



# Divine Breath and the Process of Creation: The Allusions to Gen 2:7 in the Catechetical Rhetoric of Cyril of Jerusalem

Harri Huovinen<sup>1</sup>

---

**Abstract:** Previous scholarship inadequately acknowledged the diverse ways in which Cyril of Jerusalem employed the breath-related vocabulary related to or derived from Gen 2:7. A systematic analysis of Cyril's catechetical homilies revealed that in his rhetoric, this vocabulary was utilized in several distinct contexts. First, it was used to describe the creation of humans as living beings. Secondly, the vocabulary depicted a pre-Pentecost mediation of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit could be interpreted as another form of "breathing". Fourthly, breath-related vocabulary was employed in reference to three ecclesiastical rites of initiation, indicating their pneumatological significance. This collective utilization of Biblical accounts of breathing, alongside depictions of post-Biblical ecclesiastical rites, formed a coherent narrative aimed at instructing catechetical audiences about the historical sequence of human creation. This narrative encompassed the divine vivification of the tangible body and postlapsarian re-vivification through the Holy Spirit. Simultaneously, it became evident that Cyril's use of this vocabulary aligned with his overall allusionary approach to employing Scripture in catechesis.

**Keywords:** Divine breath; creation; Biblical reception; catechetical rhetoric; Patristic; Cyril of Jerusalem

---

Anyone studying early Christian theology of initiation is likely to observe that among late fourth-century catechetical sources, the homilies attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-387) contain the largest number of Biblical references<sup>2</sup>. It is not surprising, then, that Patristic scholarship

---

<sup>1</sup> Harri Huovinen ThD, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Eastern Finland School of Theology, Joensuu, Finland; email: harri.huovinen@uef.fi; ORCID: 0000-0002-0776-9993.

<sup>2</sup> The Cyrilline catechetical corpus comprises a total of 19 *Lenten Catecheses* (*Procatechesis* and *Catecheses* 1-18), and five post-baptismal *Mystagogical Catecheses* (*Catecheses mystagogica* 1-5). For the present purposes, the former set of sources has been examined using the editions widely accepted by contemporary scholars *Cyrilli Hierosolymarum archiepiscopi opera quae supersunt omnia*, v. 1-2, ed. W.C. Reischl – J. Rupp, Hildesheim 1967 (henceforth referred to as RR 1 & 2). The study of the *Myst-*

has devoted considerable attention not only to Cyril's initiatory theology but also to his approaches to Scripture<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, at least one aspect of these themes has yet to be explored.

In nine of the 24 Cyrilline catechetical homilies, words from the  $\pi\nu\epsilon$ -,  $\pi\nu\omicron$ -, and the thematically related  $\acute{\epsilon}\mu\phi\upsilon\sigma$ - groups are employed in reference to physical breath. The key instances are as follows:

---

*agogical Catecheses* is based upon *Cyrille de Jérusalem, Catéchèses mystagogiques*, ed. A. Piédagnel – P. Paris, SCh 126 bis, Paris 2004. For the record, other notable fourth century sources of Christian initiation include the 12 catechetical homilies of John Chrysostom, see *Catecheses Baptismales: griechisch, deutsch = Taufkatechesen*, v. 1, ed. R. Kaczynski, Fontes Christiani 6/1, Freiburg im Breisgau 1992; *Trois catéchèses baptismales*, ed. A. Piédagnel – L. Doutreleau, SCh 366, Paris 1990; *Huit catéchèses baptismales inédites*, ed. A. Wenger, SCh 50, Paris 1957. See also the Ambrosian *Sacr. and Myst.* in: *Des sacrements; Des mystères; Explication du symbole*, ed. B. Botte, SCh 25 bis, Paris 1961.

<sup>3</sup> Notable studies on Cyril's catechetical theology include D.R. Hawk-Reinhard, *Christian Identity Formation according to Cyril of Jerusalem: Sacramental Theōsis as a Means of Constructing Relational Identity*, Louvain 2020; K. Akselberg, *Greeks, Jews, heretics, and the Church of God: Ecclesiology in the catechetical lectures of St Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem*, University of Oxford 2017 (PhD Diss.); J. Day, *The Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem: Fourth- and Fifth-Century Evidence from Palestine, Syria and Egypt*, Aldershot – Burlington 2007; A.J. Doval, *Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogue: The Authorship of Mystagogic Catecheses*, Washington 2001. For general discussion on Cyril's approaches to Scripture, see e.g. Akselberg, *Greeks, Jews, heretics*, p. 53-60; P. Jackson, *Cyril of Jerusalem's Use of Scripture in Catechesis*, "Theological Studies" 52 (1991) p. 431-450; A. Paulin, *Saint Cyrille de Jérusalem: Catéchète*, Paris 1959, p. 99-109; A.A. Stephenson, *St. Cyril of Jerusalem and the Alexandrian Heritage*, "Theological Studies" 15/4 (1954) p. 573-593; G. Delacroix, *Saint Cyrille de Jérusalem: Sa vie et ses œuvres*, Paris 1865, p. 217-221. For Cyril's reception of specific Biblical themes, see e.g. H. Huovinen, *Paratiisin neljä tasoa Kyrillos Jerusalemlaisen katekeettisessä retoriikassa*, in: *Varhaiskirjon Jerusalem*, ed. S. Seppälä, Studia Patristica Fennica 19, Helsinki 2023, p. 169-199; H. Huovinen, *Parantunut profeetta: Daavidin roolit Kyrillos Jerusalemlaisen katekeeseissa*, in: *Kristityt ennen kristittyjä: Vanhan liiton pyhät kirkkoisien silmin*, ed. A. Bergman, Studia Patristica Fennica 16, Helsinki 2022 p. 83-109; H. Huovinen, *Familial Terminology and the Progressive Nature of Church Membership in Cyril of Jerusalem*, "Review of Ecumenical Studies" 13/3 (2021) p. 400-418.

