

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*

Kenneth J. Archer*

Pentecostal Theological Seminary, 900 Walker St NE, Cleveland, TN 37311, USA
karcher@ptseminary.edu

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,¹ 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

* Ken Archer (PhD, University of Saint Andrews) is an Associate Professor of Theology at Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, TN, USA.

¹ 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).²

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. 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

² This would also be fairly accurate of early North American Pentecostalism.

certain insights drawn from literary, socio-historical (p. xvi), and tradition-historical analysis.³ At particular places, he interacts with insights raised by these critical methods but is not controlled by their respective methodological concerns.

Professor Fretheim offers a close narrative reading of the text. The primary readers are the 'implied audience' to which the texts were originally directed (p. 109). Fretheim is one of a growing number of biblical scholars who recognizes the necessity of doing academic readings that are methodologically driven by theological analysis. Theological readings are narrative readings focused upon the final form of Scripture with a keen awareness of the importance of genre and reader response concerns.⁴ Theological interpretation is filling up the ugly ditch created by both systematic theology, which often does not allow for Scripture to be the primary organizing contributor, and traditional historical critical analysis, which really is not concerned about the interpretation of the final form of the text. The methodological procedure is generally trying to get to the world behind the text. For Christians, academic traditional historical critical studies offer very little for the formation of the community and its worship.⁵ Unfortunately, most conservative systematic theologians and traditional theological works often smooth out the biblical text in such ways as to minimize the challenging features raised by it—specifically, the narrative passages which challenge classical theism's portrait of God.

Fretheim's work is a theological narrative reading. It provides a close thematic reading of the biblical narrative concerning creation. This in itself is a valuable contribution. However, the work also provides helpful clues as to how the present community of God's people is the necessary interpretative audience for a theological reading. The context in which I tease this out is his discussion on the Law. The New Testament community follows the trajectory of the Old Testament community. And in turn the New Testament 'provides a broad pattern for the interpretation and sets an agenda for both church and society in its ongoing consideration of Old Testament', especially as it pertains to 'law' (p. 154). It is here we find an affirmation of Acts 15.1–35 with a

³ See p. 113 where he says he does not discount source criticism. He is very conversant with traditional historical critical analysis, but he will work with the final form of the text.

⁴ Generally, reader-response can also become an advocacy hermeneutic which has shed much light upon the text, for example, Liberation hermeneutics (Feminist, African American, Latin, etc).

⁵ However, Redaction criticism has been seen as valuable because it is concerned with the final form of the text.

citation of vv. 28-29, 'it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us' (p. 137). He writes, 'God's laws pass through a human mind (narratively) and inevitably involves interpretation and reflection (not unlike Acts 15:28, also in a law giving context)' (p. 137). He argues that Law should be understood from a relational model grounded in creational context. The law is given in creation which God expects humans to be able to discern.⁶ The law which is part of the created moral order is always given for life.⁷ Scripture is moral because it is born out of God's relationship with humanity, especially the community of God. Fretheim states, 'While texts themselves witness at times to laws *as laws* no longer being applicable, it always needs to be asked whether the concerns that generated those laws may continue to be important for the community and its ongoing formulation of new law' (p. 155).⁸ The point I am making is that the overall narrative of Scripture is the means to interpreting various forms found in Scripture, including law. The community, however, must participate in appropriating *new* meanings of specific texts because they too have behavioral relational standards which are to be practiced.

Even when it comes to interpreting texts faithfully, new meaning is a necessary possibility because of *creatio continua* (pp. 3-9). Hence interpretation is first and foremost a relational endeavor originally woven into the good created universe. Normative practices, based in and on Scripture, will enable humans to contribute in positive ways to the continuing of creation. New times and new places, although always connected to the web of life first woven in original creation, require new ways of appropriating the meanings of a text (p. 8).⁹

Fretheim affirms both the community and Scripture as necessary contributors to the interpretive process, at least at the level of appropriation.¹⁰ He also

⁶ An interesting piece to put in dialogue with Fretheim on creational and relational hermeneutics would be James A. K. Smith., *The Fall of Interpretation; Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

⁷ Fretheim includes non-believers in the process of interpreting law because law is part of the created moral world, see pp. 137-140.

