

**Conversion as Apostolicity: Cross-cultural Transmission,
Appropriation, and the Historical Continuity of the Faith**

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Group*

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This paper examines the relationship between conversion and apostolicity. It queries whether contemporary ecumenical approaches to apostolicity and the church's historical continuity might identify conversion with enculturation into a particular framework.

Ecumenical solutions to the problem of apostolicity avoid the issue of episcopal office by linking the language of mission to the nature of the community. The witness of the community derives from its being a particular type of culture. Office reenters the discussion as a fruit of and necessary to the type of culture basic to the church's witness.

While this may satisfy elements of the ecumenical problem, apostolicity is linked to this culture and its historical continuity. When it comes to 'diversity' and the cross-cultural engagement, cultural continuity sets the conditions for the faith's transmission. Conversion, by extension, is conceived in relation to this culture.

Against this position, the paper draws on developments within the study of world Christianity. Rather than conceiving apostolicity as the historical continuity of an ordered culture, conversion as the faith's

appropriation is itself basic to questions of historical continuity. Conversion structures the church, and with this the church apostolic is both contextual and polycentric.