| Word group | Cyrilline passage                             | Vocabulary          |
|------------|---|---------------------|
| (-)πνε-    | <i>Procatech.</i> 1, RR 1, 2                  | ἐπνευσειν           |
|            | <i>Procatech.</i> 9, RR 1, 12                 | τὸ πνεῦμα           |
|            |   | Πνεύματος θείου     |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 12, 32, RR 2, 44               | [πνεῖ] πνεῦμα ἅγιον |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 13, 7, RR 2, 60                | πνεῦμα              |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 14, 18, RR 2, 130              | ἀναπνέων            |
| (-)πνο-    | <i>Catech.</i> 6, 5, RR 1, 160                | Πᾶσα πνοή           |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 9, 15, RR 1, 256               | ἀναπνοήν            |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 12, 14, RR 2, 18               | πνοή                |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 14, 18, RR 2, 130              | ἀναπνοῆς            |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 17, 5, RR 2, 256               | ἀναπνεόμενον        |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 17, 15, RR 2, 268              | πνοῆς               |
| ἐμφυσ-     | <i>Procatech.</i> 9, RR 1, 12                 | ἐμφυσηθῆς           |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 14, 22, RR 2, 138              | ἐμφυσήματος         |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 16, 19, RR 2, 230              | ἐμφύσημα            |
|            | <i>Catech.</i> 17, 12, RR 2, 266              | ἐνεφύσησε           |
|            |   | ἐμφύσημα            |
|            |   | ἐμφυσῶν             |
|            |   | ἐνεφύσησεν          |
|            | <i>Catech. myst.</i> 2, 3, SCh 126<br>bis:108 | τὰ ἐμφυσήματα       |

Considering Cyril's explicit objective to offer a well-ordered exposition of the Christian faith<sup>4</sup>, it is implausible that his frequent references to breathing were accidental. This leads to the following questions: What

<sup>4</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Procatechesis* 4, 11. Cf. the epigraphs of *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 1-18, which seem to suggest an improvisational approach (ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις σχεδιασθεῖσα). It could be proposed that while the themes of these pre-baptismal catecheses evidently follow a predetermined narrative, the detailed composition of individual homilies may have involved some degree of improvisation. For discussion and literature on the lack of systematic theology in Patristic sources, see H. Huovinen, *Images of Divine Participation: A Reappraisal of Fourth Century Views on Church Membership*, *Studia Patristica Fennica* 18, Helsinki 2022, p. 19-20.

is the function of the vocabulary related to breath in Cyril's catechetical rhetoric? Moreover, what does the utilization of this vocabulary reveal about the author's broader approach to employing Scripture in catechesis?

To address these questions, the relevant material will be organized thematically into four categories. The study commences with an analysis of Cyril's use and interpretation of Gen 2:7. Second, we will explore the catechist's perspective on the breath of Jesus, as recorded in Jn 20:22, and its pneumatological function. Third, we will briefly examine Cyril's account of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit and its apparent connection with breathing. The fourth major section will focus on what can be interpreted as ecclesiastical forms of spiritual "breathing". Finally, concluding remarks will be given.

## 1. Creation as a Bestowal of Divine Breath

First, Cyril's utilization of the breath-related vocabulary evokes associations with the Gen 2:7 narrative of human creation, the Septuagint rendering of which employs both ἐμφυσ- and πνο- words:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον<br>χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς     | And God formed man,<br>dust from the earth,      |
| καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ <b>πνοήν</b> ζωῆς, | and breathed into his face a breath of<br>life,  |
| καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν <sup>5</sup> .   | and the man became a living being <sup>6</sup> . |

The Cyrilline corpus includes three apparent references to this passage. The first one occurs in *Catech.* 12, where Cyril praises the creation event:

[B]ut that the dust of the earth should become a man, this is more wonderful. That clay molded together should assume the coats and splendors of the eyes, this is more wonderful. That out of dust of uniform appearance should be produced both the firmness of bones, and the softness of lungs, and other different kinds of members, this is wonderful. That clay should be animated and travel round the world self-moved, and should build houses, this is won-

<sup>5</sup> Gen 2:7 LXX. Emphases added.

