

**“GOD HAS NO FAVORITES!”
CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF APOSTLE PETER'S
MISSIOLOGICAL PARADIGM**

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Not much is written on the Apostle Peter's pioneering contribution to the shaping of the theology of mission. Interestingly enough, it was *Peter*, not Paul, *who pioneered cross-cultural missions*.¹ Unfortunately the significance of his role in pioneering missionary work remains silent, if not extant. Early in his ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ made one of the most powerful pronouncements in biblical history: “And I tell that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19, *NIV*).²

Little did Peter know that one day, this pronouncement would be fulfilled in a household of a Gentile centurion named Cornelius. F. F.

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¹Michael Goulder asserts that there was never a single or unitary church but instead “two competing missions,” that of Peter and James in Jerusalem and Paul in Antioch. Paul's singular prominence can be “historically misleading.” See, *St. Paul versus St. Peter: A Tale of Two Missions* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995). Paul, of course, tops the production and dissemination of contemporary mission theology. See, Dean Gilliland, *Pauline Theology and Mission Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983).

²George E. Ladd understands Peter's function as an “administrative authority” like setting aside “Jewish ritual practices that there might be free fellowship with the Gentiles” (*Theology of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974], 117).

Bruce observes that at Pentecost Peter uses the “keys of the kingdom to admit Jewish believers to the new fellowship,” and at Cornelius’ house, he uses them to “open a door of faith to Gentiles.”³ Peter’s role as a representative of the Twelve Apostles is distinct and historically significant because he was the first to preach the good news to a group of Gentiles (Acts 15:7) as well as to acknowledge their incorporation within the church, which is referred to three times in Acts 10:1-48; 11:5-17; 15:7-11. The missiological currency of this redundancy of testimony and claims is highly significant.⁴ Acts 10-11 provides the details of the fulfillment of Christ’s pronouncement relative to Peter’s crucial role in missions, which unfolds in the drama of a “culinary vision.”⁵

This essay seeks to identify and expound the critical components of Peter’s missiological paradigm in Acts 10-11 as a foundational contribution to contemporary missionary work. Each component will be identified according to its major domains and corresponding emphases. For the purpose of this study, the following critical components will be noted: (1) theological, (2) philosophical, (3) anthropological, (4) cultural, (5) structural, (6) soteriological, (7) christological, (8) psychological, (9) incarnational, and (10) practical.⁶

³F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 3^d rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 264.

⁴See Andrew Clark, “The Role of the Apostles” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 172.

⁵See William J. Larkin Jr., *Acts*, IVPNT Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 156.

⁶The genesis of this article traces back to Dr. Casañó’s lectures on missions and cultural anthropology to participants of Asia-Pacific Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). Insights were also presented in an essay, “Critical Challenges in Contemporary Missiology: Peter’s Framework,” which was delivered at the First Missiology Seminar on June 8, 2003, with the support of the United Graduate School of Theology of Hoseo University, Chonan, Korea.

THEOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Texts	Domain	Emphasis
10:4-8;34-35; 45-48; 11:15-17	Inclusive God	Checking Extreme Nationalism: <i>God is not Domestic!</i>
		Correcting Theological Entrenchment: <i>God is a Boundary-Crosser!</i>

Basically, *mission* refers to the total plan, process, and work of God for the salvation of people through all ages. All implementation and forms of this plan done by the covenant people of God and through the universal church are called *missions*.⁷ Peter discovers that this plan of salvation for humanity, and its corresponding implementation and forms through and by the church, are primarily theological in nature. Thus, the theological component in contemporary missiology relates primarily to the biblical view that God, as the chief missionary, is not exclusive but rather inclusive.⁸ God is universal, although the

