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SADDUCEE

Sadducee sad'joo-see (G4881, derivation uncertain). A member of an important Jewish sect, more political than religious, which arose among the priestly aristocracy of the HASMONEAN period, but which ceased to exist with the demise of the aristocracy after the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70).

The Sadducees are perhaps today best known for their opposition to the popular party of the PHARISEES, with whom they differed on various doctrinal and political questions. I. Name. The derivation of the name Sadducee has been the subject of considerable discussion but has not been established with any certainty. If one may bypass some of the more ingenious guesses (e.g., that it derives from the STOICS, or from the Persian word for "infidel," or from the hypothetical name of a now unknown person), there are left three significant possibilities.

(1) Since in Hebrew the name consists of the same three radicals (ṣdq) as the word for "righteousness," it has been argued that Sadducees means "righteous ones." This account, however, leaves unexplained the necessary vowel shift from the i of ṣaddîq H7404 ("righteous") to the u of ṣĕdûqî ("Sadducee"). Moreover, although this explanation of the name was accepted by certain of the early fathers of the church (cf. Epiphanius, Panarion 14.2.1), it is not at all clear in what sense "righteousness" could be attributed to, or even claimed by, the Sadducees as their distinguishing characteristic. (2) An explanation that has gained popularity in modern times and is held by the majority of contemporary scholars, traces the word back to the proper noun ṣādôq H7401 (Gk. Sadōk G4882, sometimes spelled Saddouk in the LXX). Sadducee thereby

becomes the equivalent of Zadokite ("descendant of Zadok"), the ZADOK in question being the descendant of AARON who became a leading priest under DAVID (2 Sam. 8:17; 15:24 – 29), and chief priest under SOLOMON (1 Ki. 1:32; 2:35). The priestly line begun by Zadok continued to the Babylonian EXILE and was reinstituted after the exile in the person of Joshua ben-Jehozadak (Hag. 1:1; see JESHUA), coming to an end only when the unscrupulous ANTIOCHUS IV installed MENELAUS as high priest in 171 B.C. The line of authentic Zadokite priests nevertheless continued until around A.D. 70 at the rival sanctuary at Leontopolis in Egypt (cf. Jos. Ant. 13.3.1 §§65 – 73).

The Zadok priesthood itself remained highly honored in Israel (cf. Ezek. 40:45 – 46; 44:15 – 16), as is evident from ECCLESIASTICUS (Sir. 51:12, Heb. [missing in the LXX]), and the writings of the QUMRAN Community (e.g., IQS V). Since in JOSEPHUS and the NT the Sadducees are closely associated with the high priesthood, it has been argued that the use of the name Sadducee was an attempt to legitimatize the Jerusalem priesthood by associating it with the line of Zadok. But, in point of fact, the Jerusalem priesthood of the Hasmonean period was manifestly not of Zadokite lineage, so that on the other hand it has been suggested that the use of Sadducee or Zadokite in referring to that priesthood could be derogatory—that is, an ironical reference to the disreputable (although legitimate) priesthood of the pre-Hasmonean era. (It is, of course, not impossible that the name may trace back to a Zadok other than the high priestly Zadok.

There is actually a late 9th-cent. rabbinic tradition, the ,Abot de Rabbi Nathan, which derives Sadducee from an obscure Zadok of the 2nd cent. B.C. who was a disciple of Antigonus of Socoh. However, since a second disciple of Antigonus, a certain Boethus, is said by R. Nathan to have originated the sect known as the Boethusians, it is generally held that with respect to Sadducee the tradition is merely a late etymological guess. If the word is derived from the name Zadok, almost certainly it would go back to Zadok the high priest.) (3) In light of the difficulty of using

Zadokite to refer to a non-Zadokite priesthood, T. W. Manson (in BJRL 22 [1938]: 144 – 59) rejected the previous explanation and suggested in its place that the Aramaic/Hebrew word is a transliteration of the Greek word syndikoi, meaning "syndics, judges, fiscal controllers." The use of this term can be traced back to 4th cent. B.C. Athens. It came during the Roman period to refer to individuals having responsibilities and authority quite similar to that held by the Sadducees in Jerusalem (i.e., serving in somewhat of a mediatorial role between the Roman authorities and the local or national community). Thus the word was used also to refer to members of the Jewish senate, the SANHEDRIN.

