

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php

JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE.

TWELFTH YEAR—1893—PART I.

The Use of the Word *Kōhēn* in the Old Testament.

PROFESSOR LEWIS B. PATON.

HARTFORD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, HARTFORD, CONN.

THAT the various literary elements of the Old Testament exhibit a striking diversity in their application of the name *kōhēn* can scarcely be disputed. The main points of this diversity are too well known to require more than the briefest recapitulation. In the books of Judges and Samuel the title is applied to non-Levitical ministrants; in the later pre-exilic writings it is used of Levites only; in Ezekiel the name of *kōhēn* is denied to certain Levites, and is conferred upon the family of Zadok alone; in post-exilic times it is applied to the Aaronidæ only. Corresponding, apparently, with this variation in the historical books, we find that the JE elements of the Hexateuch place no explicit restrictions upon the exercise of priestly functions; that Deuteronomy seems to know no other *kōhanim* than the Levites; and that the Priestly Code regards the sons of Aaron as the only legitimate priests.

What is the explanation of these phenomena? The one that lies nearest at hand is that we have here an evolution from a general to a special priesthood; and that in the history and the laws we see the stages by which the sacerdotal functions which originally any Israelite might exercise were successively limited until they became the exclusive possession of a small section of the community. This view, of course, assumes at the outset that the word *kōhēn* is a fixed quantity, and that the difference in the documents is due to an application of this term to different classes of persons. Viewed abstractly, this is evidently an adequate explanation of the phenomena; it cannot be said, however, to be the only explanation that is antecedently possible. The variation in the statements of the records may be due to the fact that *kōhēn* is a fluctuating term which at different stages of its history was applied to different classes of persons, without this indicating that the functions of these classes have undergone any

modification. In other words, the phenomena of the Old Testament in the statements in regard to the *kōhanim* may be due to a gradual narrowing of the meaning of the word *kōhēn* as well as to a gradual narrowing of the sacerdotal office; and the fundamental question, it seems to me, in the investigation of this subject, is whether the successive literary elements of the Old Testament exhibit a development in the word for priest or in the office of priest.

In spite of the weight of authority in favor of the first and more obvious theory, I venture the critical heresy of asserting that there is a good deal to be said in favor of the hypothesis that the office of priest has stood still and that the word *kōhēn* has fluctuated. I wish in this paper to notice a few of the facts that seem to favor this hypothesis rather than the other, and then to show what light it casts upon the statements in regard to the priesthood. I shall begin with the historical and prophetic writings whose date is approximately certain, in order to ascertain what they indicate in regard to the use of the word *kōhēn* at different periods of the literature; and shall then endeavor to show how the documents of the Hexateuch are related to this usage.

I. Our investigation commences most naturally with the statements in 2 Sam. viii. 18, xx. 26, and 1 Ki. iv. 5, that David's sons, and Ira the Jairite, and Zabud the son of Nathan were *kōhanim*, 1. because these passages admittedly belong to the oldest Hebrew historical literature; 2. because they contain a categorical assertion that David's sons were *kōhanim*; and 3. because these appointments are not open to the suspicion of being in wilful violation of established religious usage. Do these passages, then, indicate that in the time of David and Solomon the priestly office might be held by any Israelite, or that the word *kōhēn* is here used in a wider sense so as to include *civil* officers? The school of Graf holds the former opinion, maintaining that *kōhēn* in these passages must be taken in the same sense which it bears in P or in the Chronicles, and that, consequently, they indicate that in the time of David men of any tribe might become priests. The first passage reads, "And David's sons were *kōhanim*." On this Kuenen remarks (*Hist.-krit. Onderzoek*², § 11, n. 11 = *Hexateuch*, p. 204), "It is highly improbable, in fact inconceivable, that so common a word should be used in a double sense. The writer can only mean that David's sons acted as priests, perhaps on special occasions, such as household or family sacrifices"; and Wellhausen adds (*Prolegomena*⁸, p. 133), "These words are not to be twisted into meaning something else for the sake of upholding the Pentateuch."

