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Children's Positive Attitudes in the New Testament Epistles

This article is a continuation of a reflection on the attitudes of children as cited in the New Testament. In the already published text, we dealt with children's positive and negative attitudes in the Gospels². Now we will analyse texts from the New Testament, but only from the epistles, because in Acts and Revelation we find no mention of the subject in question³. The Lord Jesus saw children above all in a positive light. He emphasized their openness to what is new, their ability to receive, their awareness of their own limitations, their boldness in expressing their beliefs, and their natural attachment to and cordiality towards others. Jesus commended such features to His disciples as they allow them to enter the kingdom of God, and to grow in it, and they express the right attitude towards God and others. However, Jesus did not idealize children and saw negative qualities in them as well. He noted their capriciousness and stubbornness, as well as their disobedience and reluctance to fulfil their duties. When Jesus asked His disciples to become like children, He did not mean that they should assume all of their qualities, but only some of them and to a limited extent. He did not want adults

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² S. Wronka, *Pozytywne i negatywne postawy dziecka w Ewangeliach*, „Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne” 46 (2013) 2, pp. 276–291.

³ The term *νήπιος* (“infant, little child”) does not appear in Acts or Rev. We find other terms denoting children in these books, but not in the context of expressing their attitudes.

to become infantile people, but to keep the child's soul, freshness, and openness when they mature.

In the epistles of the New Testament there are also references to children's attitudes and characteristics — their status, their way of life, and their behaviour. They are assessed both positively and negatively, and their example is used to illustrate those circumstances in which Christians should resemble children, and those in which they should strive to overcome the childlike condition. This is often a clear comparison with the use of particle or conjunction “as, like” (ὡς). In contrast to the Gospel, where we have the advantage of positive evaluations of children, in the epistles of the New Testament there is a balance between children's positive and negative characteristics. In the present article we will deal only with children's positive attitudes, while in the next text we will explore the negative ones as research material is too extensive for one study. Because the image of a child is used spontaneously, and it is difficult to see any continuous line connecting the individual texts and the relationships between them, we will discuss the texts in the order in which they appear in the New Testament. We will use a synchronous analysis without covering issues related to the genesis of individual texts and their possible stages.

The issue of children in the Scriptures has been discussed many times by biblical scholars, and there are many publications on this subject. However, they are quite general or deal only with selected texts and aspects. They do not adequately emphasize children's limitations nor those negative attitudes which are also mentioned, especially in the New Testament⁴. There is no comprehensive study focused on children's attributes, some of which are recommended or

⁴ See for example: S. Szymik, *Dziecko w przekazie biblijnym*, “Sprawy Rodziny” 54 (2000), pp. 40–62; K. Romaniuk, „Być dzieckiem” według Biblii, “Międzynarodowy Przegląd Teologiczny Communio” 5 (1985) 3 (27), pp. 3–17; M. Filipiak, *Dziecko w Biblii*, in: *Dziecko*, red. W. Piwowarski, W. Zdaniewicz, Warszawa–Poznań 1984, pp. 5–20; J. Banak, *Biblijna teologia dziecka*, “Materiały Problemowe” 15 (1981) 11, pp. 78–89; J. Szłaga, *Społeczne i teologiczne aspekty biblijnego spojrzenia na dziecko*, “Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” 23 (1980) 3 (91), pp. 51–61; M. Rode, *Stosunek Jezusa Chrystusa do dzieci w świetle Pisma św. Nowego Testamentu na tle ich sytuacji społecznej i prawnej w Palestynie I w.*, “Posłannictwo” 47 (1979) 3–4, pp. 37–84; A. Tulej, *Problematyka chrzcielna perykopy o błogosławieniu dzieci przez Jezusa (Mk 10,13–16 i par.)*, “Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne” 24 (2011) 2, pp. 113–120; T. Kot, *Czy tylko dzieci wejdą do królestwa niebieskiego?*, “Życie Duchowe” 15 (2008) 54, pp. 14–18; J. Kułaczkowski, *Obraz dziecka w Ewangeliach*, “Studia Koszalińsko-Kołobrzeszkie” 8 (2003), pp. 295–306; A. Banaszek, *Rozwój opowiadania o błogosławieniu dzieci w świetle teologicznych koncepcji synoptyków (Mk 10,13–16; Mt 19,13–15; Łk 18,15–17)*, in: *Pan moim światłem. Księga pamiątkowa dla Księdza Profesora Jerzego Chmiela w 65. rocznicę urodzin*, red. W. Chrostowski, Warszawa 2000, pp. 48–78; P. Dziedziczak, *Dziecko a królestwo Boże (Mt 18,1–5)*, in: *Światła prawdy Bożej. Księdzu Profesorowi Lechowi Stachowiakowi w 70. rocznicę urodzin*, red. E. Szewc, Łódź 1996, pp. 31–46; H.U. von Balthasar, *Jezus jako dziecko i Jego pochwała dziecka*, tłum. T. Sotowska, “Międzynarodowy Przegląd Teologiczny Communio” 5 (1985) 3 (27), pp. 18–24.

