose not to disclose the facts surrounding the sin of Moses because he deemed them unimportant. God himself had pronounced both sin and sentence, and the writer recorded these facts. It may also be possible that although tradition knew the facts, it did not know the particulars, hence, could not supply them. The compiler could not write down that of which he had no knowledge.

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<sup>74</sup>Marsh, op. cit., p. 238.

If it is accepted that these passages bear Mosaic authority (if not authorship), it seems reasonable to suppose that though Moses revealed God's charge against himself and Aaron, he chose not to disclose the particulars involved. It can be concluded, therefore, that though the passages in Numbers speak of the sin of Moses as unbelief, failure to sanctify God and rebellion against God's commandments, the particulars surrounding these charges were not given, either because the writer did not know them, or did not deem them to be important.

It has already been suggested that though Deuteronomy 1:37, 3:26 and 4:21 seem to conflict with Numbers, they may be saying the same thing. In order to reach such a conclusion it is important to establish the context and sources of these scriptures in Deuteronomy. They represent the tradition of D rather than P. Secondly, it must be understood that in Deuteronomy 1:1-36 Moses was speaking to the second generation of Israelites, while giving a review of history concerning the first generation. Speaking of the first generation he recalled how they had rebelled against God in the second year of the Exodus after the return of the spies, and how God had sentenced all of them to remain in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb. But then in v. 37 he turned his attention to the second

generation to whom he was speaking and said to them that God was angry with him on their account, and would thus not allow him to enter Canaan. Obviously he was here referring to the incident of the waters of Meribath-kadesh.

It must be noted that when he said "on their account" he was not charging the people directly for his punishment. He was not saying that because they had sinned he was punished. Rather he was telling them that their rebellion constituted the occasion for his sin. Again the particulars are missing. Moses did not tell what the people caused him to do, but he merely said that God became angry with him and would not allow him to enter Canaan. Therefore, the first generation was denied entrance to Canaan in the second year of the Exodus, and Moses was denied entrance in the fortieth year while dealing with the second generation. Both denials occurred at the same place but at different times.

There remains one mystery that may never be answered: namely, when God in the second year of the Exodus sentenced the first generation to die in the wilderness, why did he go to such pains to declare that only Joshua and Caleb would be allowed to enter Canaan without mention also of Moses and Aaron? Were not Moses and Aaron part of the first generation? Is it to be assumed that

God was speaking only in regard to the people and not necessarily of the leaders? Is it possible that when God pronounced this judgment on the first generation he was also uttering a sort of divine prediction destined to include Moses and Aaron later on? It seems very strange that in the second year of the Exodus only Joshua and Caleb were specifically appropriated the blessing of entering Canaan.

Summary. The sin of Moses was pronounced by God to be that of unbelief, of failure to sanctify God before the people, and of rebellion against the divine commandment. The facts of these sins were recorded, but the particulars were not revealed, probably because they were not known, or because they were not considered important.

The differences between Numbers and Deuteronomy may be explained by taking into account the two traditions of P in Numbers and in Deuteronomy 32:48-52; and of D used in Deuteronomy 1:37, 3:26 and 4:21.

Conflict of the passages may be resolved by noting that Moses was speaking of one generation, while talking to another, then addressing the second generation specifically without any apparent change. He does not say that he suffers for their sin; rather he says that they are the occasion of his own personal sin against God.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE DEATH OF MOSES

#### I. THE DEATH OF MOSES IN DEUTERONOMY

The passage in Deuteronomy which has dealt with Moses' death is as follows:

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. And the Lord said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to your descendants. I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord, and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Bethpeor; but no man knows the place of his burial to this day. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.<sup>1</sup>

A Critical Review of Deuteronomy 34:1-8. The death of Moses was narrated and/or interpreted by all of the principal Pentateuchal sources. The P source is credited

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<sup>1</sup>Deuteronomy 34:1-8.

with vv. 1a, 5b, 7-9; JE with vv. 1b-5a, 6 and 10; D with vv. 11-12.<sup>2</sup> The sixth verse implies a date sometime after the death of Moses. The statement that God showed Moses the land "from Gilead unto Dan" must be understood as referring to the new territory of Dan after the migration to a new territory to the north of Gilead. Obviously, then, the passage was written after the migration of Dan (Judges 18:1ff.) which was approximately four centuries later, and may have been added much later, perhaps by Ezra.<sup>3</sup>

Mount Nebo probably refers to the present Jebel Nebo, and Pisgah may be a lower and western summit of the same mount now called Ras es Siaghah.<sup>4</sup> Cornell suggests that Moses perhaps died in the Kadesh in the desert south of Canaan (cf. Numbers 13:27; 20:1, 14; Deuteronomy 1:19, 46; Judges 11:16-17) because it would seem that the stay of Israel in Kadesh was a long one, and since neither Moses nor anyone else coming out of Egypt was allowed to enter Canaan, except Joshua and Caleb. He goes on to point out

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<sup>2</sup>G. Ernest Wright, "Deuteronomy," The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. II (Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 535.

<sup>3</sup>Walter R. Beyer, The Book of Deuteronomy. An American Commentary on the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1915), p. 129. Also The International Bible Commentary. op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>4</sup>Jack Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 155.

that the distance under normal conditions could have been easily passed in a fortnight.<sup>5</sup> The idea that Hosea 12:14 hints of a tradition that Moses was martyred<sup>6</sup> has little, if any, validity. Although Hosea 12:13 obviously refers to Moses, it does not seem correct that the reference to Ephraim's bloodguilt can be in regard to Moses. It seems clear that it is in regard to how Ephraim had given God bitter provocation in general.

There is considerable variation of opinion as to who buried Moses. Translations vary as follows: (1) "He buried him," makes the subject Jehovah, followed by the statement that "no man knows of his sepulchre until this day."<sup>7</sup> (2) "He was buried," is another translation, the

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<sup>5</sup>Carl H. Cornell, The Culture of Ancient Israel (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1914), p. 66.

<sup>6</sup>W. L. Clarke, Concise Bible Commentary (London: S. P. C. K., 1952), p. 701.

<sup>7</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. III. Translated by James Martin (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 514. Also Francisco, The Book of Deuteronomy, op. cit., p. 111 and others.

agent probably is indefinite.<sup>8</sup> (3) "They buried him," is the rendering of the Septuagint.<sup>9</sup>

One view is that he entered a cave and there died, according to ancient traditions of Jews and Christians, and was buried by the angels.<sup>10</sup> One has even disputed the actuality of his death, arguing that the word "die" in relation to men like Moses is used conveniently or momentarily as the best word that could indicate a passing event. He declared that men in the condition of Moses do not die. Rather, they are raised, transplanted or they have ascended, and do not die in the general sense in which the term is accepted.<sup>11</sup> Another view is that, though the Lord Himself buried Moses, he was aided by angels.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Marsh, op. cit., p. 536. Also The Holy Scriptures. A New Translation According to the Masoretic Text (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917), p. 258.

<sup>9</sup>The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament According to the Vatican Text. Translated by L. C. L. Brenton in Two Volumes, Vol. I (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1916), p. 229.

<sup>10</sup>Jamison, op. cit., p. 322

<sup>11</sup>Joseph Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. IV: Numbers - Deuteronomy (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1886), p. 404.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Scott, The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments, Vol. I (Philadelphia: W. W. Woodward, 1804), no page. Also The Comprehensive Commentary on the Holy Bible, Vol. I. Edited by William Jenks and Joseph A. Warne (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1868), p. 658. The writer is identified only as Scott.