Are the positive assertions of these critics correct? The only way in which we can answer the question is by bringing the other passages referred to above into comparison with this one. In 2 Sam. xx. 25 f. we read, "And Zadok and Abiathar were *kōhanīm*, and also Ira the Jairite was *kōhēn* unto David." In 1 Ki. iv. 5 it is said, "And Zabud the son of Nathan was *kōhēn*, the king's friend." An examination of these two passages in connection with the former exegetically compels us, it seems to me, to recognize a distinction in these *kōhanīm*. In all three passages there is a separation in the enumeration of the various *kōhanīm* that is most singular if they were all of like character. In 2 Sam. viii. 17 Zadok and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar,¹ are mentioned as priests; then it is said, "Seraiah was scribe; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites";² and not till then are we told, "And David's sons were *kōhanīm*." Why was not this last statement made in connection with the mention of Zadok and Abiathar, if David's sons were *kōhanīm* in the same sense? In like manner 2 Sam. xx. 25 does not say Zadok, Abiathar, and Ira the Jairite were priests, but "Zadok and Abiathar were priests, and also (וְיִרָא) Ira the Jairite was *kōhēn* unto David." Here the very form of the sentence makes a distinction in the office. So also in 1 Ki. iv. 5 the notice that Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers is inserted between the statements that Zadok and Abiathar were priests and that Zabud the son of Nathan was *kōhēn*.

Apart from the separate enumeration of these *kōhanīm*, there are other considerations that go to show that they were some kind of civil officers. In 2 Sam. xx. 26 Ira is called a *kōhēn* "unto David," and this phrase shows plainly that his service was rendered to the king and not to the Lord. So also in 1 Ki. iv. 5, the meaning of *kōhēn* is exactly defined by the appositive רֵעֵה הַמְלִיךְ, or prime minister. It is, therefore, no mere harmonistic subterfuge, as Wellhausen asserts, to hold that there were *civil kōhanīm*, or higher officers. This view is necessitated by an impartial exegesis of these passages. Moreover, there is nothing in the root-meaning of *kōhēn* that can militate against this idea. Etymologically, *kōhēn* means no more than מְשָׁרֵת, which is used of the service both of God and of men. According to Delitzsch, the same title was used by the Egyptians both for priest and for royal minister (cf. Diodorus, I. 70); and if this be so, we can understand how the early Hebrews should have had a

¹ Textual error for Abiathar, son of Ahimelech.

² Emended after Chronicles.

similar linguistic usage. The existence of *civil kōhanīm* is also confirmed by Job xii. 19, where *kōhanīm* stands in parallelism with אִתְּנִים, and must therefore refer to civil dignitaries rather than to priests in the ordinary sense, — “He leadeth *kōhanīm* away spoiled and overthroweth the mighty.” The book of Job reflects the patriarchal condition when there was no priestly clan, and therefore it can hardly be doubted that its author here intentionally employs *kōhēn*, in its archaic sense, to denote civil officers.

We conclude, accordingly, from a study of these passages, that in the time of David and of Solomon the word *kōhēn* meant no more than “minister” or “ministrant,” and could be applied to royal officials as well as to members of the clergy. These passages, therefore, throw a great light upon the original meaning of the word *kōhēn*, but give absolutely no indication of the constitution or extent of the priesthood in the time of David and of Solomon.

The other places in the books of Judges and Samuel in which *kōhanīm* are mentioned, happen to refer only to religious *kōhanīm*, and occur nearly always in such connections as to show what sort of *kōhanīm* these were without further definition; nevertheless, there are certain peculiarities of linguistic usage that indicate, I think, that for the authors of these passages also, *kōhēn* was not a hard and fixed term, whose meaning was unmistakable even without nearer determination, but a word of fluctuating significance, which must be limited either by the context or by explicit statement in order to be absolutely certain.

Looking at the narrative in Jud. xvii., xviii., with the sole purpose, for the present, of noting its use of the word *kōhēn*, we find that in xvii. 5 *kōhēn* can be used without further definition because it stands in immediate connection with the “house of God,” and therefore can only mean “priest”; but in xvii. 10 and xviii. 19, where the nature of the *kōhēn* is not so obvious, the author feels the necessity of inserting the word אָב, in order to explain its meaning. It is not enough for Micah and the Danites to say, “Come and be for us a *kōhēn*,” but they say, “Come and be for us a father and a *kōhēn*”; and this fact indicates that the word *kōhēn* still wavers between a secular and a religious signification.