Besides avoiding the major problem intrinsic to the previous explanation, Manson notes that his theory is more consistent with the fact that among the Sadducees were many laymen, for whom a priestly designation (such as Zadokite) would be meaningless. Thus the word is said by Manson to have originally denoted the "syndics" or Jewish officials of the Hasmonean era; the Sadducees themselves, however, may well have preferred the etymology which designated them as "righteous." Looked at objectively, Manson's explanation seems to possess more plausibility than the first two proposals. Etymology, however, is often notoriously unpredictable, and it is thus easily possible that, even with their respective difficulties, one of the other explanations is really the correct one. It would seem safe to say that soon after the word achieved currency and its referent was established, its real etymology became unimportant (and may even have been forgotten), and that alternative etymological possibilities sprang readily to mind. II.

Origin and history. We are limited in our knowledge of the Sadducees to the indirect information Josephus provides, supplemented by what can be learned from the NT and the MISHNAH. Unfortunately, the precise origin of the Sadducees cannot be determined from these sources. The first mention of the Sadducees by Josephus (Ant. 3.5.9 §§171 – 73) refers to the period of Jonathan MACCABEE, successor to his brother Judas. He states, "At this time there were three sects among the Jews, who had different

opinions concerning human actions: the one was called the sect of the Pharisees, another the sect of the Sadducees, and the other the sect of the Essenes."

Something of the respective tenets of these three schools is given, but Josephus provides no account of their origin. Quite probably, however, the Sadducees or their precursors are to be identified with the aristocratic members of the early senate or Sanhedrin of Israel, which began prior to the Maccabean revolt and continued through the Hasmonean period. Josephus next relates how the high priest John Hyrcanus (135 – 104 B.C.) was cajoled into transferring his allegiance and favor from the Pharisees to the Sadducees (Ant. 13.10.5 – 6 §§288 – 98). This is the apparent beginning of the close connection between the Sadducees and the high priesthood that continues into the NT period.

A natural alliance between the two existed on the basis of the political interests of the aristocratic Sadducees and the eminent position of the Hasmonean princes. However, the privileged status which the Sadducees began now to enjoy was abruptly lost when Salome ALEXANDRA, succeeding her husband Jannaeus as monarch (76 B.C.), acted upon his advice and granted considerable power to the Pharisees, who were so influential among the masses. See HASMONEAN II. When Alexandra died (67 B.C.), her two sons quarreled over the succession. Aristobulus II, backed by the Sadducees, eventually won out over Hyrcanus II, the contender supported by the Pharisees. But Hyrcanus, at the instigation of Antipater, continued in a struggle for the crown that was brought to an end only by an appeal to Rome. POMPEY eventually invaded Jerusalem (63 B.C.) and installed Hyrcanus II as high priest by way of reward for his assistance. Much later (40 B.C.), the Sadducees were probably supporters of Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II, who succeeded in wresting the high priesthood from Hyrcanus II. When HEROD the Great captured Jerusalem three years later, he took vengeance on the "partisans of Antigonus" (Jos. War 1.18.4 §358; cf. Ant. 15.1.1 §2) who had opposed Hyrcanus II, among whom were doubtless a large number of Sadducees. With Herod

the standing of the Sadducees declined appreciably (cf. Jos. Ant. 14.9.4 §§171ff.). He diminished the power of the Sanhedrin and hereditary high priesthood with a disconnected succession of high priests of his own choosing. (Josephus counts, in the period of 107 years from Herod to the fall of Jerusalem, no less than 28 high priests, Ant. 20.10.5 §250.) Not only was the high priesthood as an institution degraded under Herod, but the Sadducees (who remained closely associated with the high priests) themselves suffered an increasing decline in the public opinion.

