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Review

Sindo, Vuyani Stanley, *Paul as a Prototype and Entrepreneur of Christian Identity: an Investigation into Leadership and Identity in 1 Corinthians 1-4*. Carlisle: Langham Publishing, 2024. ISBN 9781839739699, 322 pp.

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Paul as a Prototype and Entrepreneur of Christian Identity is a revision of Vuyani Sindo's PhD dissertation. The book examines the connection between leadership and identity with a particular focus on 1 Corinthians 1-4. By integrating social identity theory, a social scientific approach, and a historical critical grammatical approach, Sindo skilfully examines the 'how and why of Paul's leadership patterns' in shaping Christian identity in Corinth (13). Sindo particularly describes Paul as an entrepreneur of Christian identity who uses 'in Christ' and 'calling' idiom as a strategic tool to re-establish his authority and unify the divided church in Corinth. The book is structured into six chapters, appendixes, and a comprehensive bibliography.

The first chapter serves as the introductory stage for the dissertation structured to move from a broad problem statement to a specific research hypothesis, and includes the aims, motivations, and contributions of the study. The chapter highlights the existing gap by noting that modern leadership studies are anthropocentric (human-centred), focusing on leader's influence and competence. Sindo argues that the anthropocentric model of leadership is 'foreign to Paul's understanding of leadership, which is theocentric (God-centred)' (4) that seeks to emphasize God's role. The chapter aligns Pauline communal identity and the African philosophy of Ubuntu, noting that the African understanding of identity provides a helpful lens for understanding Paul's group-based leadership model. Sindo suggests that his African

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contribution will be implicit but since his work aims to contribute to leadership studies in terms of African experience, it would be better if his contribution was more explicit, particularly by utilising the philosophy of Ubuntu in the analytical sections of his work.

In chapter two, Sindo offers a comprehensive outline of his methodology in order to address objections regarding the use of a social scientific approach and social identity theory in New Testament studies. The chapter defines each approach and examines the pros and cons of each. Sindo evaluates the critiques against the use of social-scientific approaches to biblical studies, and acknowledges the anachronistic tendencies (i.e. imposing modern worldviews to first-century contexts) when using social-scientific approaches. To overcome the danger of anachronism, Sindo offers an incorporation of socio-historical approach.

In chapter three, Sindo carefully investigates the historical and literary context of 1 Corinthians to avoid the danger of anachronism. Sindo evaluates the social environment of Corinth during the community's inception and its subsequent development after Paul's departure. This assessment includes the pre-existing identities of Roman-Corinth, and the factors that might have resulted in the rejection of Paul's leadership by some. In doing so, Sindo frames the causes of the problems in Corinth with identity issues— 'their continuing identification with their previous identities' (150), and thus, their failure to reconcile with their new identity in-Christ.

Chapter four focuses on how Paul establishes his legitimacy as a leader by presenting himself as a group prototype whose life and ministry embody in-Christ identity. Sindo specifies that when he labels Paul as a 'prototype', he is describing the apostle's self-perception as a leader who embodied group norms and values, rather than the idea of 'archetype'— 'an original model on which something is patterned' (163). Sindo argues that the primary issue in Corinth was a fundamental identity crisis regarding where the believers derived their sense of social belonging. Thus, Paul presents his apostleship and his evangelical strategy as a typical example of the group's values, thereby making himself the prototype of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The chapter also links prototypicality with the ancient mimesis (imitation) tradition

where Paul calls the Corinthians to imitate him not to exert power, but to provide a visible prototypical example of how to live out their new identity.

Chapter five presents a detailed exegesis of 1 Corinthians 1-4 with a particular emphasis on 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, which Sindo sees as the tone-setter for the entire letter. A significant portion of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of 'in-Christ' and 'calling' idioms as key terminologies to manage the group social identity through consensualisation (a common psychological process that focuses on the effort to reach a consensus within a group) where Paul frames his argument around the group shared spiritual foundations. In this chapter, Sindo also includes the 'sibling language' as a third identity descriptor Paul used to reshape the community; however it is not developed throughout the dissertation. The chapter also highlights that Paul's use of the term 'calling' has both theological and social implications: it emphasises God's initiative in forming the community, and it functions as a social boundary marker that distinguishes believers from the out-group.

Finally, chapter six offers a comprehensive summary and the study findings. The author suggests that the 'in-Christ' and 'calling' terminologies can help counter divisive political rhetoric that underscore racial differences. Sindo notes that most leadership studies are dominated by anthropocentric attitude because of western (particularly American) influence; however, to offer a theocentric approach, Sindo relies heavily on social identity theory, which can also be seen a western psychological construct. The framework Sindo uses to deconstruct the western approach can be critiqued for being a product of western model. Thus, a more explicit employment of the philosophy of Ubuntu alongside social identity theory, would have offered a more uniquely African contribution.

Nevertheless, in the factional society in which we are living, which is similar to the church of Corinth, Sindo's work serves as a remarkable resource that can serve as a tool to understand the challenges in leadership and identity. Sindo offered a powerful blueprint for the contemporary church, which is facing a leadership and identity crisis. Sindo also opens the door to further additional dialogue regarding the use of social identity theory in New Testament studies and in leadership studies in general. Students, scholars, and church leaders who are particularly interested in the applicability of social identity theory to

New Testament studies, identity, and leadership issues will benefit from this exceptional work.