CHAPTER TWO

EX. 19:6: THE HISTORY OF ITS TRANSMISSION AND INTERPRETATION (OT–NT)

A. THE HEBREW OLD TESTAMENT

I. Exodus 19:6

The formulation of 1 P 2:9b leaves no doubt as to its origin, namely LXX Ex. 19:6. Implied, of course, is the literary source of the Greek terminology. Historically, the primary source is the Hebrew text. It is particularly important in our case to differentiate; for in this passage the LXX’s character as not only a translation but also an interpraetatio Graeca is especially evident. To establish the original import and nuance of this verse we begin, therefore, with the earliest text, MT. Ex. 19:6:

This passage falls within the larger literary unit, Ex. 19:3b-6. This section occurs at the beginning of the larger so-called “Sinaitradition” extending from Ex. 19 to Num. 10. Introducing the first portion of this tradition, the experience or the appearance of God

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1 A fact acknowledged by all commentators.
2 This brief investigation of the source or sources of 1 P 2:9b will restrict itself to an examination of those texts alone which show a textual affinity to 1 P 2:9b or Ex. 19:6. The “kingship” or the “priesthood” of Israel as a concept will not concern us here.
(Ex. 19:1-25), these verses portray God addressing the assembled folk through His mediator Moses, preparing them for the pronouncement of the Decalog (Ex. 20) and the entering of a covenant, the ratification of which is described in Ex. 24. The role which this Sinai pericope played in Israel’s religious life was essentially a cultic one. It has been demonstrated that with great probability its *Sitz im Leben* was a major cultic celebration, the ancient festival of the Covenant-renewal.1

The literary source of this unit is not easily discernable and the opinion of scholarship varies appreciably.2 Gerhard von Rad and Martin Noth both emphasize the complex interweaving of redactions here and despair of a solution of the source problem in the near future.3 This complexity, according to Noth, is further proof of the importance of the pericope. Hans Wildberger, in fact, goes so far as to declare Ex. 19:3b-8 not deuteronomic or deuteronomistic, not from P, J or E but rather a “Sondertradition . . . welche darum im jetzigen Zusammenhang wie ein Fremdkörper wirkt.”4

The paraenetic character of these verses is obvious. Analysis of the Sinai pericope, Ex. 19-24, has established that this section composed an initial paraenetic element of a four-fold covenant agreement.5 Within this section itself, moreover, a similar four-fold

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5 von Rad, *op. cit.*, p. 35: (1) Paränese (Ex. 19:4-6) and geschichtliche Darstellung der Sinaivorgänge (Ex. 19ff.); (2) Gesetzesvortrag (Dekalog und Bundesbuch); (3) Segensverheissung (Ex. 23:20ff.); (4) Bundesschluss (Ex. 24).