⁸ 'I would argue that every law of God continues to have value for the present-day communities *at some level*, especially at the level of concern that generated the law in the first place' (p. 155). See pp. 154-55, where he offers helpful guidance in discerning the appropriation of the meaning of law.

⁹ Fretheim recognizes the significant impact that sin has had on all of creation, including humanity. However, even though sin is born in the human will, sin and evil do not constitute what it means to be human or any other creature. Humans, even fallen and unredeemed, have the possibility to discern and name the forces of sin and evil, see p. 13.

¹⁰ See also pp. 136-139, where he argues that the law revealed at Mt Sinai is understood 'to stand in *fundamental continuity* with the discernment of the will of God in and through *common human experience*.'

hints at the role of the Spirit in the hermeneutical event. His affirmation of Acts 15.1-35 as a prime example of the New Testament pattern may lead him in the future to further explore the relationship and contribution of the Spirit to the interpretive process. Acts 15 does present us with a model for interpretation that involves the Spirit, community, and the Scripture as dialogical partners in a tridactic relationship for the making of meaning.¹¹ The community in dialogue with the Scripture and the Holy Spirit will need to discern the range of possible meanings of a text. New meanings are not just whimsical or fanciful concepts or novel practices. The new meaning(s) are not ahistorical principles but instead arise out of the foundational narrative (Scripture) and are inspired by the Holy Spirit as future practices for the community. The foundational 'theological' narrative, along with the syntax of the writings, provides limits to its possible meanings. Future meaning should not be severed from its past performances. The interpretation of Scripture is not a mechanical process but dynamic and open. Like creation, it is open to new possibilities. Like creation, interpretation has finite limits which do restrict the new possibilities. This is risky but God has provided the community with the raw materials necessary to interpret (creation). God has given humanity the particular revealed sacred story (Scripture) which stands as the interpretation of reality. As Jesus promised, God sends the Spirit to lead us into all truth (John 14-16). The Spirit of God is still active, speaking, forming, and leading all of creation into ultimate salvation—the eschatological event whereby God brings the new heaven and earth into being (p. 9).

The Relationality of God: A Relational Model of Creation

The relational nature of creation is a reflection of the relationality of God's being. God is relational. This is an integral part of God's ontological identity. The 'sociality of God' is 'prior to and independent of God's relationship to the world' (p. 17). God is God and creation is just that—creation. God is eternal, and the uncreated relational member in finite creation. Creation is a free loving act of God, not a necessary act. God entered into an asymmetrical relation with creation (pp. 19-27). However, given that God's very identity is

¹¹ See Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009) and John Christopher Thomas, 'Women, Pentecostals and the Bible: An Experiment in Pentecostal Hermeneutics' *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5 (1994), pp. 17-40.

relational, the sociality of God brings into existence out of no preexistent material a universe that is deeply interconnected and thus relational. According to Fretheim, 'the Hebrew Bible urges us to think of God as being in a genuine relationship with every aspect of the creation and intimately involved with every creature' (p. 20). Such an understanding of God's relationality is not foreign to Pentecostal theology or preaching.¹²

Fretheim helps us to imagine this deeply connected symbiotic interrelatedness of all of creation through the analogy of a spider web. Each creature is interconnected in such a way that 'any act reverberates out and affects the whole, shaking this web with varying degrees of intensity.' Humans have the greatest capacity to affect the web, positively and negatively (p. 19). Another analogy he makes use of is that of a weave. The symbiotic interrelatedness is a 'complex, loose causal weave' (p. 19). It is not a tight causal weave because there is room for God to be at work presently in creation as creation moves towards its future destiny (p. 165).

