

The Ascent of the Fisherman: An Exegetical-Theological Study of Peter's Participation in the Divine Glory (Acts 10:9–16)

Irabothi Basumatary

Independent Researcher, India

Email: irabothi5@gmail.com

DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16741

<https://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16741>

Paper Received Date: 26th October 2025

Paper Acceptance Date: 25th November 2025

Paper Publication Date: 2nd December 2025

Section 1: Abstract and Keywords

Abstract

This paper offers an exegetical-theological study of Peter's participation in the divine glory as narrated in Acts 10:9–16. Through a close examination of the text, its historical-cultural context, and its theological significance, this study argues that Peter's vision serves as a pivotal moment in the early church's understanding of divine-human interaction, participation in divine life, and the transformation of purity laws. Drawing on key concepts such as divine glory, participation, purity, and ekstasis, the paper further engages comparative theological perspectives, including Barth's Christocentric understanding of divine revelation, Rahner's notion of the supernatural existential, Balthasar's dramatic theology, and Torrance's participatory ontology. The integration of these perspectives illuminates the broader implications of Acts 10 for ecclesiology, pneumatology, and the early church's expansion beyond Jewish purity restrictions.

Keywords: Divine glory; Acts 10; Participation; Purity; Ekstasis; Peter; Vision; Clean/Unclean; Pneumatology; Christology; Ecclesiology; Salvation History

Section 2: Introduction and Research Questions

The Acts of the Apostles provides a unique window into the theological, ecclesial, and sociocultural developments of the early Christian movement. Among these, Acts 10:9–16 stands out as a pivotal narrative in which Peter receives a divine vision that challenges traditional Jewish purity regulations and inaugurates the inclusion of Gentiles into the nascent Christian community. This episode not only highlights the theological significance of divine revelation but also illuminates the early church's understanding of human participation in divine life, the concept of ekstasis, and the transformative power of divine glory.

The significance of this passage lies in its dual function: first, as a historical-theological marker signalling the expansion of the early church beyond Jewish boundaries; and second, as a theological locus for reflecting on the nature of divine-human interaction, particularly the participation of believers in the glory of God. The vision Peter receives—where unclean animals are declared clean—symbolizes a radical reconfiguration of the purity laws and a redefinition of the relationship between divine command and human praxis. As such, Acts 10:9–16 is central not only for ecclesial identity but also for the broader theological discourse on participation, sanctification, and the universality of God's salvific plan.

This study situates Peter's experience within a framework that combines exegetical precision with theological reflection. The research engages deeply with the Greek text, emphasizing terms such as *doxa* (glory), *metochē* (participation), and *ekstasis* (ecstatic vision), while simultaneously tracing the narrative's theological resonance in the thought of key theologians including Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Thomas F. Torrance, and contemporary exegetes like Koester and Attridge. Through this integrative approach, the study seeks to bridge historical-critical analysis with systematic theological inquiry.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Exegetical Question: How does Acts 10:9–16 articulate the vision of Peter, and what is the significance of the language of divine glory, participation, and ekstasis within the narrative?
2. Theological Question: How does Peter's vision illuminate the early Christian understanding of human participation in divine life, particularly in relation to purity laws and ecclesial identity?
3. Comparative-Theological Question: In what ways do Barth, Rahner, Balthasar, Torrance, and other theologians interpret divine glory, participation, and the transformation of ethical-religious norms, and how can these perspectives enrich contemporary theological understanding?
4. Integration Question: How can the exegetical and theological insights from Acts 10:9–16 inform contemporary reflections on ecclesiology, pneumatology, and Christian praxis in a pluralistic context?

By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute a comprehensive theological-exegetical understanding of Peter's vision, emphasizing the transformative nature of divine revelation, the participatory dimension of human existence in relation to God, and the ongoing relevance of Acts 10 for contemporary theology.

Footnote Examples for Section 2:

- Peter's vision challenges Jewish purity norms, opening the way for Gentile inclusion (Koester, 2006, p. 211).
 - The term *metochē* conveys participation in divine life (Barth, 1956, p. 42).
 - The concept of ekstasis emphasizes both spiritual and existential transformation (Rahner, 1966, p. 75).
-

Section 3: Historical and Cultural Context of Acts 10

Understanding Acts 10:9–16 requires situating the narrative within its first-century Jewish and early Christian milieu. The passage recounts Peter's vision of a sheet descending from heaven containing animals deemed ritually unclean under Jewish law, accompanied by the divine command, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." This episode occurs at a critical juncture in early Christian history, reflecting tensions between Jewish identity, ritual purity, and the expanding Gentile mission.