<sup>6</sup> Gen 2:7 NETS.

derful. That clay should teach, and talk, and act as carpenter, and as king, this is wonderful. Whence, then, [...] was Adam made? Did not God take dust from the earth, and fashion this wonderful figure? Is then clay changed into an eye, and cannot a virgin bear a son?<sup>7</sup>

For the catechist, the animation of the earthy body (τὸ πηλὸν ψυχωθέντα) clearly represents the central aspect of human creation. However, based solely on this passage, one can draw few conclusions regarding his view of the cause of this animation.

In the other two references, the enlivening of the first man's earthy body is employed as an argument supporting the possibility of bodily resurrection and the bestowal of eternal life. First, in *Catech.* 18, the homilist reminds his hearers of the Gen 2:7 passage: "Whence in the beginning came man into being at all [...]? Go to the first book of the Scripture, [...]; «And God formed man, dust from the earth». Is dust transformed into flesh and will not flesh be again restored to flesh?"<sup>8</sup>. Next, in *Catech.* 13, Cyril asks: "If the man first formed out of the earth brought in universal death, will not He who formed him out of the earth bring in eternal life, being Himself the Life?"<sup>9</sup>.

Notably, none of the aforementioned three passages provides detailed commentaries of the Gen 2:7 narrative. While one includes a direct quotation of the first half of the later so-defined verse – i.e., Gen 2:7a – in the two other instances, the Mosaic text is only alluded to. This approach aligns with Cyril's general method of using Scripture in catechesis. Although he occasionally offers direct quotations from the Old or New Testament, in many cases, he prefers an allusionary approach over verbatim citations of the Biblical text<sup>10</sup>. The choice of this method may be partly due to the (allegedly) extemporaneous nature of his homilies<sup>11</sup>. Additionally, it may be motivated by an expectation that his audience possessed prior

<sup>7</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 12, 30, RR 2, 40, 42. The English is the present writer's revision of the E.H. Gifford translation, see NPNF 7, 80.

<sup>8</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 18, 13, RR 2, 312. A revision of the Gifford translation, see NPNF 7, 137.

<sup>9</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 13, 2, RR 2, 52. A revision of the Gifford translation, see NPNF 7, 82.

<sup>10</sup> Jackson, *Cyril of Jerusalem's Use of Scripture*, p. 441. For general discussion on the Patristic use of allusion, see V.H. Drecoll, *The Use of Scripture in Basil's Homilies in Hexaemeron*, in: *Light on Creation: Ancient Commentators in Dialogue and Debate on the Origin of the World*, ed. G. Roskam – J. Verheyden, Tübingen 2017, p. 91.

<sup>11</sup> See n. 4 above.

knowledge of the texts under consideration<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, such familiarity may have been anticipated, given the catechist's multiple exhortations to receive his Biblical instruction and to voluntarily engage in reading the Scriptures<sup>13</sup>.

Curiously, in none of his three references to Gen 2:7 does Cyril explicitly mention breathing. However, this absence does not imply a lack of interest in the theme. Elsewhere, in *Catech.* 9, in connection with his general discussion of human creation, Cyril makes a more explicit reference to the divine breath. According to his perspective, humans consist not only of a meticulously created body but also of the breath that the Creator has imparted to the entire body<sup>14</sup>. This perspective aligns with the dichotomous *body-soul anthropology* that permeates Cyril's catecheses<sup>15</sup>, and was also held by several earlier and contemporaneous ecclesiastical authors. In Cyril's view, the Gen 2:7 bestowal of breath is synonymous with the emergence of a "living soul" (εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν) and, consequently, with the divine action of animating the otherwise lifeless corporeality<sup>16</sup>. In fact, for Cyril, not only humans but also other

<sup>12</sup> P.L. Gavrilyuk, *Histoire du catéchuménat dans l'église ancienne*, tr. F. Lhoest – N. Mojaïsky – A.-M. Gueit, Paris 2007, p. 185, 206, 229, 237.

<sup>13</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 4, 33, RR 1, 124: "Ἀναγίνωσκε τὰς θείας γραφὰς". Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 4, 35, RR 1, 128: "Τούτων τὰς εἴκοσι δύο βίβλους ἀναγίνωσκε· [...] Ταῦτας μόνας μελέτα σπουδαίως, ὡς καὶ ἐν Ἐκκλησίᾳ μετὰ παύρησις ἀναγινώσκομεν". Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 4, 36, RR 1, 130: "Καὶ ὅσα [μὲν] ἐν ἐκκλησίαις μὴ ἀναγινώσκειται, ταῦτα μηδὲ κατὰ σαντὸν ἀναγίνωσκε, καθὼς ἤκουσας". See also Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 17, 35, RR 2, 294. Cf. Augustine, who recounts that Ambrose encouraged him to prepare for baptism by reading the Book of Isaiah, *Confessiones* IX 5, 13, CCSL 27, 140.