Creation is the raw material and primary means of causality. The past does not predetermine the future or the present (p. 7). God has not predetermined every event in history. God acts in and through creation but God is not pure act. God can be acted upon. God's present and future actions are consistent with God's character; however God's action in the future is not predetermined by past decree. God's actions are not fixed ahead of time for every conceivable future moment (p. 277). God allows for humans and nonhumans to contribute to the present and future possibilities. People have real authentic volitional choices that impact God and creation. To some extent, God's actions will be shaped by human (and nonhuman) actions. In other words, the created time-space continuum is moving all of creation towards a final re-creative act. The movement is risky for everyone because history has not been fully determined. Created beings can resist God, reject God, and/or cooperate with God. The relational process allows for limited openness and possibilities for everyone and everything, including God. God is in the process of continuing creation and this brings forth new yet limited possibilities for creation. The biblical-theological 'relational model' shaped primarily by the biblical narrative affirms 'a deep dependence of creatures upon the Creator for their existence and continuing life' (p. 271).

¹² See Clark H. Pinnock, 'Divine Relationality: A Pentecostal Contribution to the Doctrine of God', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16 (April 2000), pp. 3-26.

Openness

Fretheim's argument for the openness of God and necessary yet limited freedom of finite creation is not grounded in philosophical argument. I agree that a close reading of biblical narrative inevitably leads one to such an understanding. In the very act of creating, God makes room for and gives space to creation, even inanimate aspects of creation. 'The result is an ordered freedom in creation, a degree of openness and unpredictability wherein God leaves room for the nonhuman creatures to develop in less than fully determined ways and for genuine human decisions on the part of human beings as they exercise their God-given power' (p. 272). These acts do have a real impact on God and what God may do. This decision on God's part to create a universe in this manner means that God enters into a certain kind of relationship with creation that entails divine constraint and restraint. God works with and through creation in a synergistic manner within the created time-space continuum. Time-space is moving towards its final re-creative act, this is assured. However getting there is risky because the relationship between creation, God, and humanity is not fully fixed (p. 272).¹³

Fretheim's theological reading is a refreshing breeze upon the stale static classical theistic model of God. This work in decisive ways rejects monergism, determinism, and ahistoricism of God's relationship with time and space. God is eternal, yet God lives and moves within the space-time continuum. Yes, God is beyond it because God is not created and God is eternal, but that does not mean that all of history has completed its course. Surely the past is the past, a fixed history. The present flowing out of the past is dynamic and interconnected but not predetermined in its course. The future is still yet to come. Space-time moves and with it so does God because God chooses to move in, with, and through creation. Even in the current corrupted condition, creation is God's home. The future is partially opened because it has not yet come fully into being.

I suspect that Pentecostals who are shaped by a more Eastern and Wesleyan theological perspectives will welcome certain aspects of his work. The rich biblical presentation of God's interaction within creation reflects our own spirituality—the core of which is a dynamic relationship with God. The Pentecostal community I worship with knows that prayer changes things

¹³ See also p. 19.

because it can move the hand of God in decisive ways.¹⁴ Our soteriology is not a past static event predetermined by God's irresistible grace of which we are passive recipients. We indeed believe in a present dynamic relational salvation made available because of God's grace and work. We receive salvation by faith and this is demonstrated through good actions (Eph. 2.1-10). We understand this as a synergistic relationship. Not everyone would agree with Fretheim's interpretation of the relational openness of God. Many will adhere to an Arminian model as the way to explain limited human freedom based upon God's foreknowledge of actual future events. The Arminian model is still a classical theistic model. From my perspective, it does not do enough justice to the relational presentation of God in the biblical narrative.