⁷ Andreas J. Kostenberger in his article, "The Place of Mission in New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Determine the Significance of Mission within the Scope of the New Testament's Message as a Whole," writes, "In contemporary usage, *missions* generally refers to cross-cultural ministry. In biblical terminology, however, it appears that the cross-cultural aspect of Christian ministry is not a necessary part of mission. To be sure, mission may, and frequently will, involve the crossing of ethnic, cultural, or other boundaries (cf., e.g., Acts 1:8), but this is not an integral part of the New Testament concept of mission itself. Rather, mission in the New Testament usually centers around a person's (or group's) commissioning (e.g., Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21-23) to a particular task, in the present case focusing on the proclamation of the gospel, the message of God's gracious salvation and forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus which is to be appropriated by faith. This soteriological focus rules out an understanding of mission that is conceived so broadly that the message of salvation in Christ is submerged under more general notions of "Christian service" or even lost altogether"; available from <http://www.ajkostenberger.com/pdf/NT%20Theology%20and%20Mission.PDF>; Internet; accessed August 13, 2003.

For further discussion on the distinction between "mission" and "missions," see Peter Beyerhaus, *Missions: Which Way*, with a foreword by Donald McGavran (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971); Edward R. Dayton and David A. Frazer, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 57-74; George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute, 1984).

⁸ See David Watson, *I Believe in the Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), 299; John Stott, "The Living God is a Missionary God," in *Perspectives on the*

expressions of his reality could be local. In other words, models of the universal God may be derived from local symbols, metaphors, or speech-form. Peter realizes that the starting point of reaching out to non-Jewish people is a correct view of who God is. This implies two things.

Peter's missiological paradigm rules out the prevalence of extreme nationalism.⁹ Confining the universal God to one nation or culture contradicts the biblical vision of who God is. "God," observes Robbie Castleman, "was showing Peter a new way to understand the ethnic inclusiveness of the Gospel."¹⁰ Peter realizes that God is not domestic or local and therefore transcends all geographical, ideological, cultural, and religious boundaries. The selection of Caesarea, a Roman colony and capital of Judea and the most important commercial and political cosmopolitan part of Palestine during Peter's time, was not incidental. It was the place for the first Gentile mission, with the exception of the gospel encounter of an Ethiopian eunuch at Acts 8:27-40.

Peter's vision compels him to bail out from his *theological entrenchment* that basically domesticates the universal God. When the voice asked Peter to "kill and eat," he protested strongly: "Surely not Lord" (10:13). The reason is obvious: "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean" (v.13). In his own human Jewish mind, it is unthinkable that God would make the so-called "chosen people" eat Gentile food.¹¹ Peter's theological system would not allow that. The command was given three times, and Peter vehemently refused it, although his disobedience was temporary. Peter soon realizes that he cannot put God inside his own Jewish box in that God is much bigger

World Christian Movement: A Reader, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 10-18.

⁹David J. Williams observes that "some Jews allowed that the Gentiles might have a limited participation in the kingdom of God, but most regarded them as beyond hope and destined for hell" (*Acts*, New International Biblical Commentary [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990], 197).

¹⁰In "Doorways to Diversity," Robbie Castleman writes, "God was showing Peter a new way to understand the ethnic inclusiveness of the Gospel"; available from http://www.urbana.org/_articles.cfm?RecordId=208; Internet; accessed August 13, 2003.

¹¹Gordon Wenham sees a close connection between humans and animals and the way they are evaluated in the holiness code in a way that what made the one unclean also made the other unclean. See Wenham's "The Theology of Unclean Food," *Evangelical Quarterly* (1981): 6-15.

than the religious boundaries of Judaism! By the time he arrives at Cornelius' house, Peter grasps already the undeniable fact that God is impartial, Christ's lordship is universal, and that Gentiles, like Jews, need to know the way of salvation.¹²

PHILOSOPHICAL COMPONENT

Texts	Domain	Emphasis
10:1-4;22; 11:15-17	Perspective	<i>Understanding People's WorldView: Basic Assumptions of Reality</i>
		<i>Verifying People's "Truth Claims"</i>

The next component is philosophical in nature. A biblical view of God challenges basic assumptions of reality, since having a biblical vision of God does not automatically erase *perspectival* challenges. Peter confronts a situation whereby he struggles with perspectival issues from both Jewish and Gentile systems. For instance, in 10:1-4, Cornelius has a vision,¹³ and the underlying perspectives of this event requires verification.