It is also worthy of notice that in 1 Sam. i. 3, where the priesthood of Shiloh is introduced to us for the first time, we read, “And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there, priests unto Yahwé” (לִיְהוָה). Why this added phrase “unto Yahwé”? Surely not in contrast to *kōhanīm* of other divinities who were worshipped

at other Israelitish sanctuaries. Of such *kōhanīm* no trace exists during this period. This phrase is the counterpart of the one in 2 Sam. xx. 26, which states that Ira was "*kōhēn* unto David" (יְהוֹרָם), and the reason for the addition is to distinguish the sons of Eli as religious *kōhanīm* rather than civil ones. In an analogous manner, when the Philistine priests are first brought into the narrative, they are characterized (1 Sam. v. 5) as כֹּהֲנֵי גִתִּי; but after it has thus been indicated formally what kind of *kōhanīm* they are, they are then referred to simply as *kōhanīm* (vi. 2). After a considerable interval in which nothing is said about any *kōhanīm*, Ahijah, the great-grandson of Eli, suddenly comes upon the scene in 1 Sam. xiv. 3; and here, also, he is not called simply the *kōhēn*, but his descent is traced from Eli, the *kōhēn* of *Yahwé*, at Shiloh. He himself is characterized as an "ephod-wearer" (נִשְׂאֵי אֶפֶד), and a comparison with xxii. 18 seems to indicate that this term was one of those used to discriminate the priests proper, and that its insertion here as an appositive is designed to make it clear at the outset what sort of a *kōhēn* Ahijah was. Throughout the rest of the episode, xiv. 19-36, he is referred to simply as the *kōhēn*.

Over against these facts, which indicate an exceedingly broad and flexible meaning of the word *kōhēn*, stands its use to designate the head of the priestly house of Eli, the *kōhēn* κατ' ἐξοχήν. The head of this house had manifestly a position of authority and power (1 Sam. ii. 28, 36; iii. 13; xxii. 11 f.), and yet he is always called simply כֹּהֵן, as if there were no other priests. So often does this title refer to the head of the priestly clan in the book of Samuel and its continuation in the first two chapters of Kings, that one might infer that there was no religious *kōhēn* during this period, except the head of the house of Eli, were it not for the fact that in three passages the name is extended so as to include other members of the family (1 Sam. i. 3; ii. 13-15; xxii. 17 f.). This fact indicates that, although at this early period the word *kōhēn* was perfectly general in its character, yet, if one wished, one might apply it in a special sense to a limited class within the clergy, without indicating that the author regarded the other clergy as excluded from this dignity.

As a result of our investigation of the linguistic use of the word *kōhēn* in the books of Judges and Samuel, we conclude that there are a good many reasons for thinking that in the period represented by the sources of these books, the word *kōhēn* was broad enough to include both religious and civil officials, but that a tendency is seen to employ it κατ' ἐξοχήν of the higher religious ministrants.

II. We must now show contrariwise that, while there is reason for thinking that the word *kōhēn* was originally broad enough to be applied to any Israelite, there is no sufficient reason for thinking that originally the priestly office might be assumed by an Israelite at will. The fact that, according to Jud. xvii., Micah made one of his sons priest, and afterwards made a Levite priest at his shrine in Mount Ephraim, cannot be made to prove that in this period the right of all Israelites to become priests was admitted, for the reason that the author uses this case as an illustration of the *lawlessness* that prevailed during the period of the Judges (xvii. 6): "In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." These words can only have been written during the golden age of the monarchy under David or Solomon. No writer who lived after the disruption of the kingdom could have regarded the king as the source of all moral and religious order in the way that the author of the appendix to Judges does. This incident, therefore, cannot fairly be used to prove the *normal* constitution of the priesthood in early times.

Apart from this one abnormal case, no religious functionaries are called *kōhanim* in the books of Judges and Samuel, except the priests of the house of Eli at Shiloh and Nob, and Zadok, the co-priest with Abiathar under David and the sole-priest under Solomon. The priests at Shiloh and Nob were all blood relatives of the head-priest (1 Sam. i. 3; xxii. 11), and in 1 Sam. ii. 27 Eli is unquestionably regarded as a descendant of Aaron. This passage, to be sure, belongs to the secondary elements of the book of Samuel, but its testimony is none the less valuable for that reason; because, as Baudissin observes,³ "The idea that Eli was a descendant of Aaron cannot have first sprung up after the fall of his house under Solomon."