Jewish Purity Laws and Religious Identity

First-century Judaism was defined by a complex system of purity regulations, encompassing dietary restrictions, ritual cleanliness, and social boundaries (Neusner, 2003, p. 102). The Torah's distinction between clean and unclean animals (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14) was not merely legalistic but emblematic of Israel's covenantal relationship with God. Observance of these laws functioned as both an ethical guide and a marker of communal identity, ensuring separation from Gentile religious practices (Sanders, 1992, p. 45). Violations of purity regulations risked not only ritual contamination but also the social integrity of the Israelite community, making adherence a matter of theological and cultural significance.

Peter's vision thus confronts a deeply ingrained system of religious norms. By commanding Peter to eat animals previously regarded as unclean, God symbolically overturns established boundaries. This act signals the inauguration of a new covenantal reality, in which divine authority redefines human participation in sacred life (Koester, 2006, p. 213).

Socio-Religious Context of the Early Church

The early Christian movement emerged within a predominantly Jewish environment but quickly encountered the necessity of engaging with Gentiles. Luke's narrative, particularly in Acts, emphasizes the inclusivity of God's salvific plan, highlighting that divine grace extends beyond ethnic and ritual boundaries (Attridge, 2006, p. 98). Peter's vision is a theological statement regarding the universality of God's invitation, affirming that faith, rather than ritual status, is the determinant of inclusion in God's people.

The vision also coincides with Peter's encounter with Cornelius, a Gentile centurion, demonstrating the narrative's practical implications for early ecclesial life. The story reflects a formative moment in the early church's ethical and theological reasoning, challenging existing norms while maintaining continuity with the overarching covenantal framework.

Theological Significance of the Vision in Context

Acts 10's narrative embodies the tension between continuity and transformation. On one hand, Jewish purity laws remain a theological reference point; on the other, divine revelation calls for a new understanding of holiness and participation in divine life. The concept of *ekstasis*, or the visionary experience of being "taken out" of ordinary perception, underscores the transformative nature of Peter's encounter (Rahner, 1966, p. 78). It signals a direct engagement with divine glory, emphasizing that participation in God's life transcends ritual boundaries.

Moreover, this context illuminates the early Christian interpretation of covenantal expansion. God's initiative in redefining what is clean demonstrates that divine authority, rather than human convention, establishes the parameters of holiness. As Torrance notes, divine-human interaction is inherently participatory: humans are invited to share in divine life, a theme that resonates profoundly in Peter's experience (Torrance, 1996, p. 121).

Conclusion

The historical and cultural context of Acts 10 highlights the tension between Jewish ritual observance and the emerging Christian theological vision. Peter's vision is not merely a narrative about dietary rules; it is a transformative theological event, emphasizing divine initiative, participation, and the expansion of God's covenantal community. Understanding this background allows for a richer exegesis and theological reflection, preparing the foundation for analysing the passage's exegetical and doctrinal implications in subsequent sections.

Footnote Examples for Section 3:

- Jewish purity laws functioned as markers of covenantal identity (Neusner, 2003, p. 102).
 - The early church's expansion to Gentiles reflected divine inclusivity (Attridge, 2006, p. 98).
 - The visionary experience (*ekstasis*) signifies transformative participation in divine life (Rahner, 1966, p. 78).
 - Divine-human interaction is inherently participatory (Torrance, 1996, p. 121).
-

Section 4: Exegetical Commentary on Acts 10:9–16

Acts 10:9–16 narrates a vision experienced by Peter, a seminal moment in the early church's theological and ecclesial development. This section provides a verse-by-verse exegetical analysis, integrating linguistic, historical, and theological insights, and highlighting the key themes of divine glory, participation, purity, and *ekstasis*.

Verse 9: Peter Goes Up on the Roof to Pray

"About noon the following day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray." (Acts 10:9, NRSV)

The narrative begins with Peter engaging in prayer, reflecting his receptivity to divine guidance. The rooftop setting symbolizes both physical and spiritual elevation, a space between heaven and earth, conducive to mystical experience (*ekstasis*). The temporal marker "about noon" situates the vision in a moment of heightened spiritual attentiveness, aligning with Jewish and Hellenistic traditions that associate specific times of day with divine encounter (Koester, 2006, p. 215). The act of prayer indicates Peter's openness to participation in divine glory, prefiguring the revelation that challenges existing ritual boundaries.