In Peter's missiological framework, *understanding people's world view or basic assumptions of reality is essential*.¹⁴ "Worldview," asserts Ronald Nash, "contains a person's answers to the major questions in life, almost all of which contain significant philosophical content."¹⁵

¹²Charles Carter and Ralph Earle, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Salem, OH: Schmull Publishing Company, Inc., 1973), 145.

¹³Ben Witherington III argues that the fact that Cornelius' prayers were accepted by God indicates how God acts to break down the barriers between Jews and Gentiles as something equivalent to the sacrifice of a Jew (*The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998], 348).

¹⁴The study of worldviews contributes significantly to the designing of appropriate strategies in missions among various cultural settings. Worldviews abound, and many of them are not friendly to the gospel. This calls for a rigorous study of the basic assumptions of reality that those who share the gospel always have to face. Of course, the study of worldviews has its own dangers and benefits. For further discussion see, David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, with a foreword by Arthur F. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 331-44.

¹⁵Ronald Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 13.

Peter seems to realize this as he reflects on his own Jewish tradition in contrast with the emerging Gentile tradition, which he now encounters face to face. Questions abound with regard to worldviews: How do people interpret the universe in relation to the concept of God or sacred? What is the structure of reality in a people's society? How is reality viewed, expressed, or manifested? For the first time in his life, Peter views reality from a Gentile perspective in a non-Jewish environment, i.e., Cornelius' house. He is able to witness how Gentiles would respond to the gospel on the basis of faith without having to use Jewish assumptions of reality and cultural forms.¹⁶

Crucial to the philosophical component of Peter's emerging missionary paradigm is the verification of people's "truth claims."¹⁷ His encounter with the Gentiles poses big questions: How would he know that Cornelius' men were telling him the truth? What was the basis of that truth? Would a Gentile grasp truth even without encountering the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal way? What is the criterion of a truth-claim? How can one verify truth-claims?¹⁸

ANTHROPOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Texts	Domain	Emphasis
10:42-43; 42-46	"Humanity"	<i>Identifying a Fallen Humanity</i>
		<i>Recognizing a Redeemable Humanity</i>

In his emerging missionary paradigm, Peter discovers that God "does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation" (10:34-

¹⁶For an excellent discussion on the subject of worldviews and their transformation in Jewish and Gentile environments, see David Burnett, *Clash of Worlds* (Nashville, TN: Oliver-Nelson Books, 1992), 221-38.

¹⁷Calvin E. Shenk admonishes Christians not to insist "that all truth worth knowing is to be found in Christian faith." Accordingly, all truth, "regardless of where it is found, is God's truth and is compatible with God's revelation in Scripture. . . . But when beliefs of other religions are incompatible with God's revelation in Christ, they cannot be accepted as truth" (*Who Do You Say that I Am?* [Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1997], 135).

¹⁸A contemporary discussion on truth-claim in an Asian setting is presented in Casiño, 193-198, using the following categories: "inferred truth," "relative truth," pluralistic truth," and "syncretistic truth."

35).¹⁹ In God's eyes, Jews and Gentiles equally need saving grace. So, a biblically correct understanding of humanity is critical to Peter's missiological understanding. Thus unfolds Peter's anthropological challenge.

In Peter's experience, God *views humanity—Jews and Gentiles alike--as fallen*. This is an unmistakable message in his proclamation to Cornelius' household. His words are direct: "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (10:42-43).