Praise

Fretheim points out that praise always has two facets, 'the honor of God and the witness to others (cf. Ps 119.171-72). The one always entails the other' (p. 259).¹⁵ He writes, 'Praise occurs when the creature fulfills the task for which it was created.' This includes nonhuman creation as well. Witness, among other things, is 'making known the name of YHWH' (p. 258). To all of this, Pentecostals would offer an affirmative, 'Amen' and some like myself would shout, 'Hallelujah!'¹⁶ What I find intriguing is his affirmation of the necessity of offering praise as both a means and an end for creation to bring forth its intended possibilities. Without 'calls of praise' people and creation may not realize all the possibilities open to them. Without praise, they may miss possible opportunities to fulfill their task. Through the activity of praise creation affirms what it is. All of creation is in a dynamic relationship with God which provides opportunity for growth. Worship generates possibilities of continuing creation's purpose as fully becoming God's home. Nonhuman

¹⁴ For my early attempt at presenting an Openness model of God that is informed by Pentecostal practice of prayer and worship see Kenneth J. Archer, 'Open View Theism: Prayer Changes Things', *The Pneuma Review* 5.2 (Spring 2002), pp. 32-53. For current argument see Kenneth J. Archer chapter five 'Pentecostal Prayer and Relational Openness of the Social Triune God' in *The Gospel Revisited: Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness* (Pickwick Publications, Forthcoming).

¹⁵ See also pp. 257-59.

¹⁶ See my essay 'A Theology of the Word... and that's the point!' in *Passover, Pentecost and Parousia: Studies in Celebration of the Life and Ministry of R. Hollis Gause* (eds. Steven J. Land, Rick D. Moore and John C. Thomas; Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2010), pp. 125-44 and 'A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology: Manner and Method', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9.3 (July 2007) pp. 301-14.

creation is the ‘raw material for human praise.’ ‘Humans give voice to nonhuman praise’ (p. 284).¹⁷ Furthermore, praise empowers God! Praise increases and gives power to God. ‘*God* is affected by praise, not simply those who (speak) praise or respond to it’ (p. 259). What humans do and do not do affects God. Human activity of praise affects both God and creation in a positive manner. The lack of worship and practice of defamation would affect God and creation in a negative manner.

Judgment

The great tragedy of human sinfulness, even the Christian’s sinful acts, may affect the ability of nature to voice their praise. Sin and human sinfulness continues to plague creation in devastating ways. The activity of human sinfulness and the lack of concern for justice, especially for the economically disadvantaged (the widow, orphan, alien, and sick) and marginalized, has devastating effects upon the social order as well as the cosmic order. Because of their lack of righteousness and justice, ‘the people have polluted the land’ (p. 170).

According to Fretheim, ‘Humans cannot escape their responsibility for what happens by a claim the devil made me do it’ (p. 73). Judgment is the consequence of the intrinsic nature of the sinful acts themselves. ‘God does not impose anything new on the judgmental situation but mediates the consequences of sin’ which is complex because of the interconnectedness of all creation (p. 160). God ‘sees’ that the consequences are carried out. God may take a more active or passive role in this activity. God’s concern is always for the redemption of creation, in spite of the tragedies produced by sin and its consequences (p. 165).¹⁸ Judgment is an intrinsic consequence of God’s moral order in creation which reflects God’s moral relational character. ‘Human sin and its judgmental effects ripple out and adversely affect the entire created order’ (p. 160). The good news is that ‘God is patient, forbearing and ‘slow to anger’ (e.g. Jonah 4.2) and open to changing the divine mind before and *after* the judgment has been exercised (e.g. Jonah 3.8–10)’ (p. 159).

¹⁷ See pp. 278–84 where he further develops the vocation of nonhuman.

¹⁸ Fretheim addresses sin throughout the monograph. His affirmation and understanding of judgment is a valuable contribution (see pp. 157–81). Sin and judgment, like creation, redemption, and salvation are understood relationally. God as judge, though, should not be understood strictly in forensic metaphor, as if each judgment was a specific divine response. Forensic categories can skew a proper relational understanding of God as judge.