The frequent linking of the Sadducees with the Boethusians—the high-priestly house of Boethus, appointed by Herod (cf. Jos. Ant. 15.9.3 §§320 - 22; 19.6.2 §§297 - 98)—attests to this low esteem of the Sadducees. (On the basis of ascriptions of legal rulings in the rabbinic literature, a recent analysis has given fresh support to the view that the Sadducees and the Boethusians constituted one group. See E. Regev, Ha-sedugim ve-hilhatam: (al dat ve-hevrah bi-yeme bayit sheni [The Sadducees and Their Halakah: Religion and Society in the Second Temple Period, 2005].) Stone weight inscribed in Aramaic, found in the so-called Burnt House of Jerusalem, and bearing the name Bar Kathros. The Babylonian Talmud refers to "the house of Kathros" as a priestly family who probably belonged to the Sadducean party (b. Pesahhim 57a). When in A.D. 6 JUDEA became a Roman province, the Sanhedrin, and with it the Sadducees and the high priest, were able to exercise more control in governing the country, but always of course under the watchful eye of the Roman governor. From this time onward the high priests were aristocratic Sadduceans, and the majority of the members of the Sanhedrin were Sadducees (cf. Acts 4:1; 5:17; Jos. Ant. 20.9.1 §199). Yet the Pharisees, though a minority in the Sanhedrin, were highly influential in that body because of their popularity with the masses. As Josephus puts it, "they accomplished nothing," having to go along with the Pharisees, "since otherwise the masses would not tolerate them" (Ant. 18.1.4 §17).

With the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the second temple in A.D. 70, the Sadducees disappear from history. Their existence was inextricably tied

to their political and priestly power, and when that came to an end they, unlike the Pharisees, were unable to survive. III. Composition and character. The determinative trait of the Sadducean party seems not to have been its priestly associations, as is commonly believed, but rather its aristocratic character. While it is true that the high priesthood and the chief priests consisted almost exclusively of Sadducees, there were many Pharisees among the priests, and probably even among the upper priestly classes.

More important, however, many Sadducees were to be found among the lay nobility who exercised important authority as members or "elders" of the Sanhedrin. Accordingly, that which was common to the Sadducees was not clerical status, but aristocratic eminence. It is natural then that the Sadducean circle was a very exclusive one, remaining closed to the populace as a whole. Josephus states that only a small number of people knew the doctrine of the Sadducees, that these were "men of the highest standing" (Ant. 18.1.5 §§16 – 17), and that the Sadducees had "the confidence of the wealthy alone" (13.10.6 §298). It is unfortunate that the Sadducees have usually been understood only by way of their contrast to the Pharisees, for this has led to oversimplification and misunderstanding.

Thus facile dichotomies have become popular, such as the view that the Sadducees represented the clergy and temple, but the Pharisees the laity and synagogue; that the Sadducees were the proponents and the Pharisees the resisters of hellenization; that the Pharisees were the urban bourgeoisie, the Sadducees the rural landowners; that the Pharisees were concerned with religion and the Sadducees with politics. It is undeniable that there is some truth in these various assertions, but none of these contrasts should be absolutized and made alone to account for the peculiar character of the Sadducees.

The latter were what they were due to a subtle combination of many factors, in varying degree. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were clearly opposed on certain issues, yet the difference between them is usually not absolute. The aristocratic makeup of the Sadducees, together with their power in the Sanhedrin and their control of the high priesthood, made it inevitable that their dominating interests should be political in nature. Their wealth and position on the one hand, and on the other hand the fact that their power was delegated to them by the Roman occupation, combine to account for the most outstanding trait of the Sadducees, their rigid conservatism. This conservatism, of course, was inevitably tempered by the dictates of the Romans. Since their political involvements were conditioned by their vested interests in the preservation of the status quo, it follows that they pursued policies designed to appease the governing authorities of Rome. A sample of 1st-cent. ceremonial or priestly stone vessels unearthed in Jerusalem at the Burnt House.

