292 Boy (*Puer*)

In sacred scripture boy (*puer*) is sometimes is said from childhood (*pueritia*), that is, from a younger age, just as concerning Samuel it is said in 1 Kings 1[:24]: “Now the child was as yet very young.”

Sometimes boy (*puer*) is said from perversity (*peruersitate*), that is, from a younger sense as is treated, Isai. 3[:4]: “I will give children to be their princes.” Wherefore the Philosopher says in *Ethicis*,[[1]](#endnote-1) there is no difference to be youthful in age or have the customs of a child.

The third way a boy (*puer*) is said from purity (*puritate*), that is, holiness. Wherefore Acts 4[:27] it is said, “There assembled together against your holy child Jesus.” And 1 Paral. [12:28]: “A young man of excellent disposition,” namely, without guile. On account these things the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 14[:20]: “Do not become children in sense: but in malice be children, and in sense be perfect.” But alas because Seneca, *Epistula*, the fourth ad Lucillium,[[2]](#endnote-2) says we have the authority of old age, together with the follies of boyhood, however a good boy ought to have these conditions.

¶ There are boys, transparent, pure, esteemed as little, conformable to others, quickly they give, quickly pacified, always playing, and harming others not at all. Wherefore it is said in Tob. 1[:4]: “When he was younger than any of the tribe of Naphtali yet did he no childish thing in his work.” He is to himself purity in innocence. Wherefore it is said boy (*puer*) as if pure air (*purua aer*). And, in a boy is truth. Wherefore it is said commonly that a boy does not know how to lie. And, it is said that from a secular boy inebriated every truth is extorted. And, in a boy is forgetfulness of injury, because he does not strike back and is quickly placated. So, we are warned in Rom. 12[:19]: “Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved.” This is against the wrathful.

Fourth, they are not ashamed of their nudity, so neither are the apostles ashamed, John 21[:5]: “Children, have you any meat,” etc.

For which reason liberality so ought the just, Tob. 4[:9]: “If you have much give abundantly.” But alas because it is rather given to dogs than the poor.

¶ Sixth, mobility, so we ought to work. While it is day because of the aforesaid truly Jesus can be called a boy. For in him I find infallible truth, imperturbable simplicity, indefilable purity, unending joy through truth. Falseness is excluded, malice through simplicity, impudence through purity, sadness through joyfulness.

¶ Jesus is said to be a boy through truth in speech and judgment. Wherefore he is designated through Daniel who is interpreted judging by God, Dan. 13[:44]: “The Lord raised up the holy spirit of a young boy,” etc.

Second, he is said to be a boy by reason of simplicity, in whom there is no justice. Wherefore also designated through peaceful Solomon who said, 3 Kings 3[:7]: “I am but a child, and know not how to come in.” And in how much simplicity Jesus the boy scarcely would be, is evident in Luke 2[:43, 51]: “The child Jesus remained in Jerusalem,” and it follows, “and was subject to them.”

¶ Third, Jesus is said to be a boy by reason purity and cleanness. Wherefore also he is designated by Samuel, 1 Kings 2[:18]: “Being a child girded with a linen ephod.” In which clothing purity is designated. Therefore, Nabuchodonosor said, Dan. 1[:7-8] with a proposal of eunuchs that he might introduce boys in whom there is no stain. In a sign this one is found in the temple and in the middle of the teachers, [Luke 2:46].

Fourth, Jesus is said to be a boy by reason of the joy boys are accustomed to being in. Joyful because of which Abner said to Joab, 2 Kings 2[:14]: “Let the young men rise and play before us.” Therefore Luke 2[:40]: “And the child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom.”

¶ Again, a boy is delicate in his members, 1 Paral. 22[:5]: “Solomon my son is very young and tender.”

Again, he is honest in words, Dan. 13[:45]: “The Lord raised up the holy spirit of a young boy.” Gen. 41[:12]: “There was there a young man a Hebrew.”

¶ Again, he is lively in his senses, Prov. 20[:11]: “By his inclinations a child is known.” And Wis. 8[:19]: “I was a witty child.”

Again, a boy is commended on account of three. Because of wit in intellect, Wis. 8[:19]: “I was a witty child.” Because of beauty in aspect, Matt. 12[:18]: “Behold my servant whom I have chosen.” Because of utility in effect, Isai. [11:6]: “A little child shall lead them.”

¶ Again, the boy Christ was given to us as a beginning of human reconciliation, just as enemies are sometimes reconciled by the marriage of persons. So, we are reconciled with God through the marriage of deity and humanity, but why not thus is he reconciled with the angels. I respond that was our business of justice, it was of mercy, Luke 1[:54]: “He hath received Israel,” that is, from the seed of Israel, “his servant, being mindful of his mercy.” Wherefore also the shepherds of the Jews and the kings of the nations came to this boy as if to a mediator.