I believe, in keeping with Fretheim's argument of the relational nature of judgment, one could say that judgment has a teleological function as well. Judgment creates redemptive possibilities. The reverse is also true. Humans doing rightly according to YHWH's moral standards creates blessing for other humans and the land. God has a partnership with creation and in the end YHWH will completely redeem it through re-creating. Re-creating is not the annihilation of creation. 'All nonhuman creatures will participate in universal salvation, envisaged most fundamentally in terms of a renewal of nature' (p. 195). God is the only one who can guarantee the future of creation (p. 105). But for now, God invites us to cooperate with God and thus contribute to the future possibilities of both human and nonhuman liberation.¹⁹

Even though I find his argument concerning how judgment is mediated through creation and the consequences of sinful activity very helpful, I would desire to affirm the biblical portraits of moments of direct dramatic intervention of God. This would help to reaffirm the transcendence of God without necessarily collapsing back into categories of natural and supernatural.²⁰ God's imminence must be grounded in God's transcendence. Also missing is the role of other non human volitional created beings. Angels or spirit beings play prominent roles in the biblical narrative, especially in episodes of judgment and salvation. They serve as messengers of YHWH, and at times they serve as causal agents for judgment and liberation. Fretheim does not address these 'created' beings in a sufficient manner, especially in light of the major roles they play in the biblical narrative. Most likely, he would see these beings function in the narrative as one of the many ways God sees that judgment is mediated through the created order.

For Pentecostals, creation also includes a real but mostly unseen spirit world. Hence, the biblical story with created spirit beings, some of which have turned against God, are affirmed as part of created reality. However, they also recognize that the world is filled with all kinds of beasts, some of which are diabolical and always opposed to God, God's people and God's creation. Thus direct divine liberation is essential for our salvation and not only ours but for all creation.

¹⁹ Fretheim writes, 'God does cease to act as creator once he acts as redeemer' (p. 24). Redemption serves creation not the other way around (p. 125). See also p. 280, where God works salvation through nonhuman creation as a medium for the salvation of the oppressed.

²⁰ Fretheim is not arguing for the modern notion of a closed naturalistic worldview nor is he arguing for some panentheistic process view. I get the sense that creation is the medium for all causality—that is God works through it, with it, and in it.

Salvation

Salvation is fundamentally material restoration of creation because it is concerned with all of original creation. In this case, healing of the body as well as the healing of the environment is interconnected to the redemptive work of God. Pentecostals generally understand that feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and ministering to the marginalized is a necessary aspect of preaching a full and whole gospel. This is not to suggest that the reconciliation of humans with God through Jesus Christ is not a concern. The point is that we must think of redemption and salvation of creation holistically. The human spirit is also a created aspect of being human. Salvation addresses the whole person and all of creation. Fretheim's theological presentation of creation's redemption only strengthens the argument that healing is provided for through the atoning work of Christ. Also, his biblically shaped theological argument concerning judgment would be a helpful inclusion into a Pentecostal theology of a contemporary *Christus Victor* model of missional redemption for all of creation. One thing that is missing in Fretheim's exposition is a clear articulation of demonic or angelical beings' contributions to the problem of sin and evil, something that Pentecostal theology could possibly shed some light upon.

In sum, 'God's relationship to the world is constituted from within its structures of time' (p. 25). God enters into the created space-time continuum without losing transcendence or being absorbed into creation. God's choice to live in creation does not mean God is subject in the same way we are to the 'ravages' of time (p. 25). Yet time as temporal and sequential is real to God. The point here is that God is affected by space-time in such a way that God too suffers the grief of human sinfulness. 'For God to decide to endure a wicked world, while continuing to open up the divine heart to the world, means that God's grief is ongoing. God thus determines to take suffering into God's own self and bear it there for the sake of the future of the world' (p. 83). Suffering is a persistent reality but not the totality of God's experience within creation. God suffers with, for, and in behalf of creation as a result of sinful rebellion. God did and continues to take great delight in his creation because creation has relational capacity (pp. 216–17). Thus God delights in right relationship with creation. God moves and tugs creation back into a right and peaceful relationship with God. Humanity (and I would include created angelic beings) is invited to work the ground with and for God, which in turn voices creation praise to God. Creation is God's stage and God's abode.