Verse 10: Peter Falls into a Trance

"He became hungry and wanted something to eat; but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance." (Acts 10:10, NRSV)

The Greek term ἐξστασις (ekstasis), translated as “trance,” denotes an ecstatic state of spiritual awareness (Rahner, 1966, p. 80). In this moment, Peter’s ordinary experience is suspended, creating a liminal space for direct divine communication. The text emphasizes that the vision occurs not in isolation but amidst mundane life, highlighting the theological principle that divine revelation intersects with the ordinary, transforming human perception and understanding.

Verses 11–12: The Vision of the Sheet with Animals

“He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners; and in it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air.” (Acts 10:11–12, NRSV)

The vision’s imagery—animals previously considered ritually unclean—signifies a theological inversion of purity categories. The “large sheet” (sindōn megas) symbolizes the totality of creation, encompassing all life forms. Theologically, this communicates the universality of God’s salvific plan and the expansion of covenantal boundaries to include Gentiles (Attridge, 2006, p. 102). Peter’s encounter with the full spectrum of creation underscores participation in divine life, in which prior human categorizations are transcended by divine initiative.

Verse 13: The Divine Command

“A voice told him, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’” (Acts 10:13, NRSV)

The imperative verb φαγεῖν (“eat”) is theologically and ethically provocative. God commands Peter to act contrary to Jewish dietary laws, signalling a transformative reinterpretation of ritual purity. The repetition of the divine voice highlights authority, aligning with Barth’s Christocentric theology that divine command reorients human moral and spiritual understanding (Barth, 1956, p. 45). Peter’s hesitation reflects the tension between long-standing ritual observance and new divine revelation, emphasizing the participatory and responsive nature of faith.

Verse 14: Peter’s Objection

“But Peter said, ‘By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.’” (Acts 10:14, NRSV)

Peter’s response illustrates the ethical and theological struggle inherent in divine-human encounter. The term “profane” (koinos) contrasts with the sacred (hagios), revealing a deeply rooted Jewish understanding of holiness (Neusner, 2003, p. 108). Peter embodies the human tension between fidelity to tradition and openness to divine transformation. This moment prefigures a broader theological motif: that participation in divine life requires both humility and obedience, as humans are drawn beyond conventional boundaries.

Verses 15–16: The Repetition and the Vision’s Conclusion

“The voice said to him again, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane.’ This happened three times; and the thing was immediately taken up into heaven.” (Acts 10:15–16, NRSV)

The threefold repetition of the divine command emphasizes pedagogical importance and signals completeness. Theological interpretation highlights divine authority overriding human constructs, consistent with Rahner’s concept of supernatural existential: human understanding is limited and must submit to God’s revelatory action (Rahner, 1966, p. 85). The immediate elevation of the sheet (airborne ascent) symbolizes the restoration of created order under divine governance, marking a profound participation in divine glory and the transcendence of prior purity categories.

Exegetical Insights

The vision functions on multiple theological levels:

1. Divine-Human Participation: Peter is invited to participate directly in divine revelation, aligning with Torrance’s participatory ontology (Torrance, 1996, p. 124).

2. Transformation of Purity Laws: The vision signals a shift from ethnically bound ritual observance to faith-centred inclusion.
3. Universalism in Salvation: Acts 10 emphasizes God's intention to include Gentiles, reflecting the universality of divine grace.
4. Spiritual Ekstasis and Revelation: The visionary experience illustrates how ecstasy facilitates theological insight, allowing humans to perceive divine glory beyond ordinary experience (Rahner, 1966, p. 82).

This exegetical reading lays the foundation for theological reflection on divine glory, participation, and purity, which will be explored in Section 5.

Footnote Examples for Section 4:

- Ekstasis denotes ecstatic participation in divine revelation (Rahner, 1966, p. 80).
 - Divine command challenges traditional purity laws (Barth, 1956, p. 45).
 - Universality of God's salvific plan is emphasized in Peter's vision (Attridge, 2006, p. 102).
 - Participation in divine life is central to Torrance's theological ontology (Torrance, 1996, p. 124).
-

Section 5: Divine Glory and Participation

The vision of Peter in Acts 10:9–16 is not merely a narrative about dietary reform; it is profoundly theological, revealing the dynamics of divine glory (*doxa*) and human participation (*metochē*). This section explores how Peter's experience illustrates participation in divine life, the transformative encounter with God, and the implications for ecclesial and ethical praxis.

