

# WESTERN WISDOM BIBLE STUDY

## *THE EPISTLES OF THE DISCIPLES*

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*Saul of Tarsus*

### BACKGROUND AND YOUTH OF SAUL

The names of many illustrious persons have added to the luster of Tarsus of Cilicia, among the most notable being Aratus, the famous astronomical poet, and that exalted Initiate, Apollonius of Tyana, both of whom studied at the celebrated University of Tarsus.

However, despite the eminence of her numerous sons, Tarsus is now chiefly renowned as the home of Saul, the archpersecutor of the Christians, and later the great Initiate Paul who was the foremost advocate and exponent of Christian Mysteries.

According to Jerome, the father of Saul, a strict Pharisee, was driven from his home in Giscula of northern Galilee by civil disturbances. With his family — his wife, a daughter and a son — he found refuge in Tarsus. The family appears to have possessed ample means for providing a comfortable living and the best educational facilities. The year 1 A.D. is given as the most likely date of Saul's birth, making him about five years younger than Jesus. His pious mother dedicated him at birth to the service of God. Although she is said to have passed on during his infancy, her holy ambition was shared and furthered by Saul's father and the young man was prepared to become a rabbi (teacher).

Tent making was a thriving industry in Tarsus. When Saul's school days ended, this was the profession chosen by him in accordance with the custom of his day — for there is an ancient Jewish proverb saying "He who teaches not his son a trade, teaches him to be a thief."

Saul's years in Jerusalem at the rabbinical college, or House of Interpretation, under the tutelage of the celebrated Gamaliel, left its impress upon all his after life. It was said of that great teacher that "from the day when Rabbin Gamaliel died the glory of the Law ceased and purity and abstinence died."

It is presumed that while in Jerusalem Saul lived in the home of his sister, who always remained a strict Pharisee and a bitter opponent of Christianity. She enjoyed high social and religious prestige and was in close touch with the ruling officials.

Saul later returned to Tarsus where he probably continued his philosophical studies at the University. He was preparing himself for permanent residence in Jerusalem, with anticipations of becoming a famous teacher like his beloved Rabbin.

### *Saul and Stephen*

The principal work before the race today is the spiritualization of the mind. The great transforming power that follows upon this achievement is shown in the life of Paul as in no other character, perhaps, in the entire Bible. Paul learned from personal experience the full meaning of his injunction to his disciples, "be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Oftimes a man's most abject failure becomes his greatest stepping stone to success. Peter, after his denial of the Christ, returned to Gethsemane where he found his

higher Self. The stoning of Stephen was the turning point in the career of Saul. In words so full of pathos and contrition, Saul declared, "And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."

Stephen was one of the most illustrious of the followers of the New Way. He was young and possessed intellectual gifts of a superior order. Eloquent, fired with the enthusiasm of Spirit, liberal in his thinking, his words were pregnant with the power and conviction of one who knows whereof he speaks. He and Saul had clashed in controversial debate within the synagogue at Jerusalem, where Stephen's power to attract and hold the attention of multitudes aroused the fury of the Sanhedrin.

"Of Love there be two principal offices: to give and to forgive. Stephen is an excellent pattern of both," wrote Dean Boys.

Stephen, like Saul, came from Silicia. But with this fact their likeness ended. Stephen was tall, slender, beautifully proportioned. He had thick black hair, eyes of a deep blue, features classical in their perfection. Saul was thin, short, frail. He had sand colored hair, pale grey eyes, prominent and unclassical features. Both, however, were earnest and aspiring students, desirous of obtaining eminence as members of the Sanhedrin.

Saul was a mentalist. His mind was keen and logical, his reasoning faculties superb — though he exercised them within a narrow orbit. He believed there was no truth beyond the Torah, no holy temple but the one in Jerusalem, and no people but the Jews with whom Jehvovah communed. Stephen was a mystic and a dreamer. His spirit was ever struggling to break the limiting confines of orthodoxy and touch a Truth that is boundless and universal. With so radical a difference in outlook and temperament, it was but natural that these two young men should become contestants and adversaries from their first meeting.

It has been assumed that Saul and Stephen attended the University of Tarsus at

the same time and that they again met in Jerusalem at the feet of the renowned Gamaliel. It was at this time that Stephen contacted the new religion, which answered so completely the eager aspirations of his spirit that he willingly renounced all worldly advantages to assume the cross of Christian discipleship.