That Zadok was an upstart, who could lay no claim to priestly descent but owed his position entirely to political considerations, has been inferred from 1 Sam. ii. 30-36 and 1 Ki. i. 7, ii. 35, but not legitimately, as it seems to me: 1. because the prophecy in 1 Sam. ii. 30-36 implies only that the faithful priest who should be raised up should not be of Eli's immediate family; 2. because historically the destruction befell only the house of Eli (1 Sam. xxii.); 3. because Zadok was already priest during the lifetime of David (2 Sam. viii. 17, xx. 25), before Abiathar made his false political move; and 4. because it seems to be a fair inference from 1 Sam. xxviii. 6 (cf.

³ *Alttest. Priesterthum*, 194.

1 Chron. xii. 26 f.) that Zadok or his father was Saul's appointee after Abiatnar escaped to David. If this be true, the fact that Zadok was retained after David came to the throne, in equal or even greater honor than the faithful Abiathar who had shared all of David's hardships, indicates that he must have had some superior claim to his position; and that claim can only have lain in his descent. Where both priests are mentioned in the book of Samuel, Zadok is always named first. In spite of Abiathar's sympathy with Adonijah, Solomon would not have ventured to depose an hereditary priest of the house of Aaron in favor of one who, as Wellhausen thinks, was nothing more than "an upstart, the founder of an absolutely new line." The hereditary character of the office is established by the fact that it descended regularly from Eli to Abiathar, and Zadok could not have obtained it unless he had some claim to it, as good as that of Abiathar, or better. No more probable explanation of this claim can be suggested than that given by the Chronicler, who makes him the representative of an older branch of the house of Aaron. Accordingly, although I find indications in the early history of the broad use of the name *kōhēn*, I can find no conclusive evidence that the priesthood was exercised outside of the single family of the Aaronidæ.

The numerous cases of sacrifice by private persons that we meet in Judges and Samuel, prove nothing against the existence of such a regular priesthood: 1. because these persons sacrificed only on special occasions; 2. because these sacrifices never took place at the main sanctuary; and 3. because these celebrants are never called *kōhanīm*. Acts of this sort may fairly be construed as indicating ignorance of the Deuteronomic law of the central sanctuary, but they are not necessarily in conflict with the provisions of P in regard to the priesthood. P prohibits all public sacrificial acts at the *אֵלֹהִים מוֹעֵד* to others than the sons of Aaron, but he says nothing about the private family sacrifices that might be offered in other parts of the land. His complete silence in regard to the cultus elsewhere than at the national sanctuary is generally construed as a sign that the Deuteronomic reform had been successfully carried through; in itself, it may just as well be interpreted as an indication that the agitation in favor of an exclusive central sanctuary had not yet begun. P is concerned simply to produce a manual for the clergy at the national sanctuary; and consequently he says nothing, one way or the other, about the religious practices of the people at large, and there is nothing in this code that would hinder such sacrifices as Samuel

offered, or other men who were not of Aaronic descent. If it were recorded that these men had sacrificed at Shiloh, or if they were called *kōhanim*, the case would be different; but this is not the fact. Although Samuel was consecrated to Yahwé by his parents, and served at Shiloh, there is no record that he ever sacrificed or performed priestly functions there; and this is singular enough in view of the fact that he offered so many sacrifices in other parts of the land. Moreover, he is never called *kōhēn*, although this would be unavoidable if the Grafian theory of the priesthood were true at this point. Graf himself tried to find the designation of Samuel as a priest in 1 Sam. ii. 35, but it is now generally admitted that this passage refers, not to Samuel, but to Zadok.