even required of Jesus' disciples, while others are not only not advisable, but are forbidden and should be uprooted from their lives. The problem is important since a good understanding of the approved attributes of children allows for better implementation of the Gospel ideal in life, avoiding misunderstandings and mistakes.

Let us consider, then, what attributes of a child are presented positively by the authors of New Testament and recommended explicitly or indirectly as appropriate for Christians and for people in general.

1. Service to the father (Phil 2:22)

Writing from a prison in Rome or Ephesus to his beloved Christian community in Philippi, Paul announces in Phil 2:19–24 that he will send Timothy, his fellow labourer, to them to learn about their circumstances since, at the time, he could not reach them himself. At the same time, he recommends Timothy as a man who surpasses all the apostle's other companions due to his spirit, and who, like no one else, will sincerely care for the Philippians' wellbeing, because he does not look for his own benefit, but cares for the matters of Jesus Christ. At the end of this recommendation, Paul employs the image of a child in Phil 2:22.

τὴν δὲ δοκιμὴν αὐτοῦ γινώσκετε,
ὅτι ὡς πατρὶ τέκνον σὺν ἐμοὶ ἐδούλευσεν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον⁵.

But you know of his proven worth,
that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father⁶.

The Philippi Christians know Timothy's value and character as they have been tested through his devoted ministry (δουλεύω) to the Gospel with Paul. Indeed, in the preface to the letter, Paul defines himself and Timothy as 'servants (δοῦλοι) of Jesus' (Phil 1:1). The noun δοῦλος means 'slave, servant, minister, subject'. The verb δουλεύω, conversely, signifies 'to be a slave, a subject; to serve, obey as slave duties'⁷. In contrast to related terms: διάκονος ('servant, helper, deacon')

⁵ Greek New Testament quotes from: *Novum Testamentum graece*, with Dictionary, ed. by B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C.M. Martini, B.M. Metzger, Stuttgart 2012²⁸.

⁶ English biblical quotes from: *The New American Standard Bible*, (BibleWorks 9), 1995.

⁷ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, Chicago–London 1979², pp. 205–206; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu. Wydanie z pełną lokalizacją greckich haseł, kluczem polsko-greckim oraz indeksem form czasownikowych*, (Prymasowska Seria Biblijna 3), Warszawa 1995², p. 144.

and διακονέω ('to serve, care, help, fulfil the ministry of a deacon')⁸, which emphasize service rendered to others, especially at the table, the terms δοῦλους and δουλεύω stress one's total dependence on one's master, who must be strictly obeyed, and the duties assigned by him thoroughly fulfilled⁹. In the relationship of the apostles to Christ or to the Gospel, these terms emphasize total devotion and belonging, as well as fulfilment of the entrusted tasks, but voluntarily, out of love, so that slavery in these expressions must be put in quotation marks. Such 'slavery' is an honor and joy, it frees a person. Christ himself took 'the form of a bond-servant (δοῦλος)' (Phil 2:7) and 'served' (δουλεύω) all (Matt 20:28; John 13:15), and Mary called herself 'the bonds slave (δούλη) of the Lord' (Luke 1:38 & 48)¹⁰. Timothy serves with full devotion to the Gospel, and ultimately to Christ, because it is His Gospel, it tells about Him and is preached by Him, the disciples are only Christ's instruments.

