

2. Statements as to precise parts of P, giving correct material from a far earlier period.

XI-56 Abba, Raymond, "Priests and Levites" Interpreter's Dict. of the Bible (1962)

p.188 There are, however, indications that the Priestly Code itself was in existence before the Exile . . . The widely distributed Levitical cities of the priestly document, some of which were ancient sanctuaries, recall the conditions of pre-exilic times. Again, the sacrificial law of the Priestly Code, according to which the lay offerer kills, flays, and cuts up the sacrificial animal . . . represents the early custom, whereas in the legislation of Ezekiel it is the Levites who kill the animal (Ezek. 44.11) . . .

. . . On the other hand the Priestly Code is acquainted with another class which was nonexistent in postexilic times - the "ministering women" (Exod. 38.18) mentioned in connection with the Shiloh temple (1 Sam. 2.22) and who may have later degenerated into the cult prostitutes ejected from the Jerusalem temple by Josiah (2 Kings 23.7). . . .

p. 189 The priestly legislation is frequently presupposed when it is not explicitly referred to - e.g. the permission given to kill and eat flesh at home in Deut. 12.15-16, 20-24, presupposes the more stringent law of Lev. 17. 1-6, which it modifies; the law of release in Deut. 15.1ff has in mind the sabbatical year of Lev. 25.2ff; the regulations for the centralized celebration of the Passover in Deut. 16.1-8 presuppose and modify the domestic Passover law of Exod. 12.1-20.

A significant feature of the references of Deuteronomy, explicit and implicit, to the Priestly Code is that, taken as a whole, they cover a considerable extent of the priestly legislation (e.g. Exod. 12; Lev. 11; 13-15; 17-19; Num. 18). And while there are indications of the dependence of Deuteronomy upon upon the Priestly Code, there is no evidence of any acquaintance of the priestly writer with Deuteronomy. Hence the priority of the Priestly Code is clearly implied.

Such a conclusion, if it be maintained, has far-reaching consequences for the study of the Levitical priesthood. If an early date for the Priestly Code be accepted, it must necessitate a complete re-evaluation of its evidence. At least it could no longer be maintained that the priestly writer has read back the organization of the second temple into early times. Indeed, it may well be that the priestly source will prove to be of far greater historical value than many have been disposed to admit.