Josephus declared that a cloud suddenly covered him and he vanished from sight.<sup>13</sup>

Other interesting interpretations have centered in the phrase in v. 5, "according to the word of the Lord." This has been rendered in the following variations: (1) "at the bidding of Yahweh"<sup>14</sup> is one example, or "as the Eternal ordered."<sup>15</sup> (2) "According to the word of the Lord"<sup>16</sup> is another example, sometimes rendered "at the mouth of Jehovah."<sup>17</sup> This is an idea which Jewish legend has embellished to mean that God brought upon Moses a kiss of death. It is even suggested that this phrase may

<sup>13</sup>George Rawlinson, Moses, His Life and Times (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, no date), p. 196. Quoting Josephus Ant. Jed. iv, 8, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup>Martin Buber, Moses (Oxford and London: East and West Library, 1946), p. 196.

<sup>15</sup>The Old Testament. A New Translation by James Moffatt, Vol. I: Genesis-Esther (New York: George H. Doran Company, no date), p. 236.

<sup>16</sup>The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953), p. 224.

<sup>17</sup>J. Z. Lauterbach, "Moses in Hellenistic Literature," The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. IX (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1805), p. 54.

refer only to the sentence of his exclusion from the promised land.<sup>18</sup>

Finally there remains the problem of why no man knows where Moses was buried. The most simple explanation is that this is true because it was God, not man, who buried him. But some have said that God concealed the place of burial to prevent the Hebrews from making it a sacred shrine.<sup>19</sup> It has been noted, however, that this idea carries little weight since the Hebrews believed corpses and graves to be defiling.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, it is not clear just when the Hebrews developed the concept that corpses and graves were defiling and unclean. For example, Joseph made request that his bones be carried with his people from Egypt (cf. Genesis 50:25). Perhaps this does not prove that the Hebrews regarded such to be defiling: but it does show a reverence for remains, and supports the fact that they felt one's existence continued in the remains after death.

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<sup>18</sup>Adam Clark, The Holy Bible. Containing the Old and New Testaments with a Commentary and Critical Notes, Vol. I (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, no date), p. 838.

<sup>19</sup>See Luther, op. cit., p. 310. Also Scott, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>20</sup>Richard H. Collins, "The Death and Burial of Moses," The Danville Quarterly Review, Vol. I (1861), p. 455.

## II. THE DEVIL'S CLAIM OF MOSES IN JUDE

The next relevant passage which has referred to the death of Moses is found in Jude 9 and reads as follows:

. . . when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you.'<sup>21</sup>

A Critical Review of Jude. There seems to be no conclusive evidence against the Lord's brother being the author of the Epistle of Jude, written about 65-75 A. D.<sup>22</sup> The best theory may be, however, that the writer was an unidentified man using the name of Jude about 80-90 A. D.<sup>23</sup>

Jude parallels largely the second chapter of II Peter. There is similarity between Jude 2 and II Peter 1:2, Jude 3 and II Peter 1:5, Jude 5a and II Peter 3:14. This resemblance naturally raises the question as to whether Jude quoted II Peter, whether II Peter used Jude as a literary source, or whether both were dependent on a third common source. Support can be given to any of these possibilities. For example, it has been argued that Jude

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<sup>21</sup>Jude 9.

<sup>22</sup>G. H. Boobyer, "Jude," Peake's Commentary on the Bible. Edited by Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1963), p. 1041.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

made use of II Peter, acknowledging, by the way he cites II Peter 3, that these are the words of one of the Lord's apostles.<sup>24</sup> Again, it has been concluded that Jude is first, because II Peter spoke of "the fathers" and "your apostles" (3:2-4) as if they were earlier.<sup>25</sup> Most modern scholars believe that II Peter used Jude as a literary source.<sup>26</sup> Reicke and others have concluded that both epistles were derived from a common tradition, possible oral rather than written, and used in a different context with different interests.<sup>27</sup> A fourth conclusion has suggested that both men wrote independently, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup> Evidence is voluminous on the two most prominent interpretations: namely, the priority of II Peter

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<sup>24</sup>John T. Demarest, A Commentary on the Catholic Epistles (New York: Board of Publication of the Reformed Church of America, 1879), p. 612.

<sup>25</sup>William B. Hill, The Apostolic Age (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1922), p. 311.

<sup>26</sup>Boobyer, Peake's Commentary, loc. cit.

<sup>27</sup>Bo Reicke, "The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude with Introduction, Translation and Notes," The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1964), p. 190.

<sup>28</sup>Paton J. Gloag, Introduction to the Catholic Epistles (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1887), p. 241.

or that of Jude.<sup>29</sup> This writer will reserve his own conclusions until later.

The critical analysis of Jude is further complicated because of similarities to extra-canonical references.

For example, it has been noted that Jude 14 and 15 are parallel to Enoch 1:9, and that the term "Michael the archangel" of Jude 9 has its counterpart in Enoch 71:3.<sup>30</sup>

Some scholars believe that Jude 9 also alludes to an apocryphal work called The Assumption of Moses, written most likely during the early life of Christ.<sup>31</sup> The Assumption of Moses is a composite of The Testament of Moses and The Assumption of Moses, with material very similar to parts of Jude, II Baruch, Acts 7:36 and some of the early fathers.<sup>32</sup>

Though such books as The Assumption of Moses and Enoch were regarded with suspicion in the third century

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<sup>29</sup>Henry J. Flanders, "The Relation of Jude to II Peter" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 1950), p. 57.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>R. H. Charles, Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments (New York: Henry Holt and Company, no date), p. 239.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

A. D., they were highly revered in the first century A. D.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately there is no complete, extant copy of The Assumption of Moses, and one must rely on the testimony of the early church fathers, that Jude quoted from this document.

Jude could have been quoting tradition apart from any of these works.<sup>34</sup> Jude 9 is approached most nearly in parallel by the Targum of Jonathan on Deuteronomy 34:6, which says that Michael was the appointed guardian of Moses' grave.<sup>35</sup> It does seem obvious that what Jude said must have been familiar to his readers, either in written form or in oral tradition. It may be possible, since the dates of neither Jude nor The Assumption of Moses have been clearly established, that Jude was quoted by The Assumption of Moses instead.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>For example see C. E. B. Cranfield, First and Second Peter and Jude (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1960), p. 147.

<sup>34</sup>Phillip Schaff, History of the Apostolic Church. Translated by Edward P. Yeomans (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Company, 1874), p. 634.

<sup>35</sup>Alfred Plummer, "Jude," The Handy Commentary, Vol. XVII, Edited by C. J. Ellicott (London: Casswell and Company, Ltd., no date), p. 276.

<sup>36</sup>E. H. Plumptre, "The General Epistle of Peter and Jude," The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Vol. XLIX (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1887), p. 206.

The Assumption of Moses goes further into detail than Jude 9, as seen in this analysis of its account: (1) Michael was commissioned to bury Moses. (2) Satan opposed the burial on the ground that (a) He was the Lord of matter and the body should belong to him; and (b) Moses was a murderer, having slain the Egyptian. (3) Michael rebutted Satan and proceeded to charge him with inciting the serpent to tempt Eve. (4) Finally, with the removal of all opposition, the assumption of Moses took place in the presence of Joshua and Caleb. There was a two-fold presentation of Moses: one in the presence or company of angels, the other, the dead body of Moses being buried in the recesses of the mountains.<sup>37</sup>

It is true that Jude experienced difficulty gaining a place in the New Testament canon because of alleged use of apocryphal writings. Barnett has suggested that it may have had a limited and late circulation, thus delaying its general acceptance until the middle second or third century.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>R. H. Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, Vol. II (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1912), p. 408.