Timothy's service to the Gospel is compared ('like' — ὡς) to a child's service to his father. The noun τέκνον, from the verb τίκτω ('to bear' in the literal and figurative sense), is very general and means 'child, offspring', son or daughter, emphasizing an affectionate relationship, parentage, affiliation, and resemblance to parents or figuratively to other ancestors, teachers, city, nation, God, or an abstract idea, for example wisdom, or anger. It can be applied equally to small or adult children¹¹. In this context, it is not about a small child, but one who can already serve the father, and help him in his works and practised profession. It was rather a son, not a daughter, who usually lived with his father as a child and learned a profession from him¹². The verb δουλεύω, which is absent as a result of elision (the full text would be: 'for as a child serves the father, so does Timothy serve the Gospel'), expresses the son's dependence on his father, and subordination, submission, and obedience to exact fulfilment of the father's commands. But all this happens in an atmosphere of family love, excluding coercion, disparagement, or abuse. We are dealing here with a mutual relationship that enriches both sides. The son voluntarily submits to his father, uses his wisdom and strength, and

⁸ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, pp. 184–185; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, p. 128.

⁹ Cf. K. Hess, *διακονέω etc.*, in: *Dizionario dei concetti biblici del Nuovo Testamento*, a cura di L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, H. Bietenhard, Bologna 1980², p. 1738; R. Tuente, *δοῦλος etc.*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 1694–1698; C. Spicq, *Lexique théologique du Nouveau Testament*, Fribourg–Paris 1991, pp. 391–395.

¹⁰ Cf. S. Wronka, *Totus Tuus — paradoks wolności*, "Polonia Sacra" 7 (25) (2003) 13 (57), p. 24.

¹¹ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, pp. 808, 816–817; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, pp. 597, 603–604; G. Braumann, *Fanciullo, bambino, figlio*, in: *Dizionario dei concetti del Nuovo Testamento*, a cura di L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, H. Bietenhard, Bologna 1980², pp. 608–609; X. Léon-Dufour, *Słownik Nowego Testamentu*, tłum. K. Romaniuk, Poznań 1998, p. 235.

¹² Cf. S. Wronka, *Wychowanie w Biblii*, "Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny" 68 (2015) 4, p. 319.

becomes involved in his work. The father, in turn, makes use of his son's help and introduces him into life.

The exegetes notice that the son-to-father relationship in Phil 2:22 corresponds better to Timothy's relationship with Paul than with the Gospel, and presume that the formulation in Phil 2:22b is misguided (anacoluthon) or deliberately softened by Paul so as not to emphasize that Timothy serves him. In their opinion, the sentence should be: 'as a son to a father, so he served me for the Gospel' or: 'as a son with a father, so he served the Gospel with me'. Therefore, they indicate that the image of the son and father must be related to Timothy and Paul, but at the cost of changing the text. Indeed, the apostle calls Timothy his child (τέκνον) (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2), along with Titus (Titus 1:4), and the Christians in Corinth (1 Cor 4:14). However, the clearly conveyed text without any variants at this point makes us relate the image of the son and father to Timothy and the Gospel (Christ). This is evidenced by the fact that, in the immediate context, Timothy's commitment to the affairs of the Lord and the Philippians is emphasized (Phil 2:20–21), and not his commitment to helping Paul. Paul recognizes Timothy as being on par with himself as a servant of Christ (Phil 1:1). He further talks about his fellow participants (συγκοινωνός μου) (Phil 1:7), his fellow workers (συνεργός μου), and those who fought with him (συναθλέω μοι) in preaching the Gospel (Phil 4:3). The preposition σύν ('with'), present in Phil 2:22, appears here in the compound verbs. Only in Phil 4:10–18 does the apostle mention the care and help he received from the Philippians, but he does not call it service to himself. In 1 Thess 3:2 he calls Timothy 'our brother and God's fellow worker in preaching the Gospel (ἀδελφὸς ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῇ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ)'. The variants refer to him as 'our fellow worker (συνεργὸς ἡμῶν)', 'servant of God (διάκονος τοῦ θεοῦ)' or 'servant and fellow worker of God (διάκονος καὶ συνεργὸς τοῦ θεοῦ)'. Paul does not call Timothy his servant; we only find mention once that Timothy served (διακονέω) him (Acts 19:22)¹³. It seems that from what he was able to observe from within the prison, whence he himself could not act, he saw his fellow workers more as independent evangelizers than as assistants serving him. Timothy was undoubtedly of great help to Paul, but Phil 2:22 does not seem to emphasize this aspect¹⁴.