In the aftermath of his vision, Peter comes face to face with a *redeemable group of humanity*, i.e., Gentiles. He discovers that Gentiles, like Jews, are fallen but can be forgiven. Peter's breakthrough experience at Cornelius' house indicates God's work in the lives of Gentiles and that he honors their "Spirit-prompted response to the light which they have, by providing them with more light, the light of the gospel message."²⁰ The spiritual dimension of humanity and its corresponding needs is crucial to Peter's understanding of the missionary task. In this case, mission primarily deals with but is not necessarily limited to spirituality, for the biblical view of mission highly stresses spiritual liberation with due regard to other forms of liberating experiences of humanity.

CULTURAL COMPONENT

Text	Domain	Emphasis
10:9-16; 27-28	Cultural Acceptance	Ethnocentrism
		<i>Xenophobia</i>

Peter's vision unfolds his cultural entrenchment, specifically with respect to his attitudes toward other people's culture. "No, Lord," was

¹⁹Larkin surmises that "Peter and Luke are seeking to avoid two extremes: the Jews' ethnic pride and prejudice, which saw no Gentile as a fit object of God's saving call, and the view that the religions of all cultures are equally valid bases for being acceptable to God" (164).

²⁰William J. Larkin, Jr., "The Contribution of the Gospels and Acts to a Biblical Theology of Religions," in *Christianity and the Religions: A Biblical Theology of World Religions*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series, no. 2, ed. Edward Rommen and Harold Netland (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 81.

Peter's strong protest when he was asked to eat food that Gentiles normally eat.²¹ Little did he know that the test of food is also a test of cultural acceptance. While God challenges cultural structures at times, especially when these structures are oppressive and tyrannical, he also uses them to communicate his offer of love and forgiveness. Peter discovers this disturbing paradox in relation to mission. His *response is basically ethnocentric and exclusivistic*.²² "No, Lord," he cries, "I have never eaten anything impure." In modern parlance, Peter may literally say, "My Jewish food is better than Gentile food, so why should I eat something that is produced by an inferior culture?" This is a tough challenge, but Peter has no choice but to face it. At first, he resists the idea of the Jewish culture mixing with that of the Gentiles. But in the end, all he could say was: "But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean" (10:28). This makes Peter a fast learner! The sudden change from "anything impure" (10:14) to "any man" (10:28) is noticeable.²³

Peter's attitude also demonstrates a high level of xenophobia. He fears other cultures; he hates them as well. His words may appear harsh but honest: "It is against our law to associate with the Gentiles." Mixing Jewish and Gentile cultures was abominable in Peter's logic as his religious tradition taught him. "To the Jews," claims David J. Williams, "Gentiles were godless, rejected by God, and given over to every form of uncleanness."²⁴ Peter is fully aware of this, but on this day, his fear of and hatred against non-Jewish cultures broke down when he was prompted by the "prevenience of the Spirit." This chain of events resulted in the administering of the water baptism to the new Gentile believers.²⁵ Peter discovers that even the Jews are no favorites of God in that those who are called "uncircumcised" receive the Lord's attention as well.

²¹Witherington notes, "If indeed this vision is intended as a parable about people, rather than animals, then the verb here may refer to Christ's death and its effects" (350).

²²See Ralph Martin, *New Testament Foundations*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 102.

²³"So strong is our commitment to ethnic distinctives of diet, " writes Larkin, 'especially when they are grounded in religion. We do not readily leave the comfort zone of our religio-ethnic identity. But if Peter is to spearhead the Jerusalem church's Gentile mission, God must move him out of his Jewish comfort zone" (156).

²⁴Williams, 197.

²⁵Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 2, trans. John E. Alsup, ed. Jurgen Roloff (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 274.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENT

Text	Domain	Emphasis
10:1-2;14-15; 19-20;34-35; 11:2-3	System	<i>Working Carefully within a "Fixed System"</i>
		<i>Working Tactfully within an "open" or "flexible system"</i>

In a contemporary situation, the structural component drains the energy of a missionary, but one expects to work within a structure.²⁶ Peter realizes this as he tries to straddle the traditional Jewish system and the emerging Gentile structure. He now faces the reality of the link between the universality of the church mission and the "boundary-breaking ministry of Jesus."²⁷ The Jewish structure is something he knows best. It is, after all, fixed. The Gentile structure is something foreign to him. It is open, or at times "without a system."