III. We have spoken at such length of the linguistic usage of the first period that we must summarize from this point on and give only general results. 1 Ki. iv. 5 is the last passage that alludes to civil *kōhanim*, unless possibly 2 Ki. x. 11 belongs to this category. The pre-exilic prophets use the word *kōhēn* without qualification for the clergy as a whole; so do also the sources of Kings and the editor of Kings. From the time of the discovery of Deuteronomy onward the phrase "the priests the Levites" is used with more or less frequency. No second grade in the clergy after the *kōhanim* is ever mentioned, and the combination "the priests and the Levites" is not found in any genuine reading. Jeremiah enumerates the entire population under the categories of king, princes, *kōhanim*, prophets, and people, without mentioning a separate class of Levites after the manner of the post-exilic books. What does this indicate? That in the opinion of these writers all the Levites were priests? Not at all. In the light of our previous investigation it shows simply that, although the word *kōhēn* has been somewhat limited so as to exclude civil officials, it is still broad enough to include religious ministrants of all classes. A great variety of functions is ascribed to these *kōhanim*, and it is exceedingly improbable that the priests did all the things that the *kōhanim* are said to have done. When the editor of Kings remarks in 1 Ki. xii. 31 that Jeroboam made *kōhanim* from among all the people which were not of the sons of Levi, he does not mean to imply that all the sons of Levi could be priests, but only that they all were religious ministrants. Ezekiel calls all of the Levites *kōhanim*, but this does not at all indicate that he regards them all as having the same functions. On the contrary, it seems to me impossible not to recognize that Ezekiel presupposes throughout a distinction between higher and lower *kōhanim*. This

is particularly evident in xl. 45, 46, where he says, "This chamber is for the *kōhanīm*, the keepers of the charge of the house. And the chamber whose prospect is towards the north is for the *kōhanīm*, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok which, from among the sons of Levi, come near to Yahwé to minister unto him." This passage not only distinguishes between the *kōhanīm* who keep the charge of the house and the *kōhanīm* who keep the charge of the altar, but recognizes the sons of Zadok as already set apart from the ordinary Levites. In view of this passage it is quite out of the question to assert that, in the classical passage xliv. 7-16, Ezekiel first creates the class of the Levites over against the priests by withdrawing the priesthood from those Levites who are not of the family of Zadok, because they have sacrificed in the high places. This view simply begs the question by assuming that previously all Levites exercised full priestly functions; and that therefore Ezekiel degrades all Levites except the Zadokites, and not merely those particular Levites who had previously ministered as priests in virtue of the fact that they were sons of Aaron although they were not sons of Zadok. On this passage Kuenen remarks (*Hist.-krit. Onderzoek*², § 11, n. 14 = *Hexateuch*, p. 205): "The attempts to explain Ezekiel's utterances in some other way than as a degradation of the Levites do not merit refutation. Every effort to bring them into harmony with P is wrecked upon the undeniable fact that Ezekiel regards the exclusion of the Levites from the priestly office as something new, as a degradation, as the penalty of the idolatry they practised and fostered while they were yet priests of the *bamōth*. Commentators who are pledged not to admit this really deserve our pity." Again, in the *Theol. Tijdschrift*, III. 465, he says, "If by reason of their birth it was impossible for the Levites to become priests, then it would be more than strange to deprive them of the priesthood on account of their faults—much as if one were to threaten the Commons with disqualification to sit or vote in the House of Lords."

In these statements there is a strange mixture of fact and fiction. It is true that Ezekiel regards exclusion from the priestly office as a degradation; and attempts such as that of Kittel⁴ to show that this is only a withholding of a desired privilege, and not a withdrawal of an existing right, are quite futile, in spite of the absence of the words *לֹא עָרַב*. Hoffmann's⁵ suggestion that Ezekiel here refers to

⁴ *Theol. Studien aus Württemberg*, 1881.

⁵ *Magazin für d. Wissenschaft d. Judenthums*, 1879.

a withdrawal of the priesthood from the Levites by Moses on account of idolatry in the wilderness is still more improbable.