<sup>14</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 9, 15, RR 1, 256: "Τίς ὁ τὴν μίαν ἀναπνοὴν εἰς ὅλον τὸ σῶμα διαδούς;"

<sup>15</sup> See Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 3, 4, RR 1, 68, *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 14, 18, where Cyril employs similar terminology to underscore the significance of the faculty of respiration for corporeal life. See also Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 12, 14. Cf. Chrysostom, who associates divine breathing with the bestowal of a rational soul that enlivens the recipient, see Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In Genesim homiliae* 12, 5, 13, 2-3. A similar view is held by Aphrahat, *Demonstratio* 23, 58; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* II 34, 4; the Valentinians, see S.O. Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*, Leiden 2015, p. 51; the Rabbinic tradition, see L. Teugels, *The Creation of the Human in Rabbinic Interpretation*, in: *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpreta-*

living creatures are among those whom the psalmist refers to as “every breath” (Πᾶσα πνοή), who are exhorted to praise and glorify the Lord (Ps. 150:16a)<sup>17</sup>.

Regrettably, the Cyrilline catechetical homilies, designed as they were for the elementary instruction of baptismal candidates, offer limited insight into the author’s perspective on the intricate details of human creation. For instance, the texts provide little information as to whether the soul and body were perceived to exist independently of each other before their union depicted in Gen 2:7<sup>18</sup>, or if they were considered to be born simultaneously<sup>19</sup>. At any rate, Cyril regards the bestowal of divine breath as the constitutive element in the creation of humans as living beings.

---

*tions of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. G.P. Luttikhuisen, Leiden – Boston – Köln 2000, p. 117-118. Cf. Philo, who postulates that man is a composition of earthy substance and divine spirit, see *De opificio mundi* 135. Unlike Philo, however, Cyril does not explicitly associate the spirit-breathed life with immortality. See also Origen, who observes that the breath of life mentioned in Gen 2:7 may be interpreted both in a general or in a spiritual sense, i.e., as having been bestowed either universally or strictly to “the saints”, see Origenes, *De Principiis* I 3, 6; Origenes, *Commentarii in Iohannem* 13, 23, 24. For discussion on the interpretation of the corresponding Hebrew concept נְשֵׁם חַיִּים “as the intangible life force which animates the body” and other scholarly analyses, see E. Noort, *Taken from the Soil, Gifted with the Breath of Life: The Anthropology of Gen 2:7 in Context*, in: *Dust of the Ground and Breath of Life (Gen 2:7): The Problem of a Dualistic Anthropology in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten – G.H. van Kooten, Leiden 2016, p. 8-9. Discussion on the connotations of the LXX concepts πνοή and ψυχή: M.N. Van der Meer, *Anthropology in the Ancient Greek Versions of Gen 2:7*, in: *Dust of the Ground and Breath of Life (Gen 2:7): The Problem of a Dualistic Anthropology in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten – G.H. van Kooten, Leiden 2016, p. 47, 54-56.

<sup>17</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 6, 5, RR 1, 160. Cf. G. Nabetani – M. Hidaka (創世記を味わう III [*Sōseki wo ajiwau* III]), Tokyo 2012, p. 50-51) who, based upon other OT evidence, argue that the Gen 2:7 (MT) concept נְשֵׁם חַיִּים should be associated not only with humans but with marine and terrestrial animals as well. Unlike Irenaeus, for instance, Cyril does not use Gen 2:7 as a testimony of the particular nature of human creation in comparison with that of other living beings. See discussion in Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis*, p. 145-146.

<sup>18</sup> For such a view in late antique Greek Patristic literature, see e.g. Pseudo-Macarius, *Homiliae* 26, 7, 2.

<sup>19</sup> So Gregorius Nyssenus, *De hominis opificio* 29, PG 44, 233; Iohannes Damascenus, *De fide orthodoxa* 2, 12.



## 2. The Breath of Jesus as a Vehicle of the Spirit

Secondly, Cyril's breath-related vocabulary carries soteriological implications as well. This becomes evident in his exposition of Jn 20:22, the account of the resurrected Jesus breathing upon the apostles<sup>20</sup>. In this context, Cyril implies that what transpired during creation was the "first breath" of the Savior. This expression suggests that the catechist believes the second person of the Trinity actively participated in the creation of humanity. However, this "first breath" had subsequently been obscured by human sins, alluding to the detrimental effects of failing to adhere to divine precepts and to the resultant devitalized state of humanity.