¹³ Paul's servant is Tychicus (διάκονος) (Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7) and John (ὕπηρέτης) (Acts 13:5), and besides Timothy he is served by Erastus (Acts 19:22), Onesiphorus (2 Tim 1:18), Philemon, and Onesimus (διακονέω) (Phlm 13), and the people around him (ὕπηρέτεω) (Acts 24:23).

¹⁴ Cf. J. Flis, *List do Filipian. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament 11), Częstochowa 2011, pp. 314–316, 331–332; A. Jankowski, *Listy więzienne świętego Pawła do Filipian, do Kolosan, do Filemona do Efezjan. Wstęp — przekład z oryginału — komentarz*, (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu 8), Poznań 1962, pp. 132–133; R. Fabris, *Lettera ai Filippesi — Lettera a Filemone. Introduzione, versione, commento*, (Scritti

Paul positively evaluates the attitude of a child who serves his father with full dedication, and uses it to illustrate Timothy's service to both the Gospel, and to Christ. A Christian behaves like a son towards his father, is completely devoted to the cause of the Gospel, submits to it, depends on Christ in everything, and fulfils the tasks entrusted to him, but he does it out of love and with unwavering trust, because Christ is the best Lord and Father who guides human beings to full maturity, and to salvation. It is worthwhile to join the work of evangelization and to serve it.

2. Obedience to parents (Col 3:20; Eph 6:1–3)

The household codes (Col 3:18–4:1 and related Eph 5:22–6:9), which have analogies in Judaic and Hellenistic literature, contain indications directed to individual family hierarchies, juxtaposed in pairs: wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters. The exhortations go first to the weaker party, then to the dominant party. The construction of exhortations is regular, includes a title, an imperative, and almost always a motivation¹⁵. The admonition to children is as follows:

Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν κατὰ πάντα, τοῦτο γὰρ εὐάρεστόν ἐστιν ἐν κυρίῳ.

Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord
(Col 3:20).

¹ Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν ὑμῶν [ἐν κυρίῳ]: τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστιν δίκαιον.

² τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα, ἣτις ἐστὶν ἐντολὴ πρώτη ἐν ἐπαγγελίᾳ,

³ ἵνα εὖ σοι γένηται καὶ ἔσῃ μακροχρόνιος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

² *Honor your father and mother* (which is the first commandment with a promise),

³ *so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth*

(Exod 20:12 LXX & Eph 6:1–3).

delle origini cristiane 11), Bologna 2001, pp. 170–171; J. Gnllka, *Der Philipperbrief. Auslegung*, (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 10.3), Leipzig 1968, pp. 159–160.

¹⁵ Cf. S. Wronka, *La provenienza e il contesto del codice domestico di Col 3,18–4,1*, “*Analecta Cracoviensia*” 36 (2004), pp. 365–369; idem, *La struttura e il contenuto del codice domestico di Col 3,18–4,1*, “*Analecta Cracoviensia*” 35 (2003), pp. 273–277; R. Penna, *Lettera agli Efesini. Introduzione, versione e commento*, (Scritti delle origini cristiane 10), Bologna 1988, pp. 225–228; A. Jankowski, *Listy...*, pp. 293–294, 479.

The noun τέκνον fits well in this context because it denotes children in general, sons and daughters, and emphasizes an emotional relationship with parents and dependence on them. It applies primarily to young children, since they are to obey their parents in everything, and the fathers, according to Eph 6:4, are to feed, and educate (ἐκτρέφω) them. In adulthood, children become more self-reliant and independent. In the ancient world, obedience was required of younger children, while adult children living separately were usually only required to respect their parents¹⁶. The order to obey, showing a negative attitude such as disobedience so common among children, is expressed in our text with the verb ὑπακούω, which means 'to obey, submit, listen, respond to requests and demands'¹⁷. Listening to another and doing his will is not as strong as the surrender (ὑποτάσσω) recommended to wives (Col 3:18; Eph 5:22), but here it is reinforced by the expression 'in all things' (Col 3:20). Thus, it is intended to be total obedience to both parents. Some say that the noun γονεύς can also include grandparents. It is interesting that both father and mother are indicated, and not only the father, who in a patriarchal society was the head of the family and had enormous power over all household members. 'Fathers' appear in the next exhortation (Col 3:21; Eph 6:4), but the noun πατήρ in plural can also refer to both parents.