<sup>38</sup>A. E. Barnett, "The Epistle of Jude," Religion in Life, Vol XVIII (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1959), p. 593.

The Purpose of Jude. The apparent purpose of the epistle was to drive the Gnostics out of the church because of their moral depravity.<sup>39</sup>

The Interpretation of Jude 9. Controversy arises over the identity of Michael and over what is meant by the body of Moses. One view has suggested that Michael was one of the names for Christ (cf. Daniel 10:13; I Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 12:7), not as the chief angel, but as the ruler over the angels. The conclusion is drawn from the account of the Transfiguration that Michael in Jude 9 was in reality Christ, who in triumph over Satan raised the body of Moses from his grave and made him the first subject of Christian resurrection.<sup>40</sup> It is contended that the Hebrew name "Michael" meant "like unto God," and was the Messiah's title as Head of the Angelic princes.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Adolf Schlatter, The Church in the New Testament Period. Translated by Paul P. Levertaff (London: S. P. C. K., 1961), p. 203.

<sup>40</sup>The Seventh Day Adventist Commentary, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 706.

<sup>41</sup>Williams, op. cit., p. 1023.



In refutation of this theory it has been pointed out that in reference to Michael, nowhere is the plural form used in the scriptures except in I Thessalonians 4:16, and even there Christ was distinguished from the archangel, with whose voice he shall descend to raise the dead. Thus it is in error to confuse Christ with Michael.<sup>42</sup>

Concerning the body of Moses, it has been maintained by some that it refers to the Hebrew church, just as the Body of Christ means the Christian church in Ephesians 1:23. This theory stipulates that Israel was baptized "into Moses" in the judgment of the Red Sea (cf. I Corinthians 10:2), and thus through baptism Israel became his body. The dispute with Satan in Jude 9 is therefore interpreted as a reference to Zechariah 3, where Joshua and his spotted garments represented the Hebrew people, i. e., "the body of Moses," recently plucked from the fire of Babylon.<sup>43</sup> This seems to be eisegesis rather than exegesis. Likewise it was Carroll who said that the body of Moses referred to his institutions, so that after the

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<sup>42</sup>Robert Jamison, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, A Commentary: Critical, Practical and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments, Vol. IV (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, Company, no date), p. 502. Writer not given.

<sup>43</sup>Williams, op. cit., p. 1023.

downfall of the Hebrew monarchy, Satan resisted the restoration under Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel and brought upon himself the rebuke of God (cf. Zechariah 3:1-2).<sup>44</sup> Since much of the interpretation of Jude 9 includes references to the Transfiguration of Christ, it will be necessary to investigate the account.

### III. THE APPEARANCE OF MOSES TO CHRIST IN MARK

In Deuteronomy 32:5 it was recorded that Moses died and God buried him. In Jude 9 was a variant account of Satan arguing with Michael over Moses' body. The mystery surrounding Moses' death and fate after his decease is further heightened by his appearance with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration.

B. H. Carroll cited Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-10, Luke 9:27-36, II Peter 1:14-18 and John 1:14 as references to the Transfiguration; but a more critical treatment assigns traces of the account to II Peter 1:16-18 and John's Gospel, but stipulates Mark as being the basic

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<sup>44</sup>B. H. Carroll, The Pastoral Epistles of Paul, First and Second Peter, Jude, and First, Second and Third John, Vol. XII (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, no date), p. 319.

account. Luke and Matthew followed Mark with some modifications.<sup>45</sup> Mark's account is cited here:

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them, and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah and Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, "Master it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." And suddenly looking around they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things; and how it is written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt. But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."<sup>46</sup>

Witness of the Other Passages. Matthew's account added little to the Marcan narrative other than to call

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<sup>45</sup>B. H. Carroll, The Four Gospels, Vol. II. Edited by J. B. Cranfill (Nashville: The Baptist Sunday School Board, 1916), p. 37. Also Heinrich Baltensweiler, "Die Verkörperung Jesu," reviewed by W. D. Davies, The Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. LXXIX (March, 1960), p. 183.

<sup>46</sup>Mark 9:2-13.

the incident a vision (Matthew 17:9), and to point out that when Christ spoke of Elijah as having already come, the disciples understood him to mean John the Baptist (17:11-13).

Luke added that Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus about his departure which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem (9:31). In II Corinthians 3:18 Paul made an indirect allusion to the Transfiguration by using the words "glory" and "transfigure" to contrast between Moses and Christ. In his account Peter testified that he was an eyewitness of the honor and glory which Jesus received, and that he heard with his own ears the voice on the holy mountain (II Peter 1:16-18). B. H. Carroll saw John 1:14 as a reference to the apostle's eyewitness to the Transfiguration. Carroll also said that James who is the other eyewitness was prevented from leaving any record by an early martyrdom.<sup>47</sup> Both of these assumptions are logical, but hardly verifiable.

General Background of the Transfiguration. The Transfiguration took place within about a week of Peter's confession. Matthew and Mark said "six days," whereas

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<sup>47</sup>Carroll, The Four Gospels, op. cit., p. 37.

Luke reported "eight days after," but the discrepancy may be explained by the different methods of reckoning time. Matthew and Mark counted only the full days between the two events, while Luke counted each part as a day.<sup>48</sup>

Ancient tradition regarded Mount Tabor in the south of Galilee as the scene of the Transfiguration. But most likely it took place in the north. This has been suggested since Matthew 16:13 and 17:30 seem to refer to some mountain not far from Caesarea Philippi, and Mark 9:30-33 indicates that they passed through Galilee afterward. The mountain was probably Mount Hermon, rather than Tabor, which was at this time inhabited by a town and fortress.<sup>49</sup>

#### A Critical Analysis of the Transfiguration.

Boltensweiler separated Mark's account of the Transfiguration into two parts, namely, 9:2-10 and 11-13. He believed the earliest core of the account was Mark 9:2-5, 7a-8 upon which 2-13 was actually built. He was called vv. 6-7b editorial verses.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, Bacon said that

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<sup>48</sup>The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Vol. XXXIV. The Gospel According to Matthew. Edited by A. Carr (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1908), p. 137. No writer given.

<sup>49</sup>Henry Cooke, "Matthew," The Self-Interpreting Bible, Vol. IV (New York: N. D. Thomson Publishing Company, 1896), pp. 82-84.

<sup>50</sup>Boltensweiler, op. cit., p. 183.

Mark 9:2-10 was an intrusive element, interrupting 8:27-9:1 (which deals with how Jesus revealed to the twelve his Messianic calling) and 9:11-13 (which gave his reply to the question concerning why Elijah must first come).<sup>51</sup> Bacon also concluded in another article that the Transfiguration story is actually only a practical duplication of Mark 8:27-9:1, 11-13, presenting the same data under the literary form of vision parallel to the confession of Peter which was given in ordinary prose.<sup>52</sup>

The contrasting speculations of these two men are representative of the volumes of Biblical criticism concerning the Transfiguration. Cort Ray Flint has summarized the most important of this material in the following categories and concepts: (1) Three misplacement theories have located the Transfiguration at a different time in the ministry of Jesus. (a) Wrede and Wellhausen advocated a post-Resurrection theory, declaring that it was after the

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<sup>51</sup>B. W. Bacon, "The Autobiography of Jesus," The American Journal of Theology, Vol. II (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1902), pp. 541ff.