In this regard, Peter realizes the necessity of *working carefully within a "fixed system,"* i.e., strict Judaism. His background was rigid and fixed. What has been fixed by tradition is final. To him, doing otherwise is sin, and his vision changed all that. The line Peter uses strongly evidences the "fixed" orientation of his religious system: "It is against our law," he protests, "for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him." He struggles about the imminent fellowship between the circumcised Jews and the non-circumcised Gentiles!

Peter's vision, however, unveils a way to *tactfully handle a once rigid but now "open" or flexible system.*²⁸ The collapse of ceremonial distinction allows the apostle to discover a novel way of viewing God's

²⁶For a contemporary application of structures in missions, see Roger E. Hedlund, *The Mission of the Church in the World: A Biblical Theology*, with a foreword by Arthur F. Glasser and James C. Gamaliel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 226-35.

²⁷Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 265.

²⁸Don Richardson comments that Peter's vision and the subsequent meeting with Cornelius "is a poignant study of human prejudice gradually melting down through the sheer goodness of the gospel of Jesus Christ" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981) 92.

work of grace.²⁹ The way of grace provides for an open system, not bound by human rules or any human invention. In an open system, grace prevails, and everyone is given the opportunity to avail himself of it.

SOTERIOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Text	Domain	Emphasis
10:34-38; 42-43	Salvation	<i>Leading People to the God of Peace</i>
		Releasing People from the Power of Darkness: <i>Power Encounter</i>

In an age in which equality of truth-claims and a break-down in the idea of the absolute predominates, the missionary component relative to the biblical vision of salvation from sin becomes crucial. Peter realizes that the reception of God's forgiveness is central to the missionary task. His discovery is revolutionizing: "God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (10:34-35). The declaration points to the primacy of *leading people to the God of peace*. Central to Peter's message is "the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all" (10:36). "Sins," observes Christoph Stenschke, "are deemed a universal human problem."³⁰ Here salvation is closely linked to the forgiveness of sins, which is found only in Jesus Christ. This is Peter's soteriological message. While world religions offer peace through different means, Christ offers peace that is grounded on his unique lordship.³¹ In Peter's logic, "peace-making is an intrinsic aspect of the church's missionary

²⁹David Brown writes, "Ceremonial distinctions are now at an end, and Gentiles, heretofore debarred from access to God through the instituted ordinances of His Church, are now admissible on terms of entire equality with His ancient people" (A Commentary, vol. 3, ed. Robert Jamieson [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973], 68).

³⁰Christoph Stenschke, "The Need for Salvation," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 134.

³¹Lutheran theologian, Carl E. Braaten, forcefully writes, "The gospel opens the door to reconciliation with God at the same time that it closes the other doors of self-salvation through works of the laws, mystical exercises, or metaphysical gnosis" *No Other Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 76.

message.”³² Here, peace takes a personal character and generates from “the Lord of all.”

Peter's emerging missionary paradigm includes the release of Jews and Gentiles alike *from the power of darkness*. He narrates how Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, going around while ministering to people by releasing them from the “power of the devil” (10:38). In contemporary language, Peter projects a missionary task that involves “power encounter,” which the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates well in his ministry.³³

CHRISTOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Text	Domain	Emphasis
10:36; 42-43	<i>Uniqueness</i>	<i>Proclaiming the Universal Lord: Sovereignty</i>
		<i>Introducing the Universal Judge: Justice</i>
		<i>Testifying of the Universal Redeemer: Mercy</i>

At the heart of Peter's emerging missionary paradigm is the non-compromising and incomparable uniqueness and universal lordship of Jesus Christ. The Gentile environment where “lords” and “gods/goddesses” abound gives him no choice but to proclaim a straightforward message: “Jesus Christ is Lord of all” (10:36), which serves as the “Christological pulse” in his mission theology.³⁴

In Peter's missionary message, Christ's universal *sovereignty requires no apology*. This sovereignty is not shared; it is rather exclusive. Against those who claim that “God has not been confined to Jesus,” Peter offers no compromise with respect to the universal

³²David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 118.