Thus, paradoxically, the Sadducees were seen to be in line with the hellenizing tendencies of their predecessors, and the populace hated them for their accommodation to the Romans, based as it was on private expediency. The primary concern of the Sadducees in all of this was to keep the nation peaceable and thereby to avoid trouble for the Romans and, in turn, themselves. In their administration of the internal justice of the country, the Sadducees were exceptionally strict in matters of law and order. Josephus refers to the party of the Sadducees as being "more heartless [or fierce; Gk. ōmos] than any of the other Jews when they sit in judgment" (Ant. 20.9.1 §199; in 13.10.6 §294 he refers to the Pharisees as being "naturally lenient in the matter of punishments" compared to the Sadducees). Similarly, any popular movement was a potential threat to the Sadducees, especially any that could be regarded as in any sense an "uprising." This accounts for their diligence in attempting to suppress the Christian movement by disposing of Jesus. The chief priests undoubtedly express the Sadducean viewpoint (which here coincided with that of the Pharisees) when they warn, "If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place [i.e., the temple] and our nation," to which CAIAPHAS the high priest, unwittingly prophetic, adds, "it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (Jn. 11:48 - 50). As to

their behavior in interpersonal relationships, Josephus says that they were far inferior to the Pharisees. While the latter were affectionate one to another and lived harmoniously, the Sadducees, he says, are "boorish," and with their "peers" (tous homoiousi) they are "as rude as to aliens" (War 2.8.14 §166). This has been seen by some as consonant with the sociological explanation of the Sadducees as crude, unpolished, provincial landowners (in contrast to the urbane Pharisees). To be sure, Josephus has a decidedly negative view of the Sadducees (whom he left to become a Pharisee), yet there are also some indications in the NT that the Sadducees were less than refined (cf. Matt. 26:67 - 68; Acts 23:2). Josephus also represents the Sadducees as inclined toward argumentation to the extent that they "reckon it a virtue to dispute" with their teachers (Ant. 18.1.4 §16), and probably Josephus means this in a derogatory sense. Thus the Sadducees, with all the advantages of higher culture that wealth brings, nonetheless were apparently lacking in the elements of refinement and decency that one usually tends to associate with the aristocracy. The Sadducees, then, by virtue of their peculiar position, were preeminently concerned with politics and the stability of the state. But while these secular concerns were dominant, it cannot be denied that there was also a clearly religious aspect to the Sadducean viewpoint, and it especially is in the realm of their religious teaching that the conservatism of the Sadducees is apparent. IV. Teaching. For the most part what we know of the religious teaching of the Sadducees we know only indirectly, that is, only in its negation of certain Pharisaic doctrines. The Sadducees, having rejected a great amount of the Pharisaic teaching as innovative, are properly seen as the conservative religious party; they appear to have regarded themselves as the stalwart guardians of the "pure faith" of the past. (Of course, from the point of view of modern "conservative" thought, the Sadducees appear "liberal," as in their rejection of the resurrection.) Unquestionably the most important denial on the part of the Sadducees was that of the Pharisees' oral law, "the tradition of the elders" (see discussion under MISHNAH). Some scholars argue that this only states the obvious, namely, that the Sadducees were not Pharisees. However, understanding how the oral law

functioned and why the Sadducees opposed it throws considerable light on the conflicts between these two groups. In particular, the Sadducees denied that the oral law of the Pharisees traced back to Moses and that it was authoritative and binding. Josephus gives explicit information on this point, informing us not only of the fact that the Sadducees abrogated the regulations of the Pharisees, but also giving the reason for this as the absence of these regulations from the "laws of Moses" (Ant. 13.10.6 §297). Josephus, indeed, seems to attribute the controversies and differences between the Pharisees and Sadducees to this fundamental disagreement. The Sadducees were probably in agreement with some parts of the oral law, but nonetheless rejected any suggestion that observance of the oral law was obligatory. With regard to matters not specified in the written law, the Sadducees seemed concerned to protect the right of private opinion. It may well be that behind this Sadducean viewpoint lay the vital concern of preserving the traditional priestly prerogative of interpreting the law, to which the Pharisaic structure of oral law posed no small threat. To the Sadducean mind, the Pharisaic attempt to "build a hedge" around the Torah—i.e., to protect against transgression by detailed regulations—was mistaken and unnecessary. Indeed, the Sadducees seemed to perceive that such legal stipulation could have the effect of annulling the Mosaic law itself. Paradoxically, however, the Sadducees too had a tradition of "decrees" or interpretation of the law of Moses that was, in principle at least, indistinguishable from the HALAKAH, or legal tradition, of the Pharisees (cf. Matt. 16:12; m. Makkot 1:6). On the whole, the Sadducees appear to have interpreted the Mosaic law more literally than did the Pharisees. While they tended to scoff at the scrupulousness of the Pharisees, they themselves were very exacting in matters of Levitical PURITY, doubtless in keeping with their concern for the prestige of the priesthood and the temple ritual. Needless to say, however, the Pharisees regarded the Sadducees as sinners of the worst kind who by their immoral conduct prostituted the sacred ritual of the temple (cf. the Pharisaic PSALMS OF SOLOMON, where the "sinners" spoken of are to be identified with the Sadducees). Turning to specific doctrinal beliefs of the Sadducees, one may begin by looking at what Josephus tells us of their