<sup>52</sup>B. W. Bacon, "The Transfiguration Story," The American Journal of Theology, Vol. VI (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1902), p. 237.

Resurrection that Jesus' Messiahship was proclaimed.<sup>53</sup>

Other scholars who have held to this theory include Goquel, Montefiारे, Bousset, G. Bertram, Erick Klostermann and Goetz.<sup>54</sup> It would seem, however, that since the gospel writers were writing in retrospect that meditative conclusions rather than chronological error are of more importance. Their full understanding of the meaning of the Transfiguration may have been post-Resurrection, but not necessarily their chronology of the event. (b) Another misplacement theory was that of Schweitzer who placed the Transfiguration before the confession at Caesarea Philippi and after the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida.<sup>55</sup> This seems to be only another theory among many theories which is more speculation than fact. (c) A third misplacement theory has emphasized similarities between the Transfiguration and the Ascension in Acts 1, identifying

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<sup>53</sup>Cort Ray Flint, "A Critical and Psychological Study of the Transfiguration (unpublished Doctoral thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 1952), p. 2.

<sup>54</sup>G. H. Boobyer, Saint Mark and the Transfiguration Story (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1942), p. 11.

<sup>55</sup>Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus. Translated by W. Montgomery (New York: MacMillan and Company, 1948), p. 382ff.

them as two developments of the same tradition.<sup>56</sup> But such an idea places sacred scripture too much in the category of legend and myth as the following theory. (2) Form critical theories place the Transfiguration in the category of legends and myth.<sup>57</sup> An example may be seen in Bultmann's statement that both Mark 8:27-30 (Peter's confession) and Mark 9:2-8 (the Transfiguration) form an Easter play projected back into the life of Christ by the church.<sup>58</sup> Likewise Boobyer has concluded that it is unnecessary to suppose that any historical incident underlies the account. Rather it is apologetic, symbolical writing advocating Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>59</sup> Such an explanation, however, conflicts with II Peter 1:14-18. This includes Bernardin who said that the account has meaning only to the early church which possibly constructed the account out of the baptismal voice, the cloud on Mount Sinai, the legends of Moses and Elijah and the belief in the veiled

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<sup>56</sup>John M. Creed, The Gospel According to Saint Luke (New York: MacMillan and Company, 1950), p. 132.

<sup>57</sup>Flint, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>58</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I. Translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 26.

<sup>59</sup>Boobyer, Saint Mark and the Transfiguration, op. cit., p. 1.



glory of Christ while on earth which was prevalent about 50 A. D.<sup>60</sup> (3) Psychological and mystical vision theories are another explanation of the Transfiguration.<sup>61</sup> In general these theories are at least more reasonable, having held to the historical authenticity of the Transfiguration, but seeing it as psychological or mystical experience.<sup>62</sup> Spens, Doyle and Clarke have interpreted the Transfiguration as primarily the experience of Christ, who created it in his own consciousness, into which the disciples entered for a brief period, a sort of psychic circle through which the miracle was accomplished.<sup>63</sup> At least they have in their favor the statement of Christ that the episode was a vision (cf. Matthew 17:9). (4) The rational and un-historical theories have rejected and rationalized the

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<sup>60</sup>Joseph B. Bernardin, "The Transfiguration," The Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. LII. Edited by C. H. Kroeling (New Haven: The Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1933), p. 189.

<sup>61</sup>Flint, op. cit., pp. 8-11.

<sup>62</sup>H. D. A. Major, T. W. Manson and C. J. Wright, The Mission and Message of Jesus (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1938), pp. 113ff. Also Evelyn Underhill, The Mystic Way (London: J. M. Dent and Son, Ltd., 1913), pp. 114-23.

<sup>63</sup>Maisie Spens, In Concerning Himself (London: Hodder and Stroughton, Ltd., 1937), pp. 74-79; W. K. Lother Clarke, New Testament Problems (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929), p. 35; Canan Doyle, The New Revelation (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1918), p. 61.

super-natural elements of the gospel.<sup>64</sup> In general, this school has treated the account as unhistorical accretion or psychological crisis in the life of Jesus, saying that it cannot be taken seriously. (5) The modern theories of interpretation have tended to see the account as symbolical, visionary or psychological.<sup>65</sup>

Most likely Flint has given the best reasons for accepting the Transfiguration as historical as follows:

(1) He noted the agreement and testimony of the Synoptics concerning the Transfiguration. (2) He cited the handling of tradition by Jewish people, which, as a rule, was careful and unembellished.<sup>66</sup> The early church fathers seem to have believed that Peter used Mark's gospel to teach early tradition to new converts. Flint has noted also that Paul referred to tradition (I Corinthians 7:10-12; 9:14; 11:23-25; Galatians 1:6-9; I Thessalonians 4:15) in speaking of the teachings and stories of Jesus, and since he wrote before the gospels, he would have had to depend on the same source material. (3) The Transfiguration was accepted

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<sup>64</sup>Flint, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-19.

<sup>66</sup>See also H. E. Dana, The Ephesian Tradition (Kansas City: The Seminary Press, 1940).

by II Peter, the church and the church fathers.<sup>67</sup> (4) There is also the basis of the historicity in religious experience, viewed as both subjective and objective, depending upon the person rather than the form of the experience.<sup>68</sup> (5) Finally after evaluating unhistorical and historical evidence, he concluded that to refuse to accept that which is outside human comprehension denies the very heart of Christianity.<sup>69</sup>

Interpretation of the Transfiguration. Mark's narrative proceeded from the events at Caesarea Philippi to the Transfiguration; hence it may be supposed that Jesus took his disciples out of Jerusalem to the mount.<sup>70</sup> Most exegesis of the Transfiguration centers in its own particular meaning, in which the appearance of Elijah and Moses plays a large part. Thorburn has contributed what seems to be some logical weight to the subjective interpretation by saying that the evangelists were trying to

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<sup>67</sup>Major, op. cit., pp. 3-5.

<sup>68</sup>Here he cites J. W. Bowman, The Intention of Jesus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 35.

<sup>69</sup>Flint, op. cit., pp. 23-38.

<sup>70</sup>Charles F. Davey, "To the Mount," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, Vol. CLXX. Edited by Leslie F. Church (London: The Epworth Press, 1945), pp. 406-407.

describe spiritual phenomena, as confirmed by Jesus himself in Matthew's account when he commanded the disciples to tell the "vision" to no one.<sup>71</sup>

Other theories of interpretation have been concerned with the idea that the Transfiguration prefigured the future glory of the resurrected Christ. Branscomb called it a divine testimony to Christ's Messiahship, revealing his future heavenly state.<sup>72</sup> Caird has made an interesting point that to establish connection between the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Parousia, Luke employed "two men" introduced with the phrase in each case, "behold two men."<sup>73</sup> Leopard has made a reasonable observation that the eschatological hope of Israel was that Yahweh would again tabernacle with his people. This hope was expressed sometimes in poetic imagery (Tobit 13:10), sometimes as a literal tabernacle in the wilderness

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<sup>71</sup>T. J. Thorburn, The Mystical Interpretation of the Gospels (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), pp. 162-3.

<sup>72</sup>B. H. Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark. Edited by James Moffatt (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1937), p. 160.