One cannot read vs. 12, 13 impartially without being convinced that the school of Graf is right, and that the Levites who had sacrificed in the high places are really to be degraded from their priestly office. Suppose, however, that we admit this, does it prove that all the Levites were to be degraded? Most assuredly not. From the statement that those who were degraded were Levites, it no more follows that all Levites were degraded, than from P's enactment that some Levites could not be priests it follows, as Kuenen seems to assert, that no Levites were priests. What does Kuenen mean by saying that according to P it was impossible for the Levites by reason of their birth to become priests? There were Levites who by very reason of their birth did become priests, and could, therefore, be threatened with degradation without any of the absurdity that Kuenen finds in the idea if priests and Levites were distinguished in the time of Ezekiel. The whole matter turns on the question to whom does Ezekiel's threat that they should not "come near to execute the office of a priest" apply. Evidently, as the school of Graf assert, to those Levites who had previously had the right to minister; but to assert that all the Levites had this right is simply begging the question. Kuenen's illustration just quoted is not a fair one. A parallel case to Ezekiel's degradation of the Levites would be as follows: A law is passed that no Englishman who has been guilty of treason shall be allowed to sit in the House of Lords. On Kuenen's principles we must infer from this that hitherto all Englishmen have enjoyed the privilege of the upper house, but obviously the real meaning is that those are excluded who have previously been members of the peerage. The case in Ezekiel is exactly parallel. Levite is a comprehensive term that includes the priests, and when Levites are said to be degraded from the priesthood, the reference is simply to those who are already in the priesthood, without defining who these are. The original eligibility of all Levites to the sacerdotal office cannot be made out in this passage nor anywhere else in Ezekiel. On the contrary, it is probable that Ezekiel himself presupposes the existing distinction between priests and Levites as the basis of his legislation.

The same broad use of the word *kōhēn* to include all religious ministrants that we have found in the literature down to Ezekiel is found also in the early post-exilic literature (cf. Neh. x. 32, 34); and yet it cannot be doubted that the class of the priests was distin-

guished from the ordinary Levites at this time, for when the exiles returned from Babylon, priests and Levites were already classified in their respective groups. Malachi ii. 4, 8, speaks of the priests as ministering in virtue of God's covenant with *Levi*, not with *Aaron*, as if he recognized no distinction between priests and Levites; and yet it is certain that he did know the difference, both on account of his date and of his relation to the PC. Even the Chronicler retains the old stereotyped name, "the Levitical *kōhanīm*," as a designation of the clergy as a whole, without feeling that this term is in any way inconsistent with the established distinction within the clergy; and in 1 Chr. xv. 12, 2 Chr. xi. 14, xxix. 5, he speaks of the priests simply as Levites. In general, however, the tendency of post-exilic times was to limit the name *kōhēn* to the priests in the narrow sense, and in the Chronicles this use is practically the only one.

As a result, now, of our study of the word *kōhēn* in the literature whose relative age can be determined, we conclude that the word *kōhēn* has passed through three main stages of meaning; 1. as a designation both of civil and religious functionaries; 2. as a designation of the clergy only; and 3. as a designation of the priests exclusively in the narrower sense.

IV. It remains to show what bearing these results have on the problem of the age of the documents of the Hexateuch, and to see whether in their use of the word *kōhēn* they indicate that they belong to one of these three stages rather than the others. The JE narrative is rightly brought into comparison with the history in Judges and Samuel by all critics, but often, it seems to me, on false grounds. JE does not indicate that any Israelite might be a *kōhēn* any more than Judges and Samuel do. The fact that the patriarchs offered sacrifices proves nothing, for this was prior to the establishment of a *national* cultus, and there is no record of anything of the sort after the Exodus. The young men of Israel in Ex. xxiv. 5 do not act as priests, but simply assist at the sacrifice, as the Levites are required to do in the priestly legislation. On the other hand, regular priests of some sort are implied in the provisions of the Book of the Covenant in regard to offerings (Ex. xxii. 28; xxiii. 15, 19; cf. xxxiv. 19 f., 26), as also in the decision of legal matters "before God" (xxii. 7). In the JE narrative Ex. xix. 22, 24, and in Josh. iii. *kōhanīm* are distinguished from the nation at large. In Ex. xix. 6 the command, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," instead of indicating that there was no regular priesthood, implies rather the existence of a priestly caste as a basis of

comparison. About these *kōhanīm* nothing definite is said in JE, although it is probable that they are regarded as Levites (Ex. xxxii. 26; Deut. xxxiii. 8). As far as the use of the word *kōhēn* is concerned, no certain conclusion in regard to the age of the record can be drawn, unless it be true that Jethro, the *kōhēn* of Midian, was a civil functionary. Ex. xviii. 12 gives no clear indication that he exercised priestly functions, and what is said of him elsewhere would apply better to a political magnate than to a religious ministrant. In this case JE stands on the same plane as the history in Samuel. Otherwise the indications from the mere use of this word are indeterminate, and we must fall back upon the relation of JE to D to determine its age.