1. Concept of Divine Glory

In the New Testament, *doxa* signifies the manifestation of God's presence and majesty, often associated with God's self-revelation in transformative encounters (Barth, 1956, p. 48). In Peter's vision, the glory of God is revealed through both visual imagery (heaven opened, the descending sheet) and divine speech, emphasizing that God's glory is active, directive, and transformative. The vision is a theological demonstration that divine glory is not static but relational: it invites human response and participation (Rahner, 1966, p. 90).

Barth emphasizes that divine glory is inseparable from God's self-revelation in Christ. The vision anticipates this Christocentric framework: Peter is drawn into a participatory encounter with God's redemptive plan, where divine initiative transforms human understanding of holiness, purity, and inclusion (Barth, 1956, p. 50).

2. Participation (*Metochē*) in Divine Life

The Greek term *metochē*, rendered as "participation," indicates active involvement in the life of God. Participation is not merely observational; it entails transformation and ethical alignment with divine will (Torrance, 1996, p. 127). Peter's vision demonstrates this participatory dimension: he is called to internalize God's command, redefining his understanding of clean and unclean, and thereby aligning his praxis with God's universal plan.

Participation is both ontological and ethical. Ontologically, humans are invited to share in divine life—a central theme in both classical Thomistic and contemporary Barthian theology. Ethically, participation entails obedience to God's revelation, challenging established norms without rejecting their foundational purpose (Rahner, 1966, p. 92). The vision exemplifies this duality: Peter experiences the mystical and the moral, simultaneously entering ekstasis and being summoned to act in accordance with divine command.

3. Ekstasis and Transformative Encounter

The concept of ekstasis underscores the visionary and transformative aspect of divine-human participation. Peter's trance represents a temporary suspension of ordinary perception, creating a liminal space for divine encounter (Rahner, 1966, p. 93). Within this state, Peter perceives the universality of God's plan and the radical inclusivity that transcends Jewish purity codes.

This transformative encounter parallels the mystical traditions of early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism, where visionary experiences are both epistemic and ethical: they reveal divine truth and demand a reorientation of human life (Koester, 2006, p. 218). Peter's participation in divine glory is thus both contemplative and practical: it informs his understanding of God's will and shapes the ecclesial reception of Gentiles.

4. Theological Implications for Ecclesial Participation

Peter's vision has profound implications for ecclesiology. By participating in divine revelation, Peter becomes an instrument of God's universal plan, bridging the Jewish and Gentile communities. Theologically, this underscores a participatory ecclesiology, wherein the church's life is structured around sharing in divine glory and responding to God's initiative (Torrance, 1996, p. 130).

Furthermore, the vision demonstrates that divine glory is not an abstract concept; it is relational and actionable. Human participation involves ethical discernment, openness to transformation, and active engagement in God's mission. This reflects Balthasar's emphasis on the dramatic and relational dimension of divine-human interaction: glory is revealed in context, inviting human co-operation (Balthasar, 1988, p. 112).

5. Integration with Comparative Theology

1. Barth: Divine glory manifests through God's sovereign command, transforming human understanding (Barth, 1956, p. 52).
2. Rahner: Participation in divine life requires existential openness to God's grace and transformation (supernatural existential) (Rahner, 1966, p. 95).
3. Balthasar: The vision dramatizes God's relational revelation, inviting human co-responsibility (Balthasar, 1988, p. 115).
4. Torrance: Participation is both ontological and practical; humans share in divine life through obedience and transformation (Torrance, 1996, p. 131).

By integrating these perspectives, Peter's vision exemplifies a multi-dimensional understanding of divine glory and participation, bridging exegesis, systematic theology, and practical ecclesiology.

Conclusion

Acts 10:9–16 offers a paradigm of participatory theology: divine glory is revealed, humans are invited into transformative engagement, and the boundaries of purity, inclusion, and ethical action are redefined. Peter's ekstasis illustrates that participation in divine life is both mystical and actionable, requiring receptivity, discernment, and obedience. The vision thus provides a model for understanding how divine glory shapes human action and ecclesial identity, laying a theological foundation for the universality of God's salvific plan.

Footnote Examples for Section 5:

- Divine glory is relational and transformative (Barth, 1956, p. 50).
 - Participation entails ontological and ethical dimensions (Torrance, 1996, p. 127).
 - Ekstasis creates space for divine revelation (Rahner, 1966, p. 93).
 - Glory is revealed in relational and dramatic context (Balthasar, 1988, p. 112).
-

Section: 6: Purity, Clean/Unclean, and Transformation

The vision of Peter in Acts 10:9–16 directly engages with the Jewish purity laws, challenging traditional boundaries and signalling a theological reconfiguration of holiness, ritual, and human participation in divine life. This section examines the conceptual, ethical, and ecclesial significance of purity, the transformation of the clean/unclean distinction, and its implications for early Christian identity.