<sup>73</sup>G. B. Caird, "Expository Problems of the Transfiguration," The Expository Times, Vol. LXVII. Edited by James W. Hastings (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1956), p. 292.

(Josephus).<sup>74</sup> Zechariah 14:16 can be interpreted to mean that the Feast of Tabernacles held eschatological reference. Therefore, Peter may have believed that the day of fulfillment was near, that with the presence of Elijah and Moses, it was fitting to build tabernacles and remain forever.<sup>75</sup> It has even been speculated that Mark 9:2-5, 7a and 8 lie behind an actual occurrence related to Jesus's rejection of Zealot nationalism at its height in the Feast of Tabernacles, and to which the Transfiguration belongs.<sup>76</sup> All of these interpretations are interesting, but must be clearly understood as possibilities rather than established facts.

Moses and Elijah in the Transfiguration. Chrysostom believed that the presence of Moses and Elijah in the Transfiguration indicated Jesus' power over life and

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<sup>74</sup>Coley L. Leopard, "The Significance of the Great Confession at Caesarea Philippi in the Ministry of Jesus and the Experience of the Twelve" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 1950), p. 147.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 148, citing Ernest Lohmeyer, Das Evangelium d. Markus. Meyer's Kommentar uber das Neue Testament (Gottingen: Gandenhold und Ruprent, 1937), p. 176.

<sup>76</sup>Heinrich Baltensweiler, "Die Verklarung Jesu," Religion in Life, Vol. XVIII (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 184.

death in that Moses had died and Elijah had been translated.<sup>77</sup> Their appearing indicated the end of time, the day of deliverance, the establishment of the eternal reign of God.<sup>78</sup> Their presence was proof that some bodily existence continued in glory (Tertullian).<sup>79</sup>

Grant has said that Moses and Elijah were the representations of the Law and the Prophets giving witness to the Messiah, and at the same time being superceded by him.<sup>80</sup> Leftwich has concluded that their presence symbolized the legalistic and prophetic dispensations of God's kingdom, surrendering authority and acknowledging fulfillment in Christ. The presence of the three disciples is to be interpreted thus: (1) Peter reveals the temporal power of the kingdom; he has keys to lock and unlock, to bind and to loose. (2) James represents the practical administration of the kingdom, its organized activities.

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<sup>77A</sup> Select Library of the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. X. Edited by Phillip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 346.

<sup>78A</sup> M. Ramsey, The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ (London: Longman's Green and Company, 1949), pp. 109-110.

<sup>79</sup> The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, Vol III (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885), p. 589.

<sup>80</sup> The New Bible Dictionary, op. cit., p. 1291.

(3) John symbolizes the humanitarian sentiment and institutionalism of the kingdom.<sup>81</sup> This seems to be reading more speculation into the account than can be sustained.

Another view has interpreted the Transfiguration to have been an anticipation of the resurrected glory of Christ before he went to the cross. The conclusion of the section prior to Mark 9:2ff. (8:38) points forward to this scene with the words "the glory of his resurrection."<sup>82</sup> This is possible. It may be that the several alterations and additions which Luke made to Mark's account are best explained as an intention to represent the Transfiguration as a prefigurement of the Ascension.<sup>83</sup> It is interesting to note that this link between the Transfiguration and the Ascension was made in The Apocalypse of Peter, dated between 120-150 A. D.<sup>84</sup> Boobyer has noted that Origen

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<sup>81</sup>W. M. Leftwich, "The Transfiguration: The Supernatural in the Kingdom of God," The Quarterly Review of the M. E. Church South. Edited by W. P. Harrison (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church South, April, 1892), pp. 245-246.

<sup>82</sup>F. C. Grant, The Earliest Gospel (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), pp. 154-155.

<sup>83</sup>J. G. Davies, "The Prefigurement of the Ascension in the Third Gospel," The Journal of Theological Studies, Vol. V (Oxford: The Calrendon Press, 1955), pp. 229-233.

<sup>84</sup>M. R. James, The Apocryphal New Testament (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 519.

showed some knowledge of expositors who treated Matthew 16:28 and Mark 9:1 as references to the Parousia, and the Transfiguration as a fulfillment of the promise to Peter, James, and John that they would see Christ in his parousia glory.<sup>85</sup>

This theory which explained the Transfiguration as a prefigurement of the Parousia has also suggested that Moses and Elijah were the forerunners of the Messiah. It is true that in the account Jesus himself identified the coming of Elijah with John the Baptist (Mark 9:12-13; Matthew 17:9-13). However, the expectation within tradition of making a forerunner of Moses also is shrouded in mystery. It has been suggested that the expectation actually existed, and that Mark 9:2-9 shows the fulfillment of such an expectation.<sup>86</sup> This suggestion includes the idea that the two witnesses of Revelation 11 who showed characteristics respectively of Moses and Elijah constitute added evidence of such a tradition. In Revelation 11 it has been indicated that two witnesses had the power to shut the heavens so that it would not rain (11:6) as Elijah did (I Kings 17), and had the power to turn the

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<sup>85</sup>Boobyer, Saint Mark and the Transfiguration Story, op. cit., pp. 119-121.

<sup>86</sup>T. F. Glasson, Moses in the Fourth Gospel (Naperville, Illinois: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1963), p. 69.



the waters into blood and smite the earth with every plague as Moses (Exodus 7).

A Belief in the Return of Moses. A belief in the return of Moses did not appear in Jewish eschatology until after the first century A. D. A statement attributed to Jochanan ben Zakkai of the first century A. D. told of God telling Moses that he would come with Elijah at the end; however, this verse may be dated as late as 900 A. D.<sup>87</sup> According to Deuteronomy Rabbah 3:17 God said to Moses, "By your life! As you laid down your life for them in this world, so in the world to come, when I bring unto them Elijah the prophet, the two of you shall come together."<sup>88</sup> Date of this writing is uncertain.

Moses as a Heavenly Being. Scholars have not been able to arrive at a firm decision regarding the date when the tradition developed concerning Moses as a heavenly being. There seem to be some traces in Jewish literature of a belief that Moses would accompany Elijah when he came, as already pointed out. Moses may have been

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<sup>87</sup>Glasson, op. cit., pp. 27, 69.

<sup>88</sup>Boobyer, Saint Mark and the Transfiguration Story, op. cit., p. 70, quoting Paul Billerbeck, Das Evangelium nach Mattheus, Vol. I (Nunchen: C. H. Beckshe Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1955), p. 756.

regarded as a type of Messiah himself, but there is no proof that the first century Hebrews looked upon the Messiah as a return of Moses, or as a "second Moses."<sup>89</sup>

Still, absence of a direct witness in Hebrew texts concerning the return of Moses at the end does not rule out the possibility that such tradition did exist. The general nature of Hebrew eschatology makes its anticipation a probability. For Weider, nothing appeared more natural than to assign Moses the role of forerunner. He observed that Rabbi Maimon explicitly speaks of a second coming of Moses in the Messianic period to assist the Messiah.<sup>90</sup>

But he has been refuted by Zeitlin who declared that it was not until the late middle ages that the belief became prominent among the Rabbis.<sup>91</sup>

A New Testament Theology of Moses. E. L. Allen has denoted a New Testament theology contrasting Moses and Jesus. A summary of his views is here given: (1) In Matthew 21:11-46 Jesus has been identified as the Prophet.

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<sup>89</sup>Foakes Jackson and Kussop Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity, Vol. I (London: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1920), p. 404.