The radical obedience of children is socially and theologically motivated. According to Col 3:20, such behaviour is a simple nicety, and is pleasing as an established social value. This behaviour also applies to Christians. The added expression 'in the Lord' instead of the simple dative 'to the Lord' indicates that the obedience of children is not only pleasing to Christ, but that it is to be done in Him; He is to be the motive and model of such an attitude. Children are to obey their parents for Christ's sake, just as He obeyed (Phil 2:8). The motivation in Eph 6:1–3 is richer. Also the expression 'in the Lord' appears here, defining the scope and nature of obedience. We subsequently have a statement that such an attitude is just, that is, it corresponds to the objective state of affairs. Moreover, obedience is the fulfilment of the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, which demands that children honour (τιμάω) father and mother. The author emphasizes that this commandment is related to the promise of prosperity and long life on earth (Exod 20:12)¹⁸. Therefore, it is worth being obedient in order to enjoy such benefits.

The radical and total order of obedience is toned down by the guidelines for fathers, which also apply to mothers. According to Col 3:21, fathers should not

¹⁶ Cf. C.S. Keener, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Nowego Testamentu*, (Prymasowska Seria Biblijna 16), Warszawa 2000, pp. 426, 447.

¹⁷ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, p. 837; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, p. 623.

¹⁸ The commandment is quoted from the *Septuagint* with some changes, first of all, the final sentence is omitted: [the land] 'which the Lord your God gives you' so that the idea of the land would not be limited only to the Israelites.

irritate (ἐρεθίζω) their children. In motivation, it is noted that irritability can lead children to lose their spirit, and become discouraged, or even depressed (ἀθυμέω). The child would become apathetic, or passive, which would be detrimental to his development. In Eph 6:4, fathers are called on not to cause anger (παροργίζω) in their children, but to educate them according to the Lord's pedagogy and instruction (παιδεία καὶ νοουθεσία κυρίου), and therefore, more gently than in the ancient world, where corporal punishment was on the agenda in education¹⁹. They are to follow Christ at home with the children. Thus, parents are required to be very attentive and sensitive, not only to their children's basic needs, but also to their internal states, thoughts, and desires. In this way, the dignity of the children and their relative autonomy appropriate to their age and maturity are preserved. Full obedience on the part of children should find full responsibility and respect on the part of parents. The guidelines are general, they draw a certain ideal that should be realized in a specific family life. The reciprocity in the relationship between children and parents is also confirmed by the general rule placed before the household code in Eph 5:21, 'Be subject (ὑποτάσσω) to one another in the fear of Christ'. The obedience required of children, therefore, is not as one-sided as it might seem at first reading²⁰.

The obedience recommended to children in the household codes (Col 3:20; Eph 6:1–3) is not related to relationships on the religious level. However, in other texts in the New Testament, the child's obedience and discipline, or the absence of these behaviours, will reflect our relationship with God, Christ, and others (Heb 12:4–11; 1 Pet 1:14). A certain transfer of slave ministry from earthly masters to Christ occurs in the context of the texts concerning the obedience of children (Col 3:22–4:1; Eph 6:5–9).

3. Modesty and innocence (1 Thess 2:7)

In the pericope of 1 Thess 2:1–2, Paul mentions his activity in Thessalonica, which turned out to be very fruitful. The apostle, together with Silvanus and Timothy, courageously undertook the proclamation of the Gospel there, despite the suffering and insults they had endured in Philippi (Acts 16:11–40), and also despite the adversities they had to fight in Thessalonica itself (Acts 17:1–9). He reminds his readers that it was God who entrusted them with the preaching of

¹⁹ Cf. C.S. Keener, *Komentarz...*, p. 426.