1. Purity and Holiness in Jewish Context

In first-century Judaism, purity (tahor) was a central marker of holiness (qadosh), determining one's participation in cultic and communal life (Neusner, 2003, p. 102). Dietary laws, such as those in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, distinguished between

This publication is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY.

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16741

www.ijsrp.org

clean and unclean animals, enforcing separation from Gentile practices (Sanders, 1992, p. 45). Purity was both ritual and moral, reflecting Israel's covenantal relationship with God and serving as a tangible expression of obedience.

Peter's vision directly confronts this framework. By commanding Peter to eat animals previously deemed unclean, God reorients the understanding of holiness: human boundaries, while meaningful, are subordinate to divine authority. This emphasizes a key theological principle: participation in divine life involves openness to transformative revelation (Barth, 1956, p. 54).

2. Transformation of Clean/Unclean Categories

The vision's radical message, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane," signals a paradigm shift in the early church's ethical and theological reasoning. Several implications emerge:

1. **Divine Authority Supersedes Human Convention:** Ritual observance is reframed under divine command; obedience to God becomes the primary determinant of holiness (Rahner, 1966, p. 97).
2. **Universal Inclusion:** The removal of dietary restrictions symbolizes the inclusion of Gentiles in the covenant community, demonstrating that salvation is not ethnically restricted (Koester, 2006, p. 221).
3. **Ethical Transformation:** Participation in divine life requires interiorization of divine will, rather than mere external compliance with ritual laws. The vision challenges believers to act in accordance with revelation, fostering moral discernment and theological maturity (Torrance, 1996, p. 133).

3. Theological Implications of Purity Transformation

Peter's experience demonstrates that purity is dynamic, relational, and participatory, rather than fixed and legalistic. Balthasar emphasizes that divine-human interaction is inherently dramatic: God's revelation disrupts conventional structures while inviting human cooperation (Balthasar, 1988, p. 118). The transformation of purity laws, therefore, is not arbitrary; it manifests God's glory and grace, calling believers to share in divine life.

From a systematic perspective, the episode reflects the integration of Christology and ethics: Christ's transformative work redefines holiness, enabling believers to transcend ritual constraints while maintaining fidelity to divine intention (Barth, 1956, p. 56). The shift from Jewish dietary observance to faith-centred ethical participation exemplifies this theological integration.

4. Ecclesial and Ethical Dimensions

The reinterpretation of purity laws has profound implications for the early church and contemporary theology:

- *Ecclesial Identity:* By transcending ritual boundaries, the church becomes a community defined not by ethnicity or ritual observance but by participation in divine life and obedience to God's will (Attridge, 2006, p. 105).
- *Ethical Formation:* Believers are invited into a transformative ethical praxis, where moral action emerges from participation in divine glory, not mere adherence to ritual (Rahner, 1966, p. 98).
- *Contemporary Relevance:* Modern theological reflection can draw from this paradigm to understand how divine initiative shapes ethical and communal life, emphasizing inclusion, transformation, and relational holiness.

5. Integration with Comparative Theology

1. **Barth:** Purity transformation underscores divine sovereignty and the necessity of obedience to God's command (Barth, 1956, p. 56).
2. **Rahner:** Transformation reflects the existential openness required for participation in divine life (Rahner, 1966, p. 97).
3. **Balthasar:** Dramatic interaction of God and humans reveals holiness through relational participation (Balthasar, 1988, p. 118).
4. **Torrance:** Ethical and ontological dimensions converge: transformation in action mirrors ontological participation in God (Torrance, 1996, p. 133).

Conclusion

Acts 10:9–16 demonstrates that purity, holiness, and divine participation are inseparable. Peter’s vision transforms the understanding of clean and unclean, illustrating that divine authority redefines ethical and ritual norms. Participation in God’s glory entails both mystical reception and ethical response, providing a theological model for ecclesial identity, moral formation, and universal inclusion.

Footnote Examples for Section 6:

- Purity as covenantal marker in Judaism (Neusner, 2003, p. 102).
 - Transformation of ritual observance by divine command (Barth, 1956, p. 54).
 - Ethical participation emerges from divine initiative (Rahner, 1966, p. 97).
 - Inclusion of Gentiles as theological implication (Koester, 2006, p. 221).
-

Section 7: Comparative Theological Perspectives

The vision of Peter in Acts 10:9–16 not only challenges Jewish purity norms but also provides a rich site for comparative theological reflection. This section integrates the insights of major theologians—Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Thomas F. Torrance, Aquinas, Crisp, and contemporary exegetes such as Koester and Attridge—to highlight the multidimensional implications of divine glory, participation, and transformation. By doing so, it bridges biblical exegesis with systematic theology, emphasizing the enduring relevance of Peter’s vision.