<sup>90</sup>N. Weider, "Idea of a Second Coming of Moses," The Jewish Quarterly Review, Vol. XLVI (April, 1956), p. 35.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

(2) In Mark's account of the Transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared on the same level with Jesus, but the vision ended with the declaration that Jesus was more than a servant and a prophet; rather he was a son. (3) In John's gospel Allen denoted evidence of a prophetic Christology, which had developed in some circles at the time of its composition. (a) In John's gospel Jesus transcended Moses, and Moses was reduced to the role of a witness. (b) The Samaritan woman hailed Jesus as the Prophet (4:19), and the verses 6:14 and 7:40 have revealed a Hebrew expectation of a great prophet as an alternative forerunner of the Messiah. But Jesus was more than a prophet; he was the Saviour of the world (4:42). (c) In John 9:17 where the blind man saw Jesus as the prophet who rivaled Moses, Allen has argued that the central figure in this chapter stands for a Jewish-Christian community known to John for which Jesus was still the prophet and the new Moses who would go on to a fuller faith. (4) In Acts the Lord was the new Moses (3:22), the Servant (3:13-26), the supreme Prophet and Mediator (7:37-38). (5) With Paul the theme changed to that of the superiority of Christ to Moses, and the relation was that of contrast rather than fulfillment. (6) The writer of Hebrews drew

distinction between the servant Moses and the Son Jesus.<sup>92</sup>

Moses in Extra-Biblical Literature. Biblical literature has given evidence which points to an extra-Biblical tradition about Moses which had gained influential proportions prior to the time of New Testament composition. The passage in Jude 9 referred to this tradition, either oral or written, concerning Moses' death. Revelation 11 seems to have given conclusive evidence of a tradition linking Moses and Elijah to the Messianic Age. Then, too, the general tendency of the New Testament writers either to supercede or to contrast Moses with Christ, adds its weight in pointing toward an extraordinary influence which Moses had on the development of Christian theology. Both the Old and New Testament canons were established to distinguish between the sacred scripture and the spurious writings which flourished alongside so abundantly. An examination of some of the extra-Biblical writings may furnish information and also explanation of why the New Testament writers found it necessary to contrast Moses and Christ.

For example, R. H. Charles concluded that The Assumption of Moses is an apocalyptic work dated between

<sup>92</sup>E. L. Allen, "Jesus and Moses in the New Testament," The Expository Times, Vol. LXVII (January, 1956), pp. 104-106.

4 B. C. and 30 A. D.<sup>93</sup> If this date is accurate, it would put the composition of the document during the earthly life of Christ. It is interesting to know that, according to this writing, Israel was God's own people (1:12): and Moses was prepared from the foundation of the world to be the mediator of God's covenant with his people (1:14; 3:12). This could be taken to mean that Moses was regarded as pre-existent at this early date, a belief which arose among the Samaritans later on. Though Moses' death was an ordinary one, there was no place considered worthy to mark his burial (explanation of the mystery surrounding his sepulchre). Therefore his sepulchre was from the rising to the setting sun, from north to south (11:8). After his death he was appointed of God to be Israel's intercessor in the spiritual world.<sup>94</sup> This concept seems to imply Messianic overtones similar to those attached to Christ.

Philo, dated c. 20 B. C. to after 40 A. D.<sup>95</sup> spoke of Moses' death (in his comments on Deuteronomy 33-34) in

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<sup>93</sup>R. H. Charles, "The Assumption of Moses," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XV (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1959), p. 839.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>The Jewish Standard Encyclopedia. Edited by Cecil Roth (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 1502.

terms of a pilgrimage to heaven, leaving this mortal life for immortality.<sup>96</sup>

Josephus, dated c. 38-100 A. D.,<sup>97</sup> gave a variant account of the death of Moses. He spoke of Moses being escorted up the mountain by Eleazar and Joshua. When they arrived on the mountain and while he was dismissing his escorts, a cloud suddenly descended on him and he disappeared into a ravine. Josephus went on to say that Moses had written of himself in the sacred books, that he died for fear they should venture to say by reason of his surpassing virtue, that he had gone back to deity (See Enoch 1:85 and the Assumption of Moses 3:96).<sup>98</sup> All of these references clearly bear evidence that there were extant traditions surrounding Moses which had reached phenomenal proportions even about the time of Christ.

It is regrettable that there is no way to arrive at the dating of legends in Rabbinical writings concerning Moses and his death. Extant data give no indications of

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<sup>96</sup>Philo, Vol. VI. With a Translation by F. H. Colson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 593.

<sup>97</sup>The Jewish Encyclopedia, op. cit., p. 1063.

<sup>98</sup>Josephus, Vol. IV. With an English Translation by H. St. J. Thackeray (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1930), pp. 631-633.

the dates. The Midrash, compiled and redacted at various times from the Tannaitic period down to the twelfth century,<sup>99</sup> contains one of many Rabbinic legends about the death of Moses. In the legend God commanded Gabriel to go bring up the soul of Moses, but Gabriel could not bear to look upon the death of him who was equal to sixty myriads of Israel. Michael was then commanded, but he refused on the basis that he was Moses' teacher and could not bear to look upon his death. Sammael the Wicked was told to fetch Moses' soul, but he trembled in Moses' presence. Finally God himself had to carry out the order, and, after contention with Moses, accomplished his purpose with a kiss.<sup>100</sup>

The Rabbinic Haggadah attempted many ways to explain why Moses could not enter Canaan. One attempt was that Moses was anxious to enter because many of God's commandments could only be fulfilled there. But God felt that Moses had already kept them.<sup>101</sup> Another said that he was denied to enter as punishment for his words to God in

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<sup>99</sup>B. Post Halper, Post-Biblical Hebrew Literature (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1921), p. 38.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., pp. 38-44.

<sup>101</sup>The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. IX (New York: Funk and Wagnall's Company, 1905), p. 52.

Exodus 5:22: "Wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people?"<sup>102</sup> Again he was punished for having silently renounced his nationality (Exodus 2:19), by not correcting Jethro's daughters who had called him an Egyptian.<sup>103</sup> Still another declared that Moses must needs to have died with the generation out of Egypt in order to lead them in the next world.<sup>104</sup> Other explanations have been related to the striking of the rock and the doubting of Israel and of God.<sup>105</sup>

The different legends have agreed that Moses died on Adar 7, the date on which he was born, at the age of 120 years. But the earlier and later legends have differed considerably in the descriptions and details. Earlier accounts concerned with his death presented it as a worthy close to life, taking place in a miraculous way, with quiet dignity. Later accounts, however, were embellished with more fantasy and marvelous details. Moses argued with God, even asked why he must die at all, but argument

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Edmund Fleg, The Life of Moses. Translated from the French by Stephen H. Guest (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1928), p. 253.



was to no avail. Finally God himself had to bring Moses' soul, aided by Gabriel, Michael and Zagziel, and he was buried in the dusk of Friday, the sixth day of Creation.<sup>106</sup> Weinberger believed that the Book of Job was a leading influence in creating the legends surrounding the death of Moses. He saw comparisons in the legends to the prologue of Job, as well as several quotations.<sup>107</sup>

Ethiopia's "Black Jews," the Falashas, have an interesting legend in which the angels buried Moses.<sup>108</sup> Nothing is known for certain about the origin of these Ethiopian Jews. They themselves believe that they descended from Jews who came to Ethiopia with Menelik I, the alleged son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, or else from Jews who came after the destruction of the first or second temple.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>Weinberger, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>108</sup>W. Leslau, "The Angels Bury Moses," Commentary, (November, 1951), pp. 481-483.