³³In contemporary missiology, “power encounter” presupposes the need for “power evangelism.” See, for instance, John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1986). Cf. Tommy D. Lea, “Spiritual Warfare and the Missionary Task” in *Missiology*, ed. John Mark Terry et al. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 626-38.

³⁴H. Douglas Buckwalter, “The Divine Savior,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peteron (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 122.

lordship of Christ.³⁵ His language is unmistakable: “Jesus Christ is Lord of all” (10:36).

Also, Peter’s *missionary message highlights universal justice grounded on the person of Christ—God’s appointed Judge*.³⁶ He proclaims a type of justice which is dispensed only by one sole universal judge, namely, Jesus Christ, who is, in Peter’s words, “the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead” (10:42).³⁷ Interestingly enough, the role of this Judge connects to his victory over death. Thus, in Peter’s emerging missiology, justice finds its basis on the resurrected Judge, a unique qualification that is not shared by other justice-dispenser in world religions.³⁸

Further, the apostle’s missionary message stresses on the offering of mercy in terms of “forgiveness of sins” (10:43) to “everyone who believes” through the name of Jesus Christ. In Peter’s missionary logic, God honors the human act of faith (“believes in him”) with mercy as God’s reward for it.³⁹ Peter discovers that Jesus Christ is not a monarch who simply rules creation from high above the heavens, nor a judge who simply sits on a throne. Christ is the God of mercy who relates to people in terms of love, forgiveness, care, and providence. Peter declares, “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (10:43). In Peter’s missiological framework, God’s majesty dynamically translates into mercy.⁴⁰

³⁵See, Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 204.

³⁶Of the scope of this judgment, John Stott observes, “All will be included; none can escape,” *The Message of Acts*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 191.

³⁷C. K. Barrett argues that the fact that “Jesus will preside at the last judgment does not in itself claim that he is divine, though it does not mean that he is entrusted with a divine function” (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 528. Cf. Williams, 194-195.

³⁸“The exalted Jesus,” stresses Buckwalter, “appears on equal footing with God by virtue of what he does and says in decreeing, preserving, and providentially leading his saving plan through the church’s mission to completion according to his will” (123).

³⁹Braaten concurs, “The *solus Christus* provides the basis and content establishing the *sola fide*” (76).

⁴⁰For further discussion on the polarity of majesty and mercy, see Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content, and Message* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1980), 90-92.

PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Text	Domain	Emphasis
10:13-14; 25-29; 11:2-3,18	<i>Traumatic Encounter</i>	<i>Handling the Trauma of Entering a "Strange World: Culture Shock</i>
		<i>Managing Stress Caused by an Indifferent World: Re-entry Shock</i>

Peter's vision is traumatic. "Surely, not, Lord" (10:14) is Peter's protest. He is not ready to enter into a strange world. The trauma is obvious. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean" (10:14). This was pure "culture shock," with a strong religious connotation. In contemporary missiology, this refers to a psychological challenge. Peter's psychological make-up was challenged as he crosses unknown cultural and religious boundaries inside a non-Jewish world.

Peter's novel missionary experience provides him an opportunity *to handle the trauma of entering a "strange world,"* a direct result from "culture shock."⁴¹ His reaction after getting inside the house of Cornelius combines confusion and apprehension that results in a shock. He enters into a strange world which his Jewish tradition calls "impure."⁴² In verse 28, Peter admits, "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean" (10:28).⁴³

Peter's astonishing experience of witnessing the Holy Spirit's "pouring out even on the Gentiles" (10:45) does not immunize him

⁴¹For a contemporary application of "culture shock" to missionary work, see Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 64-89.