When we bring D into consideration we have a larger basis of comparison in its use of the word *kōhēn*. The standing phrase of D is "the *kōhanīm* the Levites," and it is evident from a variety of considerations that the author regards all Levites as *kōhanīm*. Does not this indicate that he belongs to the second period of the development of the word, when the name *kōhanīm* had been limited to the clergy and was extended to all the Levites? No; because if the author had lived in this period it would not have been necessary constantly to append the appositive "the Levites," for the composition of the priesthood was established, and *kōhanīm* alone would have been a sufficient designation. The regular use of this title cannot be explained as due to a polemic against the assumption of the priesthood by non-Levites: 1. because there is no trace of any such polemic in the legislation of the book; and 2. because in that case the phrase must have been, "the Levites the *kōhanīm*," and not "the *kōhanīm* the Levites." As the phrase now stands, Levite modifies the conception *kōhēn*, and not *kōhēn* the conception Levite. That is to say, *kōhanīm* are defined as Levites, but it is not said that Levites are *kōhanīm*. Does not this indicate that *kōhanīm* is still an indefinite word for the author of Deuteronomy, and needs to be qualified? He does not wish to speak of all *kōhanīm*, but only of the Levitical *kōhanīm*; and this constantly felt necessity of limiting the word indicates, it seems to me, that the book must belong to the same period as that represented by the book of Samuel, the one in which *kōhēn* was so indefinite that it needed to be qualified. Accordingly, when D, for the sake of making clear what sort of *kōhanīm* he means, speaks of Levitical *kōhanīm*, this is not to be construed as an indication that its author regarded all Levites as eligible to the priesthood. It means only that all Levites could be engaged in some way

with the service of the sanctuary ; and when it is said that the Levite who shall come up to the central sanctuary "shall minister in the name of Yahwé his God as all his brethren the Levites do which stand there before Yahwé," this does not mean that he shall exercise full priestly functions, but that he shall perform the particular duties of the class of *kōhanīm* to which he belongs (cf. Baudissin, *Das alttestamentliche Priesterthum*, 81). From this standpoint of the broad meaning that *kōhēn* must have in D, there is really nothing in what it says about the *kōhanīm* that contradicts P. The phenomenon that actually presents itself is the *ignoring* of P's distinctions. In other words, D is silent in regard to the persons who may offer sacrifice, just as JE is silent ; and this may quite as well be due to the fact that the code was a popular one, or that the distinctions were already settled, as to the fact that the author knew of no distinctions in the grades of the clergy. Moreover, it can hardly be affirmed categorically that D knows of no distinction among the *kōhanīm* ; compare x. 6, xviii. 5, xxvii. 11-14, passages in which the existence of a privileged family within the tribe of Levi seems to be implied.

Turning now to the Priests' Code, we find that the characteristic expression here is "the *kōhanīm* the sons of Aaron." At first sight this seems to indicate that this code belongs to post-exilic times, when the title of *kōhēn* was applied to the Aaronidæ only ; and that the intention of the author in using this phrase is to assert that only the sons of Aaron could be lawful priests. But here again, as in the case of D, it must be observed that if it had been the author's intention to call the sons of Aaron priests, he would have said, "the sons of Aaron the *kōhanīm*," and not "the *kōhanīm* the sons of Aaron." It is usually represented as if in P the sons of Aaron were distinguished from the rest of the Levites by being called *kōhanīm*, but this is not the fact. In reality, one class of *kōhanīm* is distinguished from other *kōhanīm* by being called sons of Aaron, and this fact shows that when P was written the name *kōhēn* was still so general that it needed to be limited in some way if it was not to be misunderstood. The only question, therefore, can be whether P belongs to the first or the second period of the use of *kōhēn*. Into this question we have not the space to go. It may be remarked, however, that P's use of the name *kōhēn* κατ' ἐξοχὴν, for the priests proper, by no means indicates that in his mind the word was not broad enough to be applied to other classes of persons if he had wished to do so. It is analogous to the use of *kōhēn*, as a designation of the head of the priestly

house of Eli, without hindering its application elsewhere to other ministrants, both religious and civil.

From this brief study of the word *kōhēn* we infer, accordingly, that the hypothesis of a regular development in the meaning of the word *kōhēn* can be carried through the literature of certain date with better success than the hypothesis of a development in the priestly office; and that this hypothesis, if correct, necessitates an earlier dating of the documents of the Pentateuch than that assumed by the Grafian school.