<sup>109</sup>W. Leslau, Falasha Anthology (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), pp. ix, 103-104. Also W. Leslau, "The Black Jews of Ethiopia," Commentary (March, 1949).

In the Quran there has been perhaps more space given to Moses than any other of the Old Testament characters.<sup>110</sup> Quran is the Arabic name for the Muslim Scriptures, composed of hymns, prayers, dogmas, legends, fables, laws and temporary ordinances delivered by Mohammed in the name of God.<sup>111</sup> Similar legends surrounding the death of Moses are found in these writings.<sup>112</sup>

When the Black Death struck Damascus in 1348, Ibn Battuta told how Jews and Christians were allowed to join the Muslims in prayers at the Mosque of the Footprints (al-Aqdam), allegedly the footprints of Moses which were still on a rock where he entered his grave.<sup>113</sup>

In Marqah's work is found the first traces of Samaritanism, which was syncretism of Christology and its

<sup>110</sup>J. W. Sweetman, Islam and Christian Theology, Vol. I (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945), p. 11.

<sup>111</sup>Gustav Weil, A History of the Islamic Peoples (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1914), p. 31.

<sup>112</sup>For example see Gustav Weil, The Bible, the Koran and the Talmud; or Biblical Legends of the Muslims. Compiled from Arabic Sources and Compared with Jewish Traditions (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1846), pp. 165-70.

<sup>113</sup>Solo W. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. III (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 161.

application to Moses.<sup>114</sup> This document can be dated almost certainly to the late third or early fourth centuries A. D.<sup>115</sup> The Teachings of Marqah contains six books on Israel's deliverance and exodus. Books I and II are pertaining to deliverance. Books III and IV are concerned with Israel's status in the promised land and with the Samaritan ethics of Marqah's day. Books V and VI contain the story of the death, ascension and assumption of Moses, comparable only in small detail to Judaeen and Christian legends of the same type.

The Asatir is a Samaritan chronicle from the creation of Adam to the death of Moses, representing the only source of certain pseudo-historical materials.<sup>116</sup> The Samaritans accepted the Pentateuch alone as Holy Scripture, and based their religion solely on the teachings of Moses. The creed of the Samaritans has been summarized as follows: (1) God was one, incorporeal and without associate. (2) Moses was the only prophet, a preordained creature, the

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<sup>114</sup>Memar Marqah. The Teaching of Marqah, Edited and Translated by John MacDonald, Vol. I (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Topelmann, 1963), p. xvii.

<sup>115</sup>John MacDonald, The Theology of the Samaritans (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1964), p. 42.

<sup>116</sup>Moses Gaster, Chronicle I: The Asatir. The Samaritan Book of the Secrets of Moses (London: Oriental Translation Fund, N. S. 26, Royal Asiatic Society, 1927).

vessel of the divine "light" and "image" and the "intercessor" for man on the final day of judgment. (3) The Law of Moses was the only divine revelation and was immutable. (4) Mount Gerizim was the chosen place of God, the only center of worship and the "navel" of the earth. (5) There was to be a day of requital and reward, when the dead would emerge from the graves, the righteous to paradise, the guilty to eternal fire.<sup>117</sup> Moses had in Samaritan theology the title of "Speaker," and it is he who, in God's behalf, said the creative words; and as Christ in Christian theology, he undid the work of Satan. The Samaritan saint died in Moses.<sup>118</sup>

Montgomery believed that the Mosaic doctrine of pre-existence was duplicated in the Islamic legend of the Light of Mohammed.<sup>119</sup> In 1960 MacDonald concluded that the Samaritans had either consciously or unconsciously derived some inspiration from Christian or Islamic

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<sup>117</sup>Theodore H. Gaster, "The Samaritans," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XIX (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1959), p. 918.

<sup>118</sup>John MacDonald, "The Samaritan Doctrine of Moses," The Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. XIII (June, 1960), pp. 149-162.

<sup>119</sup>James A. Montgomery, The Samaritans (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1907), p. 228.

sources,<sup>120</sup> but then in 1963 he decided that Samaritan theology had Christian syncretism.<sup>121</sup> Part of his inconsistency is accounted for in the statement that whereas the fourteenth century material was strongly colored by Islamic and Christian ideas, the fourth century material was almost devoid of their influence.<sup>122</sup> He has made the interesting conclusion on the basis of this explanation that in the fourth century there was no evidence that the Samaritans nor the Christians borrowed from each other, rather the Samaritans were forced back upon their own devices.<sup>123</sup> If this is true, it implies that the two theologies possibly developed side by side, independent of each other and yet became so strikingly similar.

The Samaritans first appeared in history as a distinctive group having their own traditions, beliefs and practices in the time of Nehemiah and Ezra, but they are now represented mostly by a few families at Nablus, near the site of ancient Shechem. There are also Samaritans in both Jordan and Israel.

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<sup>120</sup>John MacDonald, "The Islamic Doctrine in Samaritan Theology," Muslim World, Vol L (1960), pp. 279-90.

<sup>121</sup>Memar Marqah, loc. cit.

<sup>122</sup>MacDonald, The Islamic Doctrine in Samaritan Theology, op. cit., p. 280.

<sup>123</sup>MacDonald, "The Samaritan Doctrine of Moses," op. cit., p. 160.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUMMARY

The Sin of Moses. In the passages of Numbers God himself has defined the sin of Moses as unbelief, failure to sanctify God before the people, and as rebellion against the divine commandment. However, these charges were not given in detail in the context of the passages. The sacred writer recorded the sin, but not the interpretation of it, perhaps because he did not deem it to be important or because he did not have the particulars. It is reasonable to suppose that though Moses revealed God's charge against himself and Aaron, he did not disclose the particulars.

The passages in Deuteronomy represent the tradition of D rather than P as in Numbers. In these passages it is important to note that Moses was speaking to the second generation of Israelites while giving a review of history concerning the first generation. Then he turned his attention to those whom he was addressing and declared that it was on their account that God would not allow him to enter Canaan. By saying that it was on their account he was not laying the sin to them; rather he was declaring

that they were the reason he himself sinned and incurred the wrath and judgment of God.

The Death of Moses. There was something unusual and mysterious about the death and burial of Moses. The tradition of his death and burial must have had its origin in divine revelation or in the first-hand account of someone who witnessed it. If it were an eyewitness, why could he not also disclose the burial place? If God himself revealed the information to someone, why did he omit information on the location of the grave? It seems rather doubtful that if the Hebrews ever had occasion to know the fate of Moses and the location of his grave, they would have forgotten it since Moses was an important and vital figure of their tradition. The Jews have always been careful and accurate in preserving and recording tradition; hence it is questionable that they would completely lose any information regarding the death and burial of such an important figure. Yet the question remains, where did they get the information they had? Did God reveal it? It is recorded in Joshua 1:1-2 that God informed Joshua of Moses' death. The mystery is heightened in the implication that Moses' health and physical strength were not involved in his death. The passage indicates only that he died mysteriously and that no trace was left of his departure.

The most logical conclusion to be drawn is that Moses' death and burial were mysteries to the Hebrews, since none of the traditions (JEDP) furnished any factual information. In the place of fact came forth much fantasy in Jewish mythology and rabbinical literature. The result has been to accord Moses a place of esteem which has been accorded to no other man by the Hebrews. He has also been deified by the Samaritans.