⁴²"Peter," observes Castleman, "perhaps remembering what it was like to feel like an outsider, to feel 'unclean' after his denial of Jesus, agreed to stay with this tanner by the sea. God was already preparing Peter for a ministry he wasn't expecting, to a people he didn't naturally care for--and, in fact, had been taught to avoid!"; available from http://www.urbana.org/_articles.cfm?RecordId=208; Internet; accessed August 13, 2003.

⁴³Hiebert insightfully writes, "The most crucial change that must take place in our adjustment to a new culture is to learn to see its people as 'people' --as human beings like ourselves --and their culture as our culture. We need to learn to draw a mental circle around them and us and say 'we.' We need to break down the barrier that separates us into 'we' and 'they' (89).

from managing the stress caused by an “indifferent attitude,” which resulted in a “re-entry shock.”⁴⁴ When Peter returns to his own people, he discovers that objections were raised about his missionary encounter with the Gentiles. His fellow Jewish believers criticized him (11:2). Their fingers were pointing straight to his face, saying, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them” (11:3).⁴⁵ Peter’s own Jewish Christian community became indifferent, an attitude that spills out to centuries of church history. Indifference, however, was temporary, as the circumcised Jewish believers would later realize how God “granted the Gentiles repentance unto life” (11:18).⁴⁶

INCARNATIONAL COMPONENT

Text	Domain	Emphasis
10:6,11-6; 21-23,28	Enfleshment	<i>Appropriating the Gospel in Local Context</i>
		<i>Appropriating the Gospel with Local Symbols</i>

The incarnational component is crucial to Peter’s emerging missiological paradigm as it calls for the “enfleshment” of the gospel in an actual, local setting.⁴⁷ Peter’s stay in a tanner’s house seems to prepare him to take an incarnational approach to witnessing ministry, especially among the Gentile population. Before the vision, however,

⁴⁴As Castleman laments, “Not everyone was thrilled with the news that Gentiles were now included in the family of God. Becoming ethnically diverse wasn’t comfortable for the early church, nor did it seem wise to many.”

⁴⁵“This charge,” observes Longenecker, “while traditionally worded, was tantamount to saying that Peter had set aside Christianity’s Jewish features and thereby seriously endangered its relation with the nation” (397). The expression, “uncircumcised men,” concurs William Robertson, shows the “greatest reproach that could be used by a Jew” (*Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* [Old Tappan, NJ: Flemming H. Revell Company, 1978], 78).

⁴⁶James W. Packer points out that “the approval given to Peter here was not meant to imply wholesale admission of Gentiles into the church” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: The University Press, 1966), 88).

⁴⁷The concept of “incarnational ministry” or “incarnational missions” is as old as ministry or missions itself, but its technical formulation in the history of Christianity is relatively new, especially among the evangelical movements. For further discussion, see Tereso C. Casiño, “The Text in Context: An Evangelical Approach to the Foundations of Contextualization in the Asian Setting” (Ph.D. diss., ACTS/Asia United Theological University, Seoul, 1996), 25-46.

this situation seems circumstantial, rather than intentional. Peter stays with Simon, the tanner (10:6), someone who touches the hides of dead animals, a neatly ordained preparatory place for missionary activities. His vision at the tanner's house is all about killing and eating Gentile animals, a symbol that is close to the Gentile heart and culture. This prepares Peter to confront the fact that God's grace equalizes culture and practices: "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (10:15).

The culinary vision provides Peter an opportunity to struggle with the *actualizing of the gospel in local context*. As a result, he allows Cornelius and his friends to respond to the gospel message in their own way. Peter's message on the universal significance of Jesus' life and ministry, death, and resurrection (10:34-43) may have strong Jewish roots, but it does not require strict understanding of the Jewish system or religious symbols. The response from Cornelius and his household is basically derived from their available religious resources and contextual environment.