²⁰ Cf. S. Wronka, *La struttura...*, pp. 282–284; J.N. Aletti, *Lettera ai Colossesi. Introduzione, versione e commento*, (Scritti delle origini cristiane 12), Bologna 1994, pp. 206–213; B. Adamczewski, *List do Filemona, List do Kolosan. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament 12), Częstochowa 2006, pp. 325–327, 330–332, 337–339; A. Janowski, *Listy...*, pp. 295–296, 492–494; R. Penna, *Lettera agli Efesini...*, pp. 244–245.

the Gospel and that they wanted to please only Him, not the people. At work, they were not guided by error, impure motives, deception, flattery, greed, or the pursuit of human glory. As apostles of Christ, they could be a burden to the Thessalonians through material claims or display of their authority, but they became little children among them and looked after them as a nurse or mother does their children, ready to give their souls to them. They worked day and night so as not to be a burden to anyone, behaved blamelessly, and like a father does his children, so they encouraged the Thessalonians to behave God-worthily. As can be seen, we have three metaphorical references here from the family circle: to the child (1 Thess 2:7 & 11), to the nurse or mother (1 Thess 2:7), and to the father (1 Thess 2:11). Wherein the child appears once (νήπιος) as the image of the apostles (1 Thess 2:7), and twice (τέκνον) as the image of the Thessalonians (1 Thess 2:7 & 11). We are interested in the first metaphor contained in 1 Thess 2:7 because it illustrates the behaviour of a child.

δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι.
ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν,
ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα.

even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.
But we proved to be gentle among you,
as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children.

The adjective νήπιος means ‘baby, child, minor’, but is often used as the noun ‘infant, small child’. In a figurative sense, it means someone simple, unaware, straightforward, open-minded. It is a child in the first years of life, fed on mother’s milk, weak, unable to use reason, inexperienced, deprived of rights, dependent on others. It is contrasted with an adult, as an educated and wise person²¹. In the Gospels, children defined by this term are viewed positively by Jesus and contrasted with the scribes, Pharisees, and high priests (Matt 11:25 & 21:16; Luke 10:21). In the New Testament, except for 1 Thess 2:7, the term has a pejorative meaning and, with the exception of 1 Cor 13:11, always refers to simple members of communities, not to their leaders (Rom 2:20; 1 Cor 3:1; 13:11; Gal 4: 3; Eph 4:14; Heb 5:13). What does this term mean in 1 Thess 2:7? Before we deal with the semantics involved, we must first explain the problem of text criticism.

²¹ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, p. 537; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, p. 409; X. Léon-Dufour, *Słownik Nowego Testamentu...*, pp. 234–235; G. Braumann, *Fanciullo, bambino, figlio...*, pp. 604–605.

The lesson with νήπιος has been verified more adequately, and the editors of the Greek New Testament supported it²². However, there is a variant with the adjective ἥπιος that means ‘gentle, kind, polite’²³, which is chosen by a large number of translators and commentators today. In their opinion, the lesson with νήπιος can be easily explained by dittography: the consonant ν was repeated and instead of ἐγενήθημεν ἥπιοι (‘we became gentle’), γενήθημεν νήπιοι (‘we became babies’) came out. In addition, according to them, ἥπιος fits the context better, ‘we became gentle as a nurse looks after her children’, rather than νήπιος, ‘we became babies as a nurse looks after her children’. In the last version, Paul would compare himself and his fellow workers first to children and then to a nurse, while simultaneously comparing the Thessalonians to children (τέκνον). This use of metaphors would be chaotic and incoherent. It is also noted that νήπιος has a negative meaning in Paul’s works, and that throughout the New Testament, except for 1 Cor 13:11, it does not include the apostles. Finally, ἥπιος appears in 2 Tim 2:24, where, according to Paul’s words to Timothy, it is meant to denote a characteristic of a servant of Christ.

