

# JOURNAL OF PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY



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# JOURNAL OF PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY

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God—Creation's Hope, Creation—God's Home:  
A Pentecostal Theological Response to Terence  
E. Fretheim's *God and World in the Old Testament:  
A Relational Theology of Creation*

TITULO  
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Abstract

This essay is a theological response to Terence E. Fretheim's *God and World in the Old Testament*. I will look first at Fretheim's theological method and hermeneutics. Then, I will examine the theme of God's relationality as it relates to God's openness and human ongoing participation with continuous creation. In this section I will also address praise, judgment, and salvation. Finally, I will offer a brief theological reflection on Pentecostal glossolalic speech as indicated by Rom. 8:26–27. I argue that glossolalic speech as an act of prayerful praise causes one to enter into the deep symbiotic relationship with the sociality of God and nonhuman creation. This is one significant way for the charismatic community to participate with God in continuous creation.

Keywords

openness of God, creation, relationality of God, Holy Spirit, glossolalia, hermeneutics, hope, judgment, lament, salvation, law, narrative, praise

As I was reading through Terrence Fretheim's monograph,<sup>1</sup> I could not help but recall my pastoral ministry experience. Prior to coming to Cleveland, TN, to join the faculty of the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Melissa and I pastored the Mohicanville Community Church in Loudonville, Ohio, for approximately 4 years. The church was located in the heart of rural farming country. It was one of the older churches in the area with a German Reformed

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<sup>1</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005).

heritage, and we had families of four generations attending service. Although many of the members were not occupational farmers, most had kin who were farmers or worked in agriculturally related jobs. The children were active in 4-H and the teens were involved with Future Farmers of America. Prayer requests for rain or sunshine, good harvest, and protection of cows were a normal part of our church service. The service of services, if you will, was the annual 'Rural Life Sunday'. On that Sunday, farmers would come to church riding on their newest tractors, restored antique tractors, combines, and other farming machinery. My son proudly drove our John Deere riding lawn mower to church. The mower was the closest thing we had to a tractor. Cars slowed down as they passed by the church parking lot in order to take in the sights. My most memorable sermon that I preached was during one of these services. I took off my shoes and socks, rolled up my pant legs, picked up my garden hoe and said 'Today's sermon title is "God the Farmer".'

I wish, now, that I would have had Professor Fretheim's text because it would have definitely strengthened my sermons for those occasions. For as Fretheim reiterates throughout this work, 'God's purposes in the world must be conceived in relation to the story of all God's creatures, including the land' (pp. 180–81). For like the people of Israel, the people at Mohicanville, 'lived close to the ground, and the natural world filled their lives' (p. xv).<sup>2</sup>

In this study, I will briefly touch upon two topics which I believe intersect with important Pentecostal concerns. I will look first at Fretheim's theological method and hermeneutics. Then, I will examine the theme of God's relationality as it relates to God's openness and human ongoing participation with continuous creation. In this section I will also address praise, judgment, and salvation. Finally, I will offer a brief theological reflection on Pentecostal glossolalic speech as an act of prayerful praise causes one to enter into the deep symbiotic relationship with the sociality of God and non-human creation. This is one significant way for the charismatic community to participate with God in continuous creation.

Theological Reading: A Creational-relational Hermeneutic

Fretheim states that this work is a theological narrative reading of the Old Testament. The purpose of his monograph is to develop a relational theology of creation (pp. xvi–xvii). Throughout this work, he takes into consideration

<sup>2</sup> This would also be fairly accurate of early North American Pentecostalism.