The gift and presence of the Holy Spirit constitute the greatest and most wonderful reality that we—the human community, all living beings, and the entire earth—can experience. For present in the Holy Spirit is not just one spirit of the many good and evil spirits that exist, but the very God who creates, gives life, blesses, and redeems. In the presence of the Holy Spirit, one experiences the beginning of the end of the history of guilt, suffering, and death. In the presence of the Holy Spirit, the fulfillment of creation’s movement toward the kingdom of God begins. According to the prophet Joel (2.28), God says, ‘It shall come to pass in the latter days’. What the first Christians experienced as ‘Pentecost’ in Acts 2 also occurred in the first days of the new creation of the world: the outpouring of creative power and of the divine Spirit who gives eternal life—the stormy wind and flaming tongues of the divine breath. Thus Pentecost, as Christians call this event, is not an appendix nor a supplement to ‘Good Friday’ and ‘Easter’, but the objective of Jesus’
self-sacrifice in his death on the cross and the goal of his resurrection through God in coming glory. Where the Holy Spirit is, there God is present in a special sense, and we experience God through our lives or through that which is brought forth fully alive from deep within. We experience the abundant, full, healed, and redeemed life with all of our senses. We feel and taste, we grope for and see our lives in God, and God in our lives. There are many names for God the Holy Spirit. Among them are the names of Comforter (Paraclete) and—my favorite—the Source of Life (fons vitae).

I. Biblical Perspectives and the Presence of the Spirit of God

1. Expectation and the Coming of the Holy Spirit
All prayers to the Holy Spirit are founded on the petition for the coming of the Spirit. This petition, which in the Christian tradition is termed the epiklesis of the Spirit, is very special. Most Pentecost songs simply cry, 'Come, Holy Spirit' (Veni, Creator Spiritus, Hrabanus Maurus). These petitions for the Holy Spirit are directed to the Spirit's all-encompassing presence. The Spirit is more than one gift among other gifts: the 'Holy Spirit' is the boundless presence of God awakened in our lives, filled with vitality, and gifted with spiritual powers. The petitions for the coming of the Spirit are Maranatha prayers, known to be directed to Christ and meant eschatologically: 'Amen. Yes, come Lord Jesus', speaks the next-to-the-last verse of the New Testament (Rev. 22.20). This verse refers not only to the person of Jesus but also to his coming in the glory of God for the new creation of the world. The Parousia of the Holy Spirit is the beginning of the Parousia of Christ. Thus, the Holy Spirit is called the 'down payment of glory' (Eph. 1.14; 2 Cor. 1.22). What begins here in the Holy Spirit will be fulfilled there in the kingdom of glory. The coming of the kingdom of glory is not unexpected and unprepared for but is proclaimed already and made powerful in the present. So it is with spring and summer, sowing and harvest, sunrise and high noon.

In petitions for the Spirit, those who petition open themselves to expectation and allow the energies of the Spirit to flow into them. Even when people can only groan for redemption and fall silent in groaning, the Spirit of God groans already in them and represents them (Rom. 8.26). In this bound life and destructive world, the petitions and groanings for the coming of the Spirit are themselves from the Spirit and are the first signs of the Spirit's life.