These arguments are quite strong, but it seems that there are also convincing reasons behind νήπιος. First of all, this lesson is better attested, and the term itself occurs more frequently in the Scriptures compared to ἥπιος, which is a *hapax legomenon* throughout the Greek Bible. In the *Septuagint*, from this family of terms only the noun ἡπιότης (‘gentleness’) appears once (Est 3:13b). Paul uses images very flexibly and in a surprising way, not caring about their coherence. For example, in Gal 4:19 he combines the birth of the Christians of Galatia with the formation of Christ in them, and in Rom 7:1–6 the wife is freed from the law of the husband when her husband dies, while the Christians are freed from the Old Testament law by their own death with Christ. So it is quite possible for Paul to compare both himself and the Thessalonians to children, and to compare himself and his fellow workers to a child and then to a nurse and to a father. Comparing himself and his fellow workers to infants also fits well into the context, because being like an infant refutes suspicions of impure motives, deception, flattery, greed, pursuit of human glory, or wielding authority, even better than being gentle does. An infant is not at all capable of such negative behaviours. It is true that νήπιος has a negative meaning in Paul’s works, but in 1 Cor 14:20 he uses the related verb νηπιάζω (‘to be a child, to behave like a child’), which is also a *hapax legomenon* throughout the Greek Bible, and in a positive sense. Paul writes to the Corinthians that they should be infants with regard to evil (κακία),

²² Cf. *Novum Testamentum graece...*, p. 623; *The Greek New Testament*, with Dictionary, ed. by B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C.M. Martini, B.M. Metzger, Stuttgart 1998⁴, p. 699. The latest edition assigns a ‘B’ to this lesson, which signifies great confidence in choice.

²³ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, p. 348; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, p. 264.

and therefore not capable of deceit, greed, or seeking glory... (cf. 1 Pet 2:1–2)²⁴. It is also possible to understand *νήπιοι* as the vocative, 'We became, o my children, like a nurse in your midst'²⁵.

Thus, Paul compares himself and his fellow workers to minor children, to infants, to indicate that they are modest, simple, without pretensions or demands, and without deceptive intentions or any desire to dominate the Thessalonians. They need not fear them, because they have no evil intentions; they only want to proclaim the Gospel entrusted to them by God²⁶. The metaphor of a child is completed by a comparison (*ὡς* — 'as') to the nurse. The noun used, *τροφός*, means 'nurse, nanny', here it can also mean a mother who cares for her children (*τέκνον*)²⁷. The verb *θάλπω* literally means 'to keep (s.o. or s.t.) warm' and figuratively 'to cherish, comfort'. Finally, there is also a comparison (*ὡς* — 'as') to the father (1 Thess 2:11). Like the father does his children (*τέκνον*), the apostles earnestly instruct and encourage the Thessalonians to do what is right, so that they may attain the kingdom and glory promised by God.

²⁴ The text of 1 Cor 14:20 will be further discussed while analyzing children's negative attitudes as they dominate in this verse.

²⁵ Cf. B.M. Metzger, *A textual commentary of the Greek New Testament*, London–New York 1975, pp. 629–630; M. Bednarz, *1–2 List do Tesaloniczan. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament 13), Częstochowa 2007, pp. 154, 158–160; J. Stępień, *Listy do Tesaloniczan i Pasterskie*, (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu 9), Poznań–Warszawa 1979, pp. 135–148; A. Vanhoye, *Esegesi della Prima lettera ai Tessalonesi*, Ad uso degli studenti, Roma 1987, pp. 5, 65–82; H. Schürmann, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, (Geistliche Schriftlesung 13), Leipzig 1961, pp. 44–52; G. Braumann, *Fanciullo, bambino, figlio...*, p. 606.

²⁶ From Polish translations, the lesson with *νήπιοι* is chosen by: *Biblia w przekładzie księdza Jakuba Wujka z 1599 r.*, Transkrypcja typu „B” oryginalnego tekstu z XVI w. i wstępy J. Frankowski, Warszawa 1999 ('the little'); *Pismo Święte Starego i Nowego Testamentu. Biblia Tysiąclecia w przekładzie z języków oryginalnych*, oprac. zespół biblistów polskich z inicjatywy benedyktynów tynieckich, Poznań 2002⁵ and *Pismo Święte Starego i Nowego Testamentu. „Biblia Warszawsko-Praska” w przekładzie z języków oryginalnych*, oprac. K. Romaniuk, Warszawa 1997 ('full of modesty'); *Pismo Święte Starego i Nowego Testamentu. Najnowszy przekład z języków oryginalnych z komentarzem*, oprac. Zespół Biblistów Polskich z inicjatywy Towarzystwa Świętego Pawła, Częstochowa 2008 ('small children'); *Nowy Testament. Przekład na Wielki Jubileusz Roku 2000*, z języka greckiego przełożył, wprowadzeniem i przypisami opatrzył R. Popowski, (Prymasowska Seria Biblijna 15), Warszawa 2000 ('the minor').

