AUTHENTIC CONVERSION:
becoming who we are created to be

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Abstract:
Conversion to Christianity in Australia today can be understood as resulting from non-
Christians desiring, observing and experiencing genuine authenticity. Drawing on qualitative
data from semi-structured interviews with recent converts to Christianity, this paper
demonstrates first that religious conversion is fuelled by a desire for authenticity. Secondly,
religious conversion is resourced by Christians who embrace and exhibit authenticity in their
personal, social and spiritual lives. Thirdly, God enables authenticity to develop and flourish.
Influenced by Charles Taylor and aspects of Trinitarian theology, the paper argues that this
genuine authenticity is relational in nature: focusing not (just) on the self but also on
relationship with God and significant connection with, and responsibility toward, others. This
understanding rightly challenges the notion of authenticity as a narcissistic actualisation that
prioritises the self over external relationships and responsibilities. When relational
authenticity is sought and realised by converts, healthy transformation results. This
transformation sees new converts ‘becoming’ the people they were created to be: unique
persons who see their worth and their responsibilities in the light of their relationships with
God and with others.

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