view of free will and predestination (or Fate, as he calls it, using the Greek concept). Whereas the Pharisees apparently tried to synthesize the two. the ESSENES leaned to the one extreme of attributing all to Fate, while the Sadducees were at the other extreme of attributing all to free will. "They do away with Fate altogether" and throw everything back upon the free will and responsibility of man (Ant. 13.5.9 §173; War 2.8.14 §164). For the Sadducees a person's own decision accounted for his well-being or misfortune. This belief of the Sadducees has rightly been taken as implying a certain feeling of self-sufficiency on their part and a repudiation of any dependence upon divine PROVIDENCE. A second negation further removed from God any effective relevance by arguing that there is no RESURRECTION of the dead, nor any future life whether of bliss or sorrow. For the Sadducean denial of the resurrection of the body, NT evidence is plentiful (cf. Mk. 12:18 – 27 and parallels; Acts 23:8; cf. 4:2). From Josephus we learn that the Sadducees believed that the SOUL perishes with the BODY (Ant. 18.1.4 §16) and therefore can receive neither penalties nor rewards in an afterlife (War 2.8.14 §165). It is immediately obvious how this denial intensified an already this-worldly perspective which the Sadducees had by virtue of their position. If a person must be content with the present life alone, he is bound to capitalize on any present advantages he may enjoy. And this appears, in fact, to have been the practical philosophy of the Sadducees. It may be added that the messianic hope appears to have played no role in the Sadducean perspective. Along with the resurrection and the IMMORTALITY of the soul, the Sadducees appear to have rejected the belief in angels and demons. In contrast to the Pharisees, who held to these doctrines, the Sadducees, we are told, "say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits" (Acts 23:8). The idea of a spiritual world containing elaborate hierarchies of angels and demons flourished particularly in the intertestamental period. This probably gave the Sadducees a basis for rejecting such notions as innovative, although it must be admitted that angels and thus the spiritual world are encountered in the OT—even in the Pentateuch, which for the Sadducees was finally authoritative. See ANGEL; DEMON. The doctrinal stance of the

Sadducees as we have outlined it raises questions concerning their view of the Bible. Are not most of the doctrines the Sadducees rejected to be found within the OT? How then can we explain that the Sadducees rejected them? Confronted with this question, some of the early church fathers (e.g., Hippolytus, Origen, Jerome) concluded that for the Sadducees only the books of Moses were canonical Scripture. At the same period of time the SAMARITAN community held to a canon consisting exclusively of the Pentateuch. However, the Samaritans were only half-Jews, and it is difficult to believe that evidence of the Sadducees' rejection of the non-Mosaic writings would not have been noted either by Josephus or in the NT. Moreover, the church fathers may well have been speculating concerning the answer to the above questions. A more probable solution would seem to lie along the following lines. The Sadducees accepted the CANON OF THE OT commonly received by the Jews, with the one reservation that the authority of the later writings was necessarily subordinate to that of the books of Moses. It was probably the allegedly immoderate development of specific doctrines in the intertestamental period that caused the Sadducees to overreact as they did in denying these doctrines altogether. Their final appeal was doubtless to the Pentateuch, but even here, as we have noted, they were inconsistent. Nor can we deny that their doctrinal views were tempered by the "common sense" of contemporary secular thought, such as it was, in the realms of REVELATION and ESCHATOLOGY. In their reactionary conservatism the Sadducees attempted to capitalize on their selfmade image of themselves as the protectors of the pure and true religious tradition which alone went back to Moses. V. Sadducees in the NT. The Sadducees are referred to by name only in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, and then not very often. To these references may be added those places where the "chief priests" are mentioned, for these were surely of the Sadducean stripe. It must be admitted, however, that by comparison with the Pharisees, the Sadducees seem insignificant in the Gospels. This may be plausibly explained by considering several factors. In the first place, unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees enjoyed the esteem of the masses and professed a special concern for righteousness as manifested in their