When Peter declares that Jesus Christ is "Lord of all," he exemplifies the *appropriation of biblical truth using local symbols*.⁴⁸ Peter does not convert Gentiles to his own Jewish way of thinking. He simply presents the truth according to the Gentiles' own local symbols. He discovers that the Gentiles could receive forgiveness, minus the rite of circumcision! He witnesses how Gentiles experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit even without eating Jewish food nor becoming Jewish themselves.⁴⁹ In the aftermath of the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Cornelius' house, Peter proceeds to the "outward sign," i.e., water

⁴⁸Richard N. Longenecker conjectures that the designation was "properly a pagan title for deity," which the early Christians rebaptized to become an "appropriate christological title" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 9, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 393. See also Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and David H. Juel (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 83.

⁴⁹Packer writes, "Peter's words to Cornelius and his friends are explanatory rather than missionary. The acts of his hearers had already proved their faith. There was no need of a confession; so the Holy Spirit acted with power before Peter had even finished speaking" (84-85).

baptism,” which the Lord Jesus Christ instituted in Matt. 28:19 for the induction of believers into the church.⁵⁰

PRACTICAL COMPONENT

Text	Domain	Emphasis
9:38-43; 13-16;19-20	Obedience	<i>Sensitivity to Needy Voices</i>
		<i>Submissive to a Commanding Voice</i>

Coming into full circle of the missiological components in Peter’s nascent paradigm is the practical domain. Peter’s circumstance unfolds the practical aspect of his missiological situation. The key word here is “obedience,”⁵¹ which also applies to Cornelius’ personal experience. In both cases, divine intervention and preparation are evident without the presence of supernatural manipulation to extract obedience. John Stott observes that Cornelius and Peter “reflected on what they saw and heard, interpreted its significance, and deliberately chose to obey.”⁵²

Prior to the unfolding of the culinary vision, Peter’s practical obedience is evident in the hearing of needy voices. Someone died in Chapter 9 and Peter would respond to the call. When Cornelius’ messengers came, Peter would respond positively again. In 9:38 the voice was, “Please come at once!” Peter registers no hesitation: He “went with them” (9:39). Then there is the hearing of a commanding voice. The Spirit of God commands Peter to go, and without any trace of reluctance, he obeys. The command is clear: “Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them” (10:19-20). This is a contrast with his first attitude when a vision to kill and eat came to him. In Peter’s emerging missionary paradigm, obedience to God’s will is a painful necessity that results in the primary mission of the church, namely, witnessing.⁵³ Thus, God’s acceptance of the Gentiles “caps the universal character of the Christian church.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰Robertson, 77. Longenecker stresses that the Holy Spirit’s baptism does not supplant baptism with water but “rather as being the spiritual reality to which water baptism testifies” (395).

⁵¹Peters observes that Peter exemplifies obedience to the Great Commission early in Acts 5:32. Evidently, Peter links obedience to the *gift* of the Holy Spirit (192).

⁵²Stott, 195.

⁵³See for instance Acts 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39-41, among others. For a discussion on witnessing as the primary mission of the church, see Dale Moody, *The*

CONCLUSION

Major components of Peter's emerging missionary paradigm unfold a vision for world missions beyond the boundaries of Jewish systems. Peter's contribution to the shaping of mission theology in the church may have been marginalized because of the abundant stress on Paul's missionary efforts. However, Peter's vision in Acts 10 and its corresponding results from Acts 11 onward proves the apostle's significant impact on and contribution to missionary tasks in the ensuing centuries of church history. The events surrounding Peter's vision may be descriptive, but much of its content appears normative even in today's missionary standard or expectation. Peter's vision in Acts 10 does not exhaust the components that are expected of a missionary paradigm. Other significant passages exist to provide the overall framework of Peter's missiological thinking. None, however, qualified to be as dramatic and profound as the components that have been delineated from Peter's culinary vision in relation to contemporary theologies, policies, strategies, and methodologies of contemporary global missions.

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⁵⁴Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 334.

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