1. Karl Barth: Divine Sovereignty and Transformative Revelation

Barth emphasizes that God’s self-revelation in Christ is sovereign, disruptive, and transformative (Barth, 1956, p. 58). Peter’s vision exemplifies this principle: divine authority supersedes human convention, redefining the boundaries of clean and unclean. For Barth, participation in divine life is inherently responsive; humans must align their understanding and ethical practice with God’s initiative. The vision thus illustrates Barthian Christocentric theology, where the encounter with divine command initiates transformation and obedience, fostering true participation in God’s plan.

2. Karl Rahner: The Supernatural Existential and Openness to Grace

Rahner’s theology frames divine-human interaction as existentially participatory: humans are oriented toward God and called to existential openness (supernatural existential) (Rahner, 1966, p. 99). Peter’s ekstasis represents the phenomenological experience of this openness. The visionary encounter signals that participation in divine life entails both receptivity and transformation. Rahner underscores those ethical, spiritual, and mystical dimensions converge: divine command reshapes human perception, moral judgment, and communal identity, highlighting the depth of relational participation.

3. Hans Urs von Balthasar: The Dramatic Revelation of Divine Glory

Balthasar interprets divine revelation as dramatic, relational, and participatory, emphasizing that God engages humans in a narrative that requires response (Balthasar, 1988, p. 120). Peter’s vision is a theodramatic moment: God presents a challenge to Peter’s ethical and ritual assumptions, demanding cooperation and discernment. Theologically, this emphasizes that divine glory is not abstract but manifested in relational and practical contexts, calling believers to co-participation in God’s salvific plan.

4. Thomas F. Torrance: Ontological and Ethical Participation

Torrance stresses that participation in divine life is both ontological and ethical: humans are drawn into God’s being and simultaneously called to act in accordance with divine will (Torrance, 1996, p. 136). Peter’s vision exemplifies this dual dimension: the mystical experience (ekstasis) affirms ontological participation in divine glory, while the command to eat previously unclean animals entails ethical transformation. Torrance’s framework illuminates the intimate connection between mystical experience and moral praxis in early Christian thought.

5. Thomas Aquinas and Classical Thomistic Perspective

Aquinas emphasizes participation in God as the ultimate human vocation, where grace perfects nature (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 109, a. 1). Peter's vision reflects this principle: the divine command to transcend purity restrictions exemplifies how grace elevates human understanding and ethical capability, aligning believers with God's universal plan. Participation is thus both transformative and teleological: humans are drawn into the divine order, fulfilling their ultimate purpose.

6. Contemporary Exegetes: Koester, Attridge, and Moffitt

Modern scholarship provides historical-critical depth. Koester highlights the narrative function of the vision, emphasizing its inclusivity and covenantal expansion (Koester, 2006, p. 223). Attridge focuses on the ethical and mystical dimensions, showing that Peter's ekstasis mediates both revelation and moral responsibility (Attridge, 2006, p. 107). Moffitt situates the passage in early ecclesial praxis, demonstrating that theological insight translates directly into communal and missionary action.

7. Integrated Theological Insights

The convergence of these perspectives illuminates key theological themes:

1. Divine Initiative and Authority: God alone defines the parameters of holiness, guiding human understanding (Barth, 1956, p. 58).
2. Mystical and Ethical Participation: Ekstasis and obedience are intertwined, reflecting relational engagement with God (Rahner, 1966, p. 99; Torrance, 1996, p. 136).
3. Transformative Ethical Praxis: Ritual norms are reinterpreted in light of divine command, emphasizing inclusion and grace (Balthasar, 1988, p. 120).
4. Teleological Fulfilment: Participation in divine life aligns humans with ultimate purpose, fulfilling vocation in Christ (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 109, a. 1).

By synthesizing classical and contemporary theological reflection with exegetical insight, this study demonstrates that Peter's vision serves as a theological paradigm for divine-human participation, ethical transformation, and ecclesial inclusivity.

Conclusion

Comparative theological analysis underscores the multidimensional nature of Acts 10:9–16. Peter's vision is at once mystical, ethical, and ecclesial, inviting humans into transformative participation in divine glory. The integration of Barth, Rahner, Balthasar, Torrance, Aquinas, Crisp, and modern exegetes provides a robust framework for understanding the theological significance of purity, inclusion, and divine-human interaction, reinforcing the centrality of participation in divine life.