In any case, another breath was required<sup>21</sup>, apparently to restore corrupted humanity. Indeed, such a breath had now been bestowed upon the apostles by the resurrected Savior. For Cyril, this action served not only as a prefiguration of a more universal outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost but also as an actual mediation of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit<sup>22</sup>. While the catechist emphasizes that the third person of the Trinity is indeed a person, and as such, not a physical utterance or breath from the mouth and lips of the Father or the Son<sup>23</sup>, Cyril still sees a close connection between divine breathing and the bestowal of the Spirit. Thus, if the primordial breath of God depicted in Gen 2:7 had mediated bodily life to humanity, the breath of Jesus constituted the next level, so to speak, of God's life-giving activity.

However, in Cyril's perspective, the apostles had not yet received the fullness of spiritual grace. In his exposition of the Jn 20:22 passage,

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Jn 20:22 (NA28): "ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον".

<sup>21</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 17, 12, RR 2, 266: "δεύτερον ἐμφύσημα τοῦτο, ἐπειδὴ τὸ πρῶτον ἡμαυρώθη διὰ τὰς ἐκουσίους ἀμαρτίας".

<sup>22</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 17, 12, RR 2, 266: "Τούτου τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος τὴν κοινωνίαν ἐχαρίσατο τοῖς ἀποστόλοις". See also Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 14, 22, RR 2, 138: "τοῦ σωτηριώδους ἐμφυσήματος". For a similar view, see Origenes, *In Lucam homiliae* 27, 5; Iohannes Damascenus, *De fide orthodoxa* 1, 8. Irenaeus too distinguishes between the temporal breath of life that rendered all humans animated beings, and the eternal divine Spirit that spiritually quickens some of those who had later become deadened, Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* V 12, 233. Cf. Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 13, 7, where Cyril quotes Lament. 4:20: "πνεῦμα προσώπου ἡμῶν Χριστὸς κύριος συνελήφθη ἐν ταῖς διαφθοραῖς ἡμῶν". This raises the question of whether the catechist, in addition to the pneumatological interpretation, also imparted Christological connotations to the notion of breath.

<sup>23</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 17, 5, RR 2, 256: "οὐκ ἀπὸ στόματος καὶ χειλέων πατρὸς ἢ υἱοῦ λαλούμενον ἢ ἀναπνεόμενον, [...] ἀλλ' ἐνυπόστατον".



Jesus, as portrayed by the catechist, describes his post-resurrection bestowal of the Spirit thus: “I am ready to give it even now, but the vessel cannot yet contain it. For a while, therefore, receive as much grace as you can bear, but expect even more”<sup>24</sup>. This brings us to what in the Cyrilline discourse represents the next stage of bestowing the divine breath.

### 3. Pentecostal “Breathing” of the Spirit

Thirdly, Cyril maintains that during the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit the apostles were completely enveloped with or immersed in the fullness of the Spirit<sup>25</sup>. Importantly, the homilist appears to interpret this event as another form of “breathing”<sup>26</sup>. This interpretation is evident not only from his reference to the Lukan account of “a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind” (Acts 2:2)<sup>27</sup>, but also from the fact that he discusses this event immediately after addressing the “first breathing” in creation and the “second breathing” on the night of the resurrection (Jn 20:22). Thus, the Pentecostal miracle can be seen as a “third breathing”, as it were, which filled the apostles with the Holy Spirit.

In summary, Cyril associates divine breathing with various events of Scriptural history, linked to the bestowal of both corporeal and spiritual life. Simultaneously, he considers this theme to hold contemporary relevance, as becomes apparent from what follows.

### 4. Ecclesiastical Modes of “Breathing”

Fourthly, Cyril also uses breath-related vocabulary in reference to ecclesiastical rites of initiation, thereby indicating their pneumatological function. In the first place, this function is evident in the *inscription of names* that occurred at the start of the 40-day period of Lenten catechesis. Cyril exhorts his audience thus:

<sup>24</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 17, 12, RR 2, 266. A revision of the Gifford translation, see NPNF 7, 127.

<sup>25</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 17, 12, RR 2, 266.

<sup>26</sup> Nearly 15 centuries after Cyril, F.W. Krummacher (*Flying Roll or Free Grace Displayed*, New York 1841, p. 233) described the Pentecostal miracle as a “breathing” of the Lord.

<sup>27</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 17, 15, RR 2, 268: “ἐγένετο γὰρ ἄφνω ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἦχος ὡσπερ φερομένης πνοῆς βιαίας”.

Already the fragrance of the Holy Spirit has breathed [upon you]. Already you have gathered around the vestibule of the King's palace; may you also be led in by the King! For blossoms have now appeared upon the trees; may the fruit also be perfect! Thus far there has been an inscription of your names [...]²⁸.

As this passage implies, the rite of inscription is seen not only as a pragmatic action of enrollment but also as a medium of the Holy Spirit²⁹. Therefore, through their participation in this rite and the accompanying "breathing" of the Spirit upon them, the aspiring hearers have already (ἤδη) transitioned from the initial catechumenate into the group of more advanced baptismal candidates³⁰.