Glossolalic Prayer

Fretheim writes, 'In this environmentally sensitive age we have often seen the adverse natural effects of human sin ... The whole creation groaning in travail waiting for redemption of people needs little commentary today (Rom 8:22)' (p. 123). It is precisely this passage in Romans that I want to begin with as I briefly offer a theological reflection on a Pentecostal theology of glossolalic prayer. I propose that glossolalic prayer is Spirit inspired praise and lament.

God is the sovereign-relational creator. Yet God should not be primarily conceived by the philosophical categories that informed the classical theistic model. We, like Fretheim, should allow the narrative of Scripture to shape our imagination of God. God can be and is acted upon by creation, especially humanity. The Social Trinity invites us to participate in bringing about God's mission of redemption for creation. One of the more relational intimate ways Pentecostal-charismatic communities can enter into the pathos of God is through glossolalic prayer. Pentecostals speak in tongues (glossolalia) as the Spirit gives utterance (Acts 2.4). This is a synergistic activity.

Glossolalic prayer is often understood as a personal and a corporate means of edification. I do believe this is one aspect of glossolalic prayer. However, there is another dimension. Romans 8.26 states that the Spirit intercedes for us with groans which words cannot express. If you will allow this activity to include glossolalic speech, which for many Pentecostals it is understood as such, then I can make a strong biblical case that praying in the Spirit is one very intimate way we can connect deeply with God's concern for the redemption of all of creation.

In Romans 8 we are told that creation groans in frustration, the Spirit groans through intercession, and humans groan as a result of their weakness. Everything is anticipating final restoration. We are not passive instruments but active participants with God. Prayer is not a passive activity. It is the very means of developing our relationship with God. Prayer affects God and in turn this affects creation. 'God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant' (Exod. 2.24). Prayer may be more significant in affecting the future than we can imagine, especially in light of Fretheim's argument concerning worship.

For Pentecostals, prayer is an important aspect of worship. Prayer is a gift that enables us to grow in our relationship with God and participate in God and with God. One of the intimate aspects of Spirit baptism, as understood by Pentecostals, is the ability to pray in and with the Spirit—glossolalic speech. In this activity we can join the Spirit in lifting up intercession

for creation. In fact, we become the vocal instruments of the Spirit who is praying through us on behalf of creation. This relational activity can include times of ecstatic praises enabling creation to reach new possibilities for which it was created. Such times in church service are signified through shouting, weeping, jumping, moaning, being slain in the Spirit, quietly listening, and running. The person in community is experiencing an encounter with the Spirit sometimes called a breakthrough. They are being freed up from sin, being loosed from oppression, becoming liberated from demonic interference. The practice of glossolalic prayer should not be reduced to an instrumental purpose but instead understood to be a deep relational conversation of intercession with God and unto God.

The practice of glossolalic prayer might encourage Pentecostals and charismatics to be compassionately moved to identify with God's concern for creation. If a person or a community experiences a fresh revelation that compassionate care is indeed part of God's mission then s/he might take an active role in participating in caring for creation. Thus, glossolalic prayer with the Spirit allows humans to offer up praise and petition in behalf of creation. Even more importantly, it allows the Spirit to reform the community to be good stewards of creation.