²⁷ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, pp. 827–828; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, p. 611.

4. Accepting discipline (Heb 12:4–11)

The text of Heb 12:4–11 belongs to the larger whole of Heb 12:1–13, in which the author of the letter exhorts Christians to persevere in faith. This is a serious problem because the addressees experience great torment for reason of the faith they profess: mockery, persecution, property plunder, and imprisonment. Faced with these experiences, they were becoming dispirited, losing hope, and were close to apostasy. They struggled with great difficulty for their own faith and for the faith of their persecuted brothers (Heb 10:32–39). As an example, the author of the letter gives them the witnesses of faith from the entire history of salvation who suffered even more severe torments but endured them (Heb 11:1–40). He also calls them to run with endurance in the appointed competition, putting aside any disturbing burden, especially sin. They should be modeled by Christ who guides and perfects the faith. He Himself endured the infamous cross and suffered great hostility from His opponents, thanks to which He triumphed and came to be seated at the right hand of God (Heb 12:1–3). Looking at Jesus, the Hebrews are not to lose heart, but are to strengthen their steps and actions, and support the weaker brethren (Heb 12:12–13). In the middle part (Heb 12:4–11), the author suggests that the addressees should see their suffering as discipline from God, which is justified and necessary. Indeed, the discipline is unpleasant, but it brings blessed fruits²⁸.

⁴ Οὐπω μέχρις αἵματος ἀντικατέστητε πρὸς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἀνταγωνιζόμενοι.

⁵ καὶ ἐκλέλησθε τῆς παρακλήσεως, ἥτις ὑμῖν ὡς υἱοῖς διαλέγεται·

*υἱέ μου, μὴ ὀλιγώρει παιδείας κυρίου
μηδὲ ἐκλύου ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐλεγχόμενος·*

⁶ ὃν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ κύριος παιδεύει,
μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν παραδέχεται.

⁷ εἰς παιδείαν ὑπομένετε, ὡς υἱοῖς ὑμῖν προσφέρεται ὁ θεός.
τίς γὰρ υἱὸς ὃν οὐ παιδεύει πατήρ;

⁸ εἰ δὲ χωρὶς ἐστε παιδείας ἧς μέτοχοι γεγόνασιν πάντες,
ἄρα νόθοι καὶ οὐχ υἱοὶ ἐστε.

⁹ εἶτα τοὺς μὲν τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν πατέρας εἶχομεν παιδευτὰς καὶ ἐνετρεπόμεθα·
οὐ πολὺ [δὲ] μᾶλλον ὑποταγησόμεθα τῷ πατρὶ τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ ζήσομεν;

²⁸ Cf. A. Malina, *List do Hebrajczyków. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament 15), Częstochowa 2018, pp. 503–504; S. Łach, *List do Hebrajczyków. Wstęp — przekład z oryginału — komentarz — ekskursy*, (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu 10), Poznań 1959, pp. 268–276; C.R. Koester, *Hebrews: A new translation with introduction and commentary*, (The Anchor Bible 36), New York–London–Toronto–Sydney–Auckland 2001, pp. 521–540; A. Tronina, *List do Hebrajczyków. Słowo zachęty na dni ostatnie*, Częstochowa 1998, pp. 147–156.

¹⁰ οἱ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς ὀλίγας ἡμέρας κατὰ τὸ δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς ἐπαιδεύουν,

ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ συμφέρον εἰς τὸ μεταλαβεῖν τῆς ἀγιότητος αὐτοῦ.

¹¹ πᾶσα δὲ παιδεία πρὸς μὲν τὸ παρὸν οὐ δοκεῖ χαρᾶς εἶναι ἀλλὰ λύπης,

ὑστερον δὲ καρπὸν εἰρηνικὸν τοῖς δι' αὐτῆς γεγυμνασμένοις

ἀποδίδωσιν δικαιοσύνης.

⁴ You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

⁵