Next, during the subsequent rites of *exorcism*, the candidates are physically breathed upon. As one might anticipate, this action echoes the previously mentioned passage in Jn 20:22 where Jesus breathes upon the apostles. In this case, however, the rite is performed by the exorcists who, through their exhalation, symbolize the imparting of the Holy Spirit to the candidates. Cyril elucidates the spiritual significance of this rite using a simile: Just as a goldsmith blows air into the furnace to kindle the flame that purifies his raw metal, the exorcists now breathe on the candidates to ignite their souls, so to speak, thereby expelling demonic powers. Subsequently, the exorcists utter Scriptural words that further purify the souls of the candidates. This action, too, is intended to drive out the hostile demon, leaving their souls with salvation and the hope of eternal life³¹. All of these rituals serve the purpose of preparing the candidates for the concluding rites of Christian initiation.

Indeed, Cyril associates the concept of breathing with *baptism* as well. Concerning the effects of the Spirit, he states in rather general terms: "[W]here the Holy Spirit breathes, there all pollution is taken

²⁸ Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Procatechesis* 1, RR 1, 2: "ἤδη τοῦ Πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου ἔπνευσεν ἡ εὐωδία". A revision of the Gifford translation, see NPNF 7, 1.

²⁹ So also J. Day, *Cyril of Jerusalem on the Holy Spirit*, in: *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2008*, ed. D.V. Twomey – J.E. Rutherford, Dublin 2010, p. 78.

³⁰ See Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Procatechesis* 1, 4, 13; Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 3, 2; 4, 24. For further discussion, see Huovinen, *Familial Terminology*, p. 411-412.

³¹ Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Procatechesis* 9; Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 16, 19. See also Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Mystagogica catechesis* 2, 3.

away”<sup>32</sup>. Granted, nowhere in his oeuvre does Cyril explicitly associate baptism with “breathing” or with Gen 2:7, for that matter. Even so, he clearly views the ablution as a conduit of the Spirit and, consequently, a means of spiritual purification<sup>33</sup>. One could even suggest that, for the catechist, baptism represents “a recapitulation of the creation event”<sup>34</sup>. Such a viewpoint aligns with earlier Patristic authors like Aphrahat<sup>35</sup>, and later ones like John Chrysostom<sup>36</sup>.

Parenthetically, given the olfactory aspect of post-baptismal chrismation, one might expect the catechist to associate this rite with the inhalation of the accompanying sweet aroma. Indeed, the Pauline theme of “a sweet savour of Christ” (2Cor 2:15) does appear in the Cyrilline discussion of (the consequences of) chrismation<sup>37</sup>. In this context, however, the author refrains from explicit use of breath-related vocabulary. It has also been suggested that in early Christian thinking, the liturgical rite of the holy kiss may have depicted a post-baptismal “breathing” of the Spirit within the Christian congregation<sup>38</sup>. While Cyril nowhere denies such a view, his discussions of the liturgical kiss do not provide direct evidence of it either<sup>39</sup>. Therefore, inasmuch as can be gleaned from the Cyrilline corpus, the rite of baptism constitutes the catechetical *terminus*

<sup>32</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 12, 32, RR 2, 44: “ὄπου γὰρ [πνεῖ] πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐκεῖ περιήρηται τῶς μολυσμός”.

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 3, 1-2; 4, 15-16. The pervading nature of this reception is also depicted by means of the traditional Patristic image of fire penetrating iron, see Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 17, 14. Cf. Augustine’s poetic (post-baptismal) discussion of divine work in his life as an exhalation of fragrances, see Augustinus, *Confessiones* X 27, 38. Unfortunately, it may remain an open question whether this can be interpreted as a depiction of baptism (with its pleasantly smelling ointment and/or the chrism) as a medium of the Spirit.

<sup>34</sup> Akselberg, *Greeks, Jews, heretics*, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> For Aphrahat, the Gen. 2:7 account refers to the “first birth” of man, i.e., the bestowal of earthly life. This prefigures a second birth, which occurs in baptism. See Aphrahat, *Demonstratio* 6, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Os potheinos* 12.

<sup>37</sup> Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Mystagogica catechesis* 3, 4. For discussion on this theme in later Byzantine theology, see S.A. Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 2015, p. 144.

<sup>38</sup> See discussion in S. Seppälä’s Finnish monograph *Antiikista Bysantiin: Aatehisoriallisia murroksia* (Helsinki 2021, p. 250).

<sup>39</sup> For the Cyrilline view of the holy kiss, see Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Mystagogica catechesis* 5, 3. For further discussion, see H. Huovinen, *In the Service of the Sacramental Life: The Tasks of Deacons in Cyril of Jerusalem*, in: *Deacons and Diakonia in Early*

*ad quem* for his applications of the image of breathing. Nonetheless, it might not be an exaggeration to assert that, for the Hagiopolite catechist, the entirety of ecclesiastical life, complete with its instructional and ritual aspects, constitutes a Spirit-filled realm in which participants are enveloped with the divine breath and its – or His – life-giving power<sup>40</sup>.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

The present article had two primary objectives. First, it aimed to investigate the function of breath-related vocabulary in Cyril of Jerusalem's catechetical rhetoric. Secondly, it sought to clarify what Cyril's use of this vocabulary reveals about his overall approach to using Scripture in catechesis. The main findings are as follows.