I also believe that glossolalic prayer can turn into moments of lament which are accompanied by tears and deep groans as Rom. 8.1-27 communicates. Creation is frustrated and is groaning. The Spirit laments the current condition of creation. We participate in this lament by giving voice to the Spirit. The lament is an echo of the cry of the forsaken Christ, thus the Spirit brings the lament back to the sociality of God. The Spirit moans and groans and invites us to enter into intercession for creation. This most intimate activity of the Spirit is an aspect of the grieving that God experiences. This grief is something the Spirit shares with us. In this way, the cry of Jesus upon the cross and the cries of the Spirit are connected to the cry of the Father. 'For God, too, has a story and will cry out, How long? (e.g. Hos 8:5)' (p. 26). The lament of God is not a cry to destroy creation but reminds creation that it has a future. God is its future. As Christ was raised so shall creation be raised to new life. Grief is temporary; hope is permanent.

God is not overwhelmed by grief nor is God a foreigner to the experiences of grief. Relational love is the ontological reality of God. This assures all of creation, including redeemed humanity, that God will bring about the completion of God's mission. By being formed through participation in God's mission and the present ministry activity of the Holy Spirit, these synergistic glossolalic prayer times of praise and lament are cries for the King's coming. They invite God's present help by manifestation of signs and wonders. These cries also connect us to the realization that the coming of God includes the

coming liberation of creation. In fact ‘God’s coming is accompanied by activity in the nonhuman sphere: the earth quakes and the heaven rains down ... God is accompanied by fire and smoke, covered by darkness and clouds’ (p. 281). Liberated creation will participate in God’s coming. Creation’s participation in God’s coming brings about its own liberation.

For Pentecostals, Acts 2 and Joel 2 impress heavily upon our imagination. We can care for creation through participating in glossolalic prayer. Furthermore, such activity should cause the community to care for creation in various ways. Maybe this will help Pentecostal communities develop helpful ways of creation care. No doubt, Christians deeply connected to the Holy Spirit will be greatly concerned for God’s mission, which includes not only the poor and marginalized but all of God’s creation. Pentecostal spirituality manifests as a passionate love for God and compassionate care for people which also needs to include a demonstrable witness to care for God’s creation. The importance of this work by Fretheim for Pentecostals is articulated by its key theme—relationality. It can further strengthen a Pentecostal understanding of the synergistic relationality of God, something we treasure. But even more pressing is the need to ‘see’ and ‘hear’ the relationality of creation—an overlooked garden that could provide much future theological fruit if properly attended.

In conclusion, Fretheim’s work will continue to contribute to my theological understanding in fruitful ways. Pentecostals will most likely find it a helpful resource because it engages Scripture as narrative and thus the focus is a close reading of the final form of the canon. It thoroughly addresses the relationality of God which has always been the very heart of our spirituality. The text offers an *implicit* ‘biblical’ critique of the classical theistic doctrine of God and the more conservative North American evangelical understanding of divine judgment.²¹ Furthermore it strengthens the necessary human responsibility for cooperating with God as we care for creation. Fretheim has provided me with theological seeds that will bear fruit in due season in both my teaching and preaching.²² By doing so he has achieved his hope to foster more

²¹ He does not specifically address classical theism in this work.

²² I share this as a word of encouragement to Terry. A couple of weeks after returning from the Society for Pentecostal Studies I was invited by my Pastor to preach. My sermon passage was Rom. 8.18–27. The sermon title was ‘Frustrated but not Finished’. The congregation responded positively. On Sunday June 13, 2010, our evening service was devoted to communion and intercessory prayer. Our pastor invited various people to lead the congregation in lifting up specific concerns. He invited me to lead the congregation to pray about the oil spill in the Gulf. His concern was for the financial problems and ecological damage resulting from the devastating oil spill. Your book had benefited me.

theological reflection in the academy and in religious communities (p. xvii). I end my response with these quotes, ‘No matter the past, God remains committed to the future of creation’ (p. 109). ‘When the trumpet sounds and God rides the cloud chariots into the new heaven and new earth, the children will come singing, leading wolves and leopards, and playing among the snakes. And they will not hurt or destroy, for God will, finally, “give rest to the earth” (Jer 50:34; see Isa 14:7; 51:3) and all creatures will “shout for joy”’ (p. 181).