careful allegiance to the oral law. This made them natural targets of Jesus. The Sadducees, on the other hand, had influence only among the aristocracy, a segment of society with which Jesus had little to do, and were mainly concerned with their political interests. The Sadducees were, moreover, restricted for the most part to Jerusalem, whereas the Gospels center on the Galilean ministry of Jesus. Early in the gospel narratives, the Sadducees have almost no role to play. They do make an appearance along with the Pharisees at the Jordan, where John castigates them as a "brood of vipers" (Matt. 3:7), but they do not seem to have been particularly interested in the early ministry of Jesus. The next reference to the Sadducees in the chronology of the synoptics occurs when they, again accompanied by the Pharisees, ask Jesus for a "sign from heaven" (16:1). Just after this, Matthew records Jesus' warning concerning the "yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (vv. 6, 11) which is "the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (v. 12). The word "Sadducees" does not occur in the parallels to this passage, although Mark does refer to "the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod" (Mk. 8:15), the latter guite probably referring to the Herodians, who would certainly appear analogous to the Sadducees in many ways. The Matthean passage should not be interpreted to mean that the teaching of the Pharisees was identical to that of the Sadducees. The warning concerns the teaching of each group, which was in its own peculiar way corrupt and contrary to the message of Jesus. The most significant mention of Sadducees in the Gospels concerns an interview with Jesus in Jerusalem, at the end of his ministry, in which they tried to trap Jesus with a crafty question concerning the resurrection (Matt. 22:23 - 33; Mk. 12:18 - 27; Lk. 20:27 - 38). In his answer, Jesus accused them of knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God, and he then proceeded to cite the Pentateuch (Exod. 3:6) in support of the doctrine of the resurrection. The Sadducees appear to have been unconcerned about Jesus early in his career. Only as it became clear that he posed a threat to their security and position (as in his cleansing of the temple; cf. Mk. 11:18) did they begin to become alarmed and decide to take action (cf. Jn. 11:47 - 53). Indeed, confronted with Jesus and his claims, the Sadducees were able to unite with the Pharisees, their

traditional enemies, for the purpose of disposing of Jesus. Both parties collaborated in his arrest and "trial" by the Sanhedrin (Mk. 14:53 - 65). The Sadducees were agitated by the preaching of the apostles in the early church. The book of Acts records that they arrested Peter and John for "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 4:2). Some time later, the Sadducees were "filled with jealousy" at the abundance of signs and wonders wrought by the apostles and arrested them again (5:17). This action of the Sadducees is consistent with both their character and special interests. Josephus, indeed, implicates the Sadducees in the death of JAMES, the half-brother of Jesus (Ant. 20.9.1 §§199 - 200; cf. Acts 12:1 -2). The final reference to the Sadducees in Acts (and in the NT) occurs in the trial of PAUL before the Sanhedrin, where in almost humorous fashion Paul is able to get the Pharisees and Sadducees into an intramural battle on the question of the resurrection, which brings the meeting to an end in a great clamor (Acts 23:6 - 10). The NT evidence, while not of considerable extent, is nonetheless valuable in itself and consistent with the picture of the Sadducees that can be gleaned from the writings of Josephus. It may finally be remarked that the evidence of Jewish oral tradition as codified in the Mishnah and other rabbinic compilations tends on the whole to support that same picture, whether on the Sadducean aversion to Pharisaic scruples (e.g., m. Parah 3:3; Yadayim 4:6 - 7) or concerning the question of life after death (e.g., m. Berakot 9:4). At the same time, the rabbinic literature must be used somewhat judiciously; produced from the later standpoint, it views the Sadducees as heretics and virtual enemies of Israel (cf. m. (Erubin 6:2; m. Niddah 4:2), and thus its references to the Sadducees often are highly polemical. (See further W. O. E. Oesterley, The Jews and Judaism During the Greek Period [1941]; J. Z. Lauterbach, Rabbinic Essays [1951]; T. W. Manson,