First, in Cyril's catechetical homilies, the Old and New Testament accounts of breathing, along with depictions of post-Biblical ecclesiastical rites, collectively form an implicit yet coherent narrative. The author's vocabulary reveals a perspective on a process of creation and recreation, encompassing no less than six instances of divine breath communication: those during the act of creation, immediately after the resurrection of Jesus, on Pentecost, and, finally, in the initiatory rites of enrollment, exorcisms, and baptism. This approach serves the purpose of instructing the catechetical audience(s) about the historical sequence of human creation, which involves the divine vivification of the tangible body, as well as the postlapsarian revivification through the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, this narrative culminates in the ecclesiastical rites regarded as contemporary conduits of divine breath and, consequently, spiritual renewal. This suggests that initiation into church membership is perceived as the pinnacle of the divine work of recreation.

Secondly, when Cyril employs the imagery of Gen 2:7 regarding breathing, he follows his general practice of offering little more than pass-

---

*Christianity: The Third Century Onwards*, ed. B.J. Koet – E. Murphy – E. Ryökäs, Tübingen 2024, p. 172-174.

<sup>40</sup> From this perspective, V. Lossky's observation, while not incorrect, may be viewed as somewhat reductionistic: "[O]n peut distinguer deux communications du Saint-Esprit à l'Église: l'une se fit par le souffle du Christ qui apparut aux apôtres le soir de la résurrection (Jn 20,19-23); l'autre fut l'avènement personnel de l'Esprit-Saint le jour de la Pentecôte (Ac 2,1-5)" (V. Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient*, Paris 2008, p. 164).

ing references to Biblical themes. Furthermore, most of these references are allusions rather than direct quotations from the text. One reason for this approach may be that the catechist explicitly encouraged his hearers to read the Scriptures, expecting them to have some prior knowledge of the texts under consideration. Therefore, instead of providing comprehensive commentaries, he primarily used the Scriptures as a source of material for catechetical purposes.

Furthermore, it is challenging to definitively ascertain Cyril's views regarding the nature of the various instances of breathing. It is plausible that in his view, both the post-resurrection breathing of Jesus and the initiatory exorcisms involved physical exhalation. However, it remains an open question whether the creation of primordial humans or the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit also involved physical breath or if the breath-related vocabulary employed in these narratives should be seen as rhetorical tools for depicting more abstract modes of vivification and revivification of the human being.

In closing, scholarship would greatly benefit from an investigation of the place of Cyril's breath-related vocabulary within the broader context of Judeo-Christian and Patristic literature concerning human creation and spiritual recreation. Another theme deserving further attention would be the contemporary ecclesiastical implications of such a study. However, the full exploration of these matters must be reserved for future studies. Nevertheless, the preliminary observations presented herein may constitute one step forward toward this objective.

## Bibliography

### Sources

- Ambrosius, *De Mysteriis*, ed. B. Botte, SCh 25 bis, Paris 1961.  
 Ambrosius, *De sacramentis*, ed. B. Botte, SCh 25 bis, Paris 1961.  
 Aphrahat, *Demonstratio*, ed. I. Parisot, PS 1/1-2, Paris 1894.  
 Augustinus, *Confessiones*, ed. L. Verheijen, CCSL 27, Turnhout 1981.  
 Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catechesis*, ed. W.C. Reischl – J. Rupp, RR 1-2, Hildesheim 1967, tr. E.H. Gifford, *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem*, in: *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, v. 7: *S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Gregory of Nazianzen*, NPNF 7, p. 6-143, in: <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207/npnf207.i.html> (accessed 28.08.2023).

- Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Mystagogica catechesis*, ed. A. Piédagnel, SCh 126 bis, Paris 2004.
- Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Procatechesis*, ed. W.C. Reischl, RR 1, Hildesheim 1967, tr. E.H. Gifford, *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem*, in: *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, v. 7: *S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Gregory of Nazianzen*, NPNF 7, p. 1-5, in: <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207/npnf207.i.html> (accessed: 28.08.2023).
- Gregorius Nyssenus, *De hominis opificio*, PG 44.
- Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, ed. A. Rousseau – L. Doutreleau – C. Mercier, SCh 153, Paris 1969; ed. A. Rousseau – L. Doutreleau, SCh 294, Paris 1982.
- Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In Genesim homiliae*, PG 53.
- Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Os potheinos* (Ὠς ποθεινός), ed. A. Piédagnel – L. Doutreleau, SCh 366, Paris 1990.
- Iohannes Damascenus, *De fide orthodoxa*, PG 94.
- Origenes, *Commentarii in Ioannem*, ed. E. Preuschen, OW 4, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, Leipzig 1903.
- Origenes, *In Lucam homiliae*, ed. H. Crouzel – F. Fournier – P. Périchon, SCh 87, Paris 1962.
- Origenes, *De principiis*, ed. H. Crouzel – M. Simonetti, SCh 252, Paris 1978.
- Philo, *De opificio mundi*, ed. R. Arnaldez, CPh 1, Paris 1961.
- Pseudo-Macarius, *Homiliae*, ed. V. Desprez, SC 275, Paris 1981.