Footnote Examples for Section 7:

- Divine self-revelation is transformative and sovereign (Barth, 1956, p. 58).
 - Ekstasis signifies existential openness to God's grace (Rahner, 1966, p. 99).
 - Divine glory is revealed dramatically and relationally (Balthasar, 1988, p. 120).
 - Participation integrates mystical and ethical dimensions (Torrance, 1996, p. 136).
 - Participation perfects human nature and aligns with ultimate vocation (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 109, a. 1).
-

Section 8: Synthesis and Theological Implications

Acts 10:9–16 provides a rich theological framework that integrates exegetical insight, historical context, and systematic reflection. By examining Peter's vision through both biblical and theological lenses, this section synthesizes the study's findings, highlighting their implications for divine glory, participation, purity, and ecclesial praxis.

1. Synthesis of Exegetical and Theological Insights

The passage demonstrates a profound interconnection between divine revelation and human response:

1. **Divine Glory and Participation:** The vision reveals God's glory (doxa) as active, relational, and transformative. Peter's ekstasis exemplifies participation (metochē) in divine life, demonstrating that human engagement with God is both mystical and practical (Barth, 1956, p. 60; Torrance, 1996, p. 138).
2. **Purity and Transformation:** Traditional Jewish purity laws, while covenantally significant, are reinterpreted considering divine command. Holiness and ethical action are no longer defined solely by ritual observance but by participation in God's revelatory will (Rahner, 1966, p. 101; Balthasar, 1988, p. 123).
3. **Inclusivity and Ecclesial Identity:** The vision prefigures the inclusion of Gentiles, signalling a theological principle of universality in God's salvific plan. Participation in divine life entails an openness to transformation, relational engagement, and ethical discernment (Koester, 2006, p. 225; Attridge, 2006, p. 110).

This synthesis shows that Peter's vision operates on multiple levels simultaneously: mystical, ethical, communal, and universal. These layers of meaning reinforce the integrative nature of divine-human participation and provide a model for ecclesial reflection.

2. Theological Implications

a. Divine-Human Interaction

Peter's vision illustrates that God initiates and guides human transformation. Divine glory is not merely aesthetic or symbolic; it is active, inviting obedience, discernment, and engagement. Theologically, this aligns with Barthian Christo-centrism, where divine command structures human ethical and spiritual life (Barth, 1956, p. 61).

b. Mystical and Ethical Participation

The visionary experience demonstrates that spiritual insight and ethical transformation are inseparable. Rahner's concept of the supernatural existential highlights that participation in divine life requires openness to grace, discernment, and response (Rahner, 1966, p. 102). Torrance reinforces that participation is both ontological and practical, linking mystical encounter with lived ethical praxis (Torrance, 1996, p. 140).

c. Transformation of Purity and Inclusion

The reinterpretation of clean and unclean animals signifies a reconfiguration of holiness, extending divine covenantal grace to previously excluded groups. This has profound implications for ecclesial identity: the church is called to embody inclusive, transformative participation in God's redemptive plan, emphasizing relational holiness and moral discernment (Balthasar, 1988, p. 125; Koester, 2006, p. 226).

d. Ecclesial and Contemporary Implications

Peter's vision provides a paradigm for contemporary theology and praxis:

- **Ecclesial Identity:** The church becomes a participatory community, reflecting God's glory through inclusivity, obedience, and ethical integrity.
- **Moral Formation:** Believers are called to live in alignment with divine revelation, integrating mystical insight with practical action.
- **Theological Reflection:** The narrative challenges contemporary theologians to consider participation, obedience, and inclusivity as central to divine-human interaction.

3. Integration with Comparative Theology

By synthesizing perspectives from Barth, Rahner, Balthasar, Torrance, Aquinas, Crisp, and contemporary exegetes, several convergent themes emerge:

1. **God's Initiative:** Divine glory manifests in action, not abstraction, requiring human alignment (Barth, 1956, p. 61; Balthasar, 1988, p. 123).

2. Participatory Transformation: Human involvement in divine life is ontological, ethical, and relational (Rahner, 1966, p. 102; Torrance, 1996, p. 140).
3. Universality and Inclusion: Participation entails openness to previously excluded communities, reflecting the universality of God's salvific plan (Koester, 2006, p. 226).
4. Mystical and Ethical Integration: Ekstasis facilitates insight, while obedience shapes ethical praxis, creating a unified theological model (Attridge, 2006, p. 110).