There is a story to the effect that Saul, while a student in Jerusalem, went down to the banks of the Jordan to hear John the Baptist, attracted by curious multitudes who thronged to hear the desert prophet, and that he saw Jesus baptized. Paul's reference to having seen Christ in the flesh is said to be reminiscent of that eventful day.

Immediately upon his conversion, the brilliant talents of Stephen were dedicated to the furtherance of the Christian cause. Stephen and Phillip were probably friends before they became followers of the Way. At any rate, they were close comrades in the work.

Stephen is described as being "full of grace." When the rapid accession of members imposed such a strain upon the Disciples that a committee of seven of their most advanced followers was chosen to assist them, Stephen was the first one appointed and was named leader of the seven.

The keynote of Christ's message, the Universality of God's Fatherhood and the oneness or Brotherhood of Man, found unquestioning response in Stephen's spirit, and upon this glorious theme he made his impassioned defense before the Sanhedrin.

Stephen's oration, as recorded in the Book of Acts, is a golden page in the world's immortal literature. The glory of the Shekinah overshadowed him as he spoke and his face shone like that of an angel. Transported beyond all thought of peril, he was filled with eagerness to share his transcendent vision with others. Before an infuriated mob, headed by the intolerant and scornful Saul of Tarsus shouting anathemas upon him, he stood. His beautiful face was aflame with the light of heaven as he made his final plea, asking nothing for himself but

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remainder to include soup, condiments, seeds, and nuts. Eventually, as the doctor's condition improved, fruit would be added.

"Within ten days to two weeks the majority of the pain disappeared," Dr. Sattilaro reported, and he stopped taking the pain-killer prescription. By December 1978 the doctor "started to show some good signs," but this improvement was reversed when he went off his diet by eating chicken. Pain returned and the feeling of illness remained until he went back on the diet, this time permanently.

The doctor explained: "There was a great temptation to go off the diet. Everything that I knew in terms of my Western training as a physician argued against continuing to pursue this approach. And yet, what was happening was that I basically had never felt better in my whole life, and it had to be attributed to the way I was eating."

Dr. Sattilaro took his own food to social functions and professional affairs, eating it under the sometimes raised eyebrows of his colleagues, who continued to consume their traditional lobster tails and fillet mignon.

Dr. Sattilaro also discontinued — against the advice of his own doctor — the estrogen treatment he had been receiving all along, because he "felt that unless he went off the estrogen treatment he would never fully recover."

"Four months after he had quit the estrogens and 15 months after starting macrobiotics, the bone scan and gamma camera showed Sattilaro was totally free of cancer."

His experience naturally has changed Dr. Sattilaro's outlook about the treatment of cancer and other disease, and he is "attempting to establish a clinic in some way associated with Methodist Hospital that would use diet as a therapy against illness." Even, however, in the fact of Dr. Sattilaro's cure, which stunned his fellow physicians, the wheels of change in cancer treatment no doubt will continue to grind slowly. There are, for instance, "enormous legal problems when physicians break with established medical practices in treating diseases," (!)

such as the problem of calling an expert witness in a malpractice suit.

Patients themselves would be a problem too, said Dr. Sattilaro, in the sense that, although they would be forced to stay on a dietary regimen while in clinic or hospital, there would be no method of enforcing it once they went home to loving families who would want to see them return to familiar, "normal" eating habits. (However, one of the prerequisites of permanent good health is that the individual exercise sufficient will-power to follow the rules of right living, regardless of family or social pressures. Dr. Sattilaro did this when he took his own rice balls to elegant social functions, and surely other patients can do so in the privacy of their own homes if they are sufficiently determined.)

At any rate, we are pleased that this story has received such wide publicity, and we note with interest that Dr. Sattilaro's experience has caused several of his colleagues to modify their own diets and has re-directed their thinking about cancer treatment.

An editor's note to this article suggests that readers desiring further information write to:

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only that they, his persecutors, might see the Light. Then the heavens opened. A host of Angels surrounded Stephen, the Master Jesus with them. With countenance rapt and transfigured, breathing his last prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," the glorified spirit of Stephen passed on to join the Immortals.

How Saul of Tarsus paid in full his debt to Stephen is revealed in the life and works of Paul the Apostle.