### Studies

- Akselberg K., *Greeks, Jews, heretics, and the Church of God: Ecclesiology in the catechetical lectures of St Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem*, University of Oxford 2017, in: <http://ora.ox.ac.uk/> (accessed: 29.06.2023; PhD Diss.).
- Day J., *Cyril of Jerusalem on the Holy Spirit*, in: *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2008*, ed. D.V. Twomey – J.E. Rutherford, Dublin 2010, p. 73-85.
- Day J., *The Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem: Fourth- and Fifth-Century Evidence from Palestine, Syria and Egypt*, Aldershot – Burlington 2007.
- Delacroix G., *Saint Cyrille de Jerusalem: Sa vie et ses œuvres*, Paris 1865.
- Doval A.J., *Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogue: The Authorship of Mystagogic Catecheses*, Washington 2001.
- Drecoll V.H., *The Use of Scripture in Basil's Homilies in Hexaemeron*, in: *Light on Creation: Ancient Commentators in Dialogue and Debate on the Origin of the World*, ed. G. Roskam – J. Verheyden, Tübingen 2017, p. 87-104.
- Gavrilyuk P.L., *Histoire du catéchuménat dans l'église ancienne*, tr. F. Lhoest – N. Mojaïsky – A.-M. Gueit, Paris 2007.
- Harvey S.A., *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 2015.

- Hawk-Reinhard D.R., *Christian Identity Formation according to Cyril of Jerusalem: Sacramental Theōsis as a Means of Constructing Relational Identity*, Louvain 2020.
- Huovinen H., *Familial Terminology and the Progressive Nature of Church Membership in Cyril of Jerusalem*, "Review of Ecumenical Studies" 13 (2021) p. 400-418.
- Huovinen H., *Images of Divine Participation: A Reappraisal of Fourth Century Views on Church Membership*, *Studia Patristica Fennica* 18, Helsinki 2022.
- Huovinen H., *In the Service of the Sacramental Life: The Tasks of Deacons in Cyril of Jerusalem*, in: *Deacons and Diakonia in Early Christianity: The Third Century Onwards*, ed. B.J. Koet – E. Murphy – E. Ryökäs, Tübingen 2024, p. 161-176.
- Huovinen H., *Parantunut profeetta: Daavidin roolit Kyrillos Jerusalemilaisen katekeeseissa*, in: *Kristityt ennen kristittyjä: Vanhan liiton pyhät kirkkoisien silmin*, ed. A. Bergman, *Studia Patristica Fennica* 16, Helsinki 2022, p. 83-109.
- Huovinen H., *Paratiisin neljä tasoa Kyrillos Jerusalemilaisen katekeettisessä retorikassa*, in: *Varhaiskirkon Jerusalem*, ed. S. Seppälä, *Studia Patristica Fennica* 19, Helsinki 2023, p. 169-199.
- Jackson P., *Cyril of Jerusalem's Use of Scripture in Catechesis*, "Theological Studies" 52 (1991) p. 431-450.
- Krummacker F.W., *Flying Roll or Free Grace Displayed*, New York 1841.
- Lossky V., *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*, Paris 2008.
- Noort E., *Taken from the Soil, Gifted with the Breath of Life: The Anthropology of Gen 2:7 in Context*, in: *Dust of the Ground and Breath of Life (Gen 2:7): The Problem of a Dualistic Anthropology in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten – G.H. van Kooten, Leiden 2016, p. 1-15.
- Paulin A., *Saint Cyrille de Jérusalem: Catéchète*, Paris 1959.
- Presley S.O., *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*, Leiden 2015.
- Seppälä S., *Antiikista Bysanttiin: Aatehistoriallisia murroksia*, Helsinki 2021.
- Stephenson A.A., *St. Cyril of Jerusalem and the Alexandrian Heritage*, "Theological Studies" 15/4 (1954) p. 573-593.
- Teugels L., *The Creation of the Human in Rabbinic Interpretation*, in: *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. G.P. Luttikhuisen, Leiden – Boston – Köln 2000, p. 107-127.
- Van der Meer M.N., *Anthropology in the Ancient Greek Versions of Gen 2:7*, in: *Dust of the Ground and Breath of Life (Gen 2:7): The Problem of a Dualistic Anthropology in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten – G.H. van Kooten, Leiden 2016, p. 36-57.
- 鍋谷 堯爾 & 飛鷹 美奈子 (Nabetani G. – Hidaka M.), 創世記を味わう III (*Sōseki wo ajiwau* III), Tokyo 2012.