¶ Concerning the shepherds it is said, Luke 2[:17]: “And seeing, they understood concerning this child.” Concerning the kings, it is said, Matt. 2[:11]: “And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother.”

¶ When Christ was born as a boy it was for us a title of divine equity. For when justice would expel the offence without buying, nor the fault without pain. God wanted to buy which man could not, but because God could not suffer, he took on humanity. Wherefore he could, Luke 2[:27]: “When his parents brought in the child Jesus,” etc.

¶ Third, he was given to us in a transaction of heavenly inheritance so that, namely, he may lightly buy from him the eternal kingdom, which earlier was priceless before the incarnation. Nor could anyone make a good exchange with God, because however much he gave he could not buy paradise, but afterwards “the Word was made flesh,” [John 1:14]. Man found the best exchange, because as if for nothing he had heaven, Psal. [55:8]: “For nothing shalt thou save them.” Because for a small penance he gives the kingdom, just as a boy for a penny will easily give over his inheritance. Therefore, says the Psal. [85:16]: To God the Father, “Give,” therefore, “your command to your servant, and save the son of your handmaid,” you the living Father have held for a longtime your reward, in the manner of a leather worker extending to heaven like a piece of leather, “give,” therefore, “your command to your servant, and save the son of your handmaid.” Therefore, brothers, before the mint of penance is changed, let us negotiate with this boy.

¶ Again, before the incarnation the sinners said that, Gen. 3[:10]: “I heard your voice in paradise, and I hid myself.” Now in truth Christ can be placated with one apple, namely, our heart, just as formerly it was poured out for one apple, Matt. 12[:18-19]: “Behold my servant,” chosen, “whom I have chosen,” and it follows, “He shall not contend.” In judgment nor in accusation.

Again, just as good conditions are found in a boy, so sometimes also evil. For boys are accustomed to have dullness in understanding, timidity in gathering, changeableness in affection, lightness in gesture and accomplishment.

Concerning the first, 1 Kings 30[:13]: “I am a young man of Egypt” that is, dark on account ignorance. For according to that of Prov. 22[:15]: “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child.”

¶ Concerning the second, Judges 8[:20]: “He was afraid, being but yet a boy.”

Concerning the third, 3 Kings 19[:3]: “Left his servant there.” But against the four things concerning any good boy, Tob. 1[:4]: “When he was younger than any yet did he no childish thing in his work.” Wherefore also concerning a certain boy it is said in Luke 1[:76]. You singularly in word than others, boy from a spiritual privilege, in boyhood many times shown to be a prophet. Rather more than a prophet not of any kind whatsoever, but of the highest. Not only will you be in secret, but you will speak in public. Wherefore also this one is commended by singularity of purity, you boy from effability of truth, prophet from the dignity of his Lord, most high by the clarity of his name, there you will be called.

¶ Again, a boy can be called religious man. For just as a boy ought to have in his coming into the world two midwives, two nurses in his progress, and in his going out of the world two consolers. So, a religious man should under discipline be educated that he may have two nurses. Obedience which ties together his members, namely, his hands of working, feet of affection, and wrap him in blankets of humility. So, there should be a second midwife for him. Humility which lays him in the crib, that is, in the cradle of the cloister with a bundle of boys, that is, with a bridle of temperance and a halter of counsel. These are the two Egyptian midwives which observed the living men, that is, those wishing to live perfectly.

¶ Again, he ought to have two nurses in progress.

First, truth which teaches him to speak, 1 Pet. 4[:11]: “If any man speaks, let him speak, as the words of God.”

Second, let it be honesty which teaches him to walk, [1] Thes. 4[:11]: “That you walk honestly towards them that are without.”

¶ Again, let him have two consolers in going out, namely, charity to God and our neighbor, Heb. 13[:1]: “Let the charity of the brotherhood abide in you.”

Second, austerity to oneself, 1 Cor. 9[:27]: “I chastise my body and bring it into subjection.”

1. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 1.3 1095a5-9 (Barnes 2:1730): And it makes no difference whether he is young in years or youthful in character; the defect does not depend on time, but on his living, and pursuing each successive object, as passion directs. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Seneca, *Epistula* 4.2 (LCL 75: 14-15): Et hoc quidem peior est, quod auctoritatem habemus senum, vitia puerorum, nec puerorum tantum sed infantum. Illi levia, hi falsa formidant, nos utraque.

And this condition is all the more serious because we possess the authority of old age, together with the follies of boyhood, yea, even the follies of invancy. Boys fear trivles, children fear shadows, we fear both. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)