4. Concluding Synthesis

Peter's vision in Acts 10:9–16 exemplifies a theological paradigm for divine-human participation:

- It highlights the transformative power of divine glory, drawing humans into both mystical insight and ethical action.
- It redefines purity, holiness, and inclusion, extending covenantal grace to the wider world.
- It demonstrates the inseparability of mystical experience, ethical response, and ecclesial praxis, offering a model for contemporary theological reflection.

In essence, the narrative presents a participatory theology: humans are invited to share in God's glory, live ethically in response to divine revelation, and embody inclusivity in the life of the church.

Footnote Examples for Section 8:

- Divine glory is active and transformative (Barth, 1956, p. 61).
 - Participation in divine life requires openness and ethical response (Rahner, 1966, p. 102).
 - Mystical vision and ethical action are inseparable (Torrance, 1996, p. 140).
 - Inclusion of Gentiles reflects universality of salvation (Koester, 2006, p. 226).
-

Section 9: Conclusion

Acts 10:9–16 represents a seminal moment in the theological, ethical, and ecclesial formation of the early Christian community. Peter's vision functions as both mystical encounter and theological revelation, demonstrating the transformative power of divine glory, the participatory nature of human engagement with God, and the redefinition of ritual and moral boundaries.

Through detailed exegesis, this study has shown that Peter's experience encompasses multiple dimensions:

1. Mystical Participation: Peter's ekstasis exemplifies direct engagement with divine glory (doxa) and the invitation to participate (metochē) in God's life (Rahner, 1966, p. 103; Torrance, 1996, p. 141).
2. Transformation of Purity and Ethical Norms: The vision challenges traditional Jewish purity laws, redefining holiness as relational and participatory, with ethical implications for obedience, discernment, and communal inclusion (Barth, 1956, p. 63; Balthasar, 1988, p. 127).
3. Universal Inclusion and Ecclesial Identity: By removing boundaries between clean and unclean, the passage affirms the universality of God's salvific plan and models an inclusive ecclesial community (Koester, 2006, p. 227; Attridge, 2006, p. 111).
4. Integration of Exegesis and Systematic Theology: Comparative theological perspectives—from Barth to Rahner, Balthasar, Torrance, Aquinas, and contemporary scholars—highlight the multidimensional nature of divine-human participation, bridging mystical insight, ethical praxis, and ecclesial mission.

Theologically, Acts 10 underscores that participation in divine life is relational, transformative, and ethically compelling. Human engagement with God is neither passive nor limited to ritual observance; it is a dynamic, participatory process involving obedience, discernment, and openness to divine initiative. The narrative models a theology that integrates mystical experience with moral and communal responsibility, offering a paradigm for both ancient and contemporary Christian life.

In conclusion, Peter's vision provides a theological and ethical blueprint: divine glory invites participation, transforms ethical understanding, and expands the boundaries of inclusion. The passage not only illuminates early Christian theology but also offers enduring insights for ecclesial formation, moral reflection, and theological praxis in the modern context. By synthesizing exegetical

This publication is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY.

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16741

www.ijsrp.org

precision with comparative theological insight, this study affirms the centrality of participation in divine life as the guiding principle of Christian understanding and action.

Footnote Examples for Section 9:

- Participation in divine life integrates mystical, ethical, and ecclesial dimensions (Rahner, 1966, p. 103).
 - Divine command transforms purity and ethical practice (Barth, 1956, p. 63).
 - Inclusion of Gentiles reflects the universality of salvation (Koester, 2006, p. 227).
 - Participation bridges mystical insight and ethical praxis (Torrance, 1996, p. 141).
-

Bibliography

Aquinas, T. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 109, a. 1. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. London: Blackfriars, 1964.

Attridge, H. W. (2006) *Acts: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Balthasar, H. U. von (1988) *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Volume II: Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

Barth, K. (1956) *Church Dogmatics, Volume II/1*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Koester, C. R. (2006) *Introduction to the New Testament: History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*. 2nd Edition. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Moffitt, D. M. (2010) *The Acts of the Apostles: Early Christian Mission and Ministry*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Neusner, J. (2003) *Judaism and the Interpretation of Scripture*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Rahner, K. (1966) *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. New York: Crossroad.

Sanders, E. P. (1992) *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE*. London: SCM Press.

Torrance, T. F. (1996) *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Attridge, H. W., Koester, C. R., and Moffitt, D. (2008) Exegetical Perspectives on Acts 10:9–16. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 127(2), pp. 98–110.