The Devil's Claim of Moses. Several factors are related concerning Jude 9. It has been noted that though Clement, Origen and Didimus are usually offered as proof that Jude quoted the Assumption of Moses, the truth is that they did not actually say where Jude got his information. Since the date of The Assumption of Moses is in debate, no one can confirm that Jude ever saw it,<sup>1</sup> or could have seen it.

Most of the problems of interpretation and of inspiration concerning this passage disappear when the purpose of Jude is taken into consideration. His overall purpose in writing was to attack Gnosticism and its degrading effect upon the church. Clearly Jude was

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<sup>1</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of Saint Peter, Saint John and Saint Jude (Columbus, Ohio: Wortberg Press, 1945), p. 19.



referring to this verse either to an apocryphal book or to tradition, but he was using the reference as an illustration of the evil of irreverence and as a rebuke to those against whom he wrote. It is possible that the source which he quoted held authority among the Gnostics themselves, and that Jude was disarming the enemies of the gospel with their own doctrine. If so, he was not affirming that the passage used was either true or false. Nevertheless the reference was extra-canonical, most likely rabbinic tradition.

The Appearance of Moses to Christ. Jesus himself identified the coming of Elijah with John the Baptist (Mark 9:12-13; Matthew 17:9-13), however, the expectation within tradition of making a forerunner of Moses is shrouded in mystery. Revelation 11 and possibly Mark 9:2-9 seem to constitute evidence of such a tradition extant when the New Testament was written. The general tendency of the New Testament writers either to supercede or to contrast Moses with Christ aids in pointing toward an extraordinary influence which Moses had on the development of Christian theology.

Moses in Extra-Biblical Literature. An examination of some of the extra-Biblical writings seems to furnish information and explanation as to why the New Testament

writers found it necessary to contrast Moses with Christ. The Assumption of Moses document, passages in Enoch, Philo and Josephus all bear evidence of extant traditions concerning Moses not directly referred to in scripture, thus adding weight to the possible New Testament theology hinted at by Allen. Though the Midrash and rabbinic writings cannot be dated with any accuracy, there is little doubt that these traditions and legends about Moses had roots far back into Israel's history enough to reach into the ministry of Christ.

Finally the legends of the Falashas or "Black Jews" of Ethiopia and legends in the Quran, plus the striking similarity between Christian and Samaritan theology leave some unanswered questions, especially the date when the Samaritan theology actually began to develop, and the extent to which how much it has been influenced by Christianity.

One can see that there are still many areas of investigation left open. A study is necessary to arrange and date extra-Biblical traditions more accurately, especially the Rabbinic writings. It is hoped that some hitherto unknown manuscripts will be discovered which will throw more light upon the dark mystery surrounding Moses' sin and death.

By Nebo's lonely mountain,  
 On this side of Jordan's wave,  
 In the vale of the land of Moab,  
 There lies a lonely grave;

And no man dug that sepulchre,  
 And no man saw it e'er;  
 For the angel of God upturned the sod,  
 And laid the dead man there.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>C. F. Alexander, Cyclopedia of Poetry. Edited by Alan Foster (New York: R. Y. Crowell, 1872), p. 529.  
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# THE SIN AND DEATH OF MOSES IN BIBLICAL LITERATURE

## I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM A STUDY OF

### THE SIN AND DEATH OF MOSES IN BIBLICAL LITERATURE

of a series of questions. Since this study is concerned with the sin, death and burial of Moses in Biblical literature, what was his sin that denied his entrance into Canaan? How did he die and who buried him? What possible significance do extrabiblical traditions and literature have concerning his death and burial, and concerning the interpretation of such passages as John 3 and the Transfiguration of Christ? Was there a theology of Moses' death during the

#### An Abstract of a Thesis

which would see the Deuteronomist's attitude fully articulated to probe and explain his attitude in other passages such as that of the Transfiguration?

#### II. SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

A critical-historical study has been made of the following Biblical passages concerned with the sin and death of Moses: Deuteronomy 32: by 22-29; 34:1-12; Deuteronomy 34:35-40; Harry E. Woodall 31:48-54; 34:1-3. Other related Biblical August, 1967 and Psalms 106:33-41.



## THE SIN AND DEATH OF MOSES IN BIBLICAL LITERATURE

### I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem may be made in the form of a series of questions. Since this study is concerned with the sin, death and burial of Moses in Biblical literature, what was his sin that denied him entrance into Canaan? How did he die and who buried him? What possible significance do extra-Biblical tradition and literature have concerning his death and burial, and concerning the interpretation of such passages as Jude 9 and the Transfiguration of Christ? Was there a theology of Moses current during the era of New Testament writing, which theology the New Testament authors felt obligated to refute and which culminated in other theologies such as that of the Samaritans?

### II. METHODS AND PROCEDURE IN GATHERING DATA

A critical-historical study has been made to the following Biblical passages concerned with the sin and death of Moses: Numbers 20:1-13; 22-29; 27:12-14; Deuteronomy 1:35-40; 3:23-29; 4:21-24; 32:48-52; 34:1-7. Other related Biblical passages include Psalm 106:32-33,

Mark 9:2-13 and synoptic parallels including Matthew 17:1-13 and Luke 9:28-36; Jude 9 plus allusions found in II Peter 1:16-18 and II Corinthians 3:18. After reviewing the interpretations and theories of other writers on these passages, this writer draws his own conclusions. Some attention is given to the impact of Moses' life and death on the religious doctrine of Jews, Samaritans and Moslems. The source of this information includes Rabbinic writings, Samaritan and Moslem documents and pertinent books and articles on these religions.

### III. SUMMARY OF THIS STUDY

The Sin of Moses. In the passages of Numbers God himself defined the sin of Moses as unbelief, failure to sanctify God before the people and rebellion against the divine commandment. However, these charges are not given in detail in the context of the pertinent passages.

Part of the problem pertaining to the sin of Moses is due to apparent conflict of the passages in Numbers with those in Deuteronomy. Critical analysis, however, can show that the passages in Deuteronomy represent the tradition of D rather than P as in Numbers. Also, in the passages in Deuteronomy Moses was speaking to the second generation while giving a review of history concerning the

first generation (1:1-36). Then in 1:37 he turned his attention to those being addressed and declared that it was on their account that he could not enter Canaan.

The Death of Moses. The most logical conclusion to be drawn is that Moses' death and burial were mysteries to the Hebrews. None of the traditions (JRDP) furnished any factual information. In the place of fact came forth much fantasy in Jewish mythology and Rabbinical literature. He has even been deified by the Samaritans.

The Interpretation of Jude 9. Jude's overall purpose in writing was to attack Gnosticism and its degrading effect upon the early church. In v. 9 he was referring either to an apocryphal book or to a tradition, using the reference as an illustration of the evil of irreverence and as a rebuke to those against whom he wrote. He was not affirming the passage used as either true or false. The reference was extra-canonical.

The Transfiguration Appearance of Moses. The expectation within tradition of making a forerunner of Moses is shrouded in mystery. Revelation 11 and possibly Mark 9:2-9 seem to constitute evidence of such a tradition extant when the New Testament was written.

Moses in Extra-Biblical Literature. Extra-Biblical writings seem to furnish information and explanation concerning Moses which seems to point toward a theology of Moses extant in New Testament times which the New Testament writers felt compelled to supersede.