

**FUNARI, Pedro Paulo Abreu. *Paulo de Tarso, um apóstolo para as nações*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2013. ISBN: 9788534936293**

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Pedro Paulo Funari and Pedro Lima Vasconcelos are authorities in Historical-biblical themes. Funari, who is from São Paulo, with a large experience and an extensive and uninterrupted academic career since his graduation in History at the University of São Paulo (1981), Master's degree in Social Anthropology (USP, 1985), PhD in Archeology and habilitation in history (UNICAMP, 1996). He has also been a professor at UNESP (Assis, SP) and, since 1992, he holds the chair of Ancient History at UNICAMP. He is also a researcher and teacher working in and out of the country; with dozens of books and hundreds of papers and articles, many of them abroad and has devoted himself to the study of ancient religions, as well as the jewish and christian identities.

Vasconcelos was born in Barra do Piraí (RJ), graduated in Philosophy (UNIFAI, 1992) and Theology (College of Theology Nossa Senhora da Assunção (Our Lady of the Assumption - SP, 1988), Master in Religion Sciences (UMESP, 1994) , Ph.D. in Anthropology (PUC / SP, 2004) and lecturer in Religion Sciences (PUC / SP, 2009). He was professor of theology at the Salesian University Center of São Paulo and currently is professor of philosophy and social sciences at the Federal University of Alagoas and continues to develop researches about Religions and its symbolic outcome.

The authors are very happy about the book, about the life of a character such as Paul of Tarsus and clarify this brief approach. Still, we understand that the text will be very relevant to researchers of all levels, who study the life and work of the most prolific author of the NT, and will also benefit those interested in research on early Christianity.

Although the manuscript results in a small book just over a hundred pages, the bibliography presented is important, including names such as Jeremy Murphy-O'connor, James Dunn, John Dominic Crossan, Jonathan

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L. Reed, Michel Quesnel, Chantal Reynier , among other no less important and still offers a brief chronology, which contemplates singular events, going from the beginning of the Roman Principate to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947.

One detail will not escape the cautious reader is the fact that they argue that Paul lived in a cosmopolitan city, open to both the East and West, in a mixture of cultures; a city of ancient history, more than five thousand years BC, which became a Roman colony by Pompey in the first century BC, and in which the Jewish community was present since the time of Alexander from the Seleucids, distributed throughout the empire and even elsewhere (p. 29).

The authors understand that most people of Greek language, both the name Saul and Paul were strangers. However, we observe that, since all these contexts exist, one could not be surprised by the presence of names neither in Latin nor Hebrew in these regions. If we recall the examples of the invasions suffered by the Jews, taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 BCE and by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, we find the presence of Jews in other nations (in these cases, forcibly) it was the reality. And even in the so-called interbiblical period, between the writing of Malachi and the New Testament, many Jewish communities were established in every region of the present Middle East and the Mediterranean, even before the time of Alexander and the later Seleucids.

In the New Testament, the author of the book of Acts, writing about Pentecost argues that there were in Jerusalem, on this occasion, Jews from many different nationalities: Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the province of Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism; Cretans and Arabs (Acts 2: 9-11). In turn, the apostle Peter will write to the Judeo-Christian communities scattered in the Point, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia and Asia Minor (1 Pet. 1.2). And James also will write his letter to the Twelve Tribes scattered among the nations (James 1: 1). Thus we understand that the presence of Jews was a reality throughout the world at that time, which naturally included the Tarsus of Cilicia<sup>2</sup>, Paul's native city.

Thus, we assume Jewish and Latin names were to some extent commonplace in those regions. The Jews due to the nature of this people,

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<sup>2</sup> JEREMIAS, Joachim. *Jerusalém nos tempos de Jesus*. Tradução de M. Cecília de M. Duprat. São Paulo: Ed. Paulinas, 1983. 95 p.

which had always been scattered and almost nomadic; the Latins because of the Roman presence, not only because the region was under Roman rule, but also because Tarsus was a cosmopolitan city where the most varied cultures were appreciated by its inhabitants, accustomed to reading poets and philosophers, Latins and Greeks. The geographer Strabo, in the early years of the first century of the Christian age writes that the people of Tarsus were eager for cultural activities; devoting themselves to the study of philosophy, the arts, and of every learning<sup>3</sup>

The authors discuss it was difficult to imagine Saul (as he is mention in the book), persecutor of the incipient Christian movement and follower of Gamaliel, at the same time (p. We understand that this Pauline attitude reflected much of his behavior. He, who was relatively young at the time, was driven on the one hand by religious radicalism and, on the other, Gamaliel's Pharisaic scholarship and piety.

For some reasons we see the motivation that drove the young Saul to radicalism goes against the arguments of the authors. Perhaps, being young (Acts 7.58) reminds us that it is young people who, motivated by more radical ideologies, usually carry out the most exaggerated actions.

Another element is related to what Saul himself will later write "*that knowledge is puffed up, but love edifies*". In other words, his youth, bound up with the knowledge he had, could have made him proud (as is his academicism) and also full of personal interests, so that being in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel was the dream of any young man who had a religious purpose, as Saul's case. And who knows, if he had no interest in becoming Gamaliel's own successor?

The writers also tried to explain the reason why the apostles of Jerusalem set out to visit communities founded by Paul. According to their arguments, these visits were intended to circumcise the new converted to Christianity. Actually, there are in Galatia those who allowed themselves to be circumcised, but it is not clear from the biblical passages that the apostles of Jerusalem did. What Paul mean in his text is that those who let themselves be circumcised should observe the entire Law of Moses (Gal. 5: 3).

Marcian, from the second century, is quoted as one who tried to distort Christianity by arguing that the OT God was not the Father of Jesus Christ, thereby rejecting the whole Old Testament and adding to the NT texts, considered apostolic, but essentially inconsistent and contradictory

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<sup>3</sup> STRABO. ed. H. L. JONES. *The Geography of Strabo*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd. 1924.

(p.89). According to them, since Marcion, texts that were taken as Paulines were added, to reject the Marist teachings. So, what we have in the New Testament as letters written by Paul, not all of them can thus be considered.

However, it would be important, as we reckon, to cover another part of the discussion regarding on autographs, since there are arguments by theologians and historians who admit the Pauline authenticity of thirteen letters present in the NT. These are based on the fact that from the first to the early nineteenth century Pauline authorship was universally accepted, and it was only from the beginning of the eighteenth century that German scholars like Baur, Barth<sup>4</sup>, Houlden<sup>5</sup> and others began to question the authenticity of some of his letters.

To quote only one of them, in the letter to the Ephesians - some of these historians claim that Paul's own vocabulary, style, and content does not appear there, nor the apostle's favorite words can be found in this letter<sup>6</sup>. Already, for those who support the Pauline authenticity of the letter, the arguments of the Germans are quite subjective, since Paul has a very creative mind, being able to transit through varied styles, rich vocabulary; and that, different themes require different words and changed circumstances require its own vocabulary<sup>7</sup>.

Thus, scholars who claim the letters contain in the New Testament are authentically Pauline are worth by its singular style used in the writing of the document, the erudition in the letters, and recurrent theological aspects<sup>8</sup>. The Anglican theologian, the British John Stott, in his arguments states that:

(...) ancient view that these letters are authentically Pauline refuse to fade. During the twentieth century a vigorous defense was mounted by scholars, both evangelicals and Catholics, among which stand out Newport JD White (1910), Walter Lock (1924), Joachim Jeremiah (1934), C. Spicq (1947), EK Simpson (1954), Donald Guthrie (1957), William Hendricksen (1957), JND Kelly (1963), Gordon D. Fee (1984), Thomas C. Oden (1989), George W. Knight (1994).

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<sup>4</sup> BARTH, Markus. *The broken wall: a study of epistle of Ephesians*. United Kingdom: Collins, 1960. 12 p.

<sup>5</sup> HOULDEN, J. H. *The Pelican New Testament Commentaries*. Paul's Letters from prison: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians. London: 1970. 235 p.

<sup>6</sup> HOULDEN, J. H. *The Pelican New Testament Commentaries*. Paul's Letters from prison: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians. London: 1970. 106 p.

<sup>7</sup> STOTT, John. R. W. *A mensagem de Efésios*. São Paulo: ABU Editora; 5ª edição. 2 p.

<sup>8</sup> STOTT, *Ibidem*.

While the arguments against Pauline authenticity go through historical, linguistic, theological and ethical<sup>9</sup>.

It must be remembered, the quotations above, even though confessional, are from theological researchers, philosophers, and historians who seek to understand the Scriptures better and thus bring to light their research to enable such discussions. Moreover, regardless of point of view, all the documents present in the NT have historical authenticity and authority.

At long last, this book is highly commended, by its thorough research in the history of this fundamental NT character, they help us understanding the important details their origin, of their determination, especially after their conversion to Christianity. Efforts like these have contributed for having such a fundamental framework of historical-biblical knowledge, which helps us to piece together what is so dear to us and, at the same time, far from us. Thus, we are grateful to the copies of this book hand in, which broaden the discussion and enrich the debate, which endures.

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<sup>9</sup> STOTT, John. R. W. *A mensagem de I Timóteo e Tito*. Tradução de Milton Azevedo de Andrade. São Paulo: ABU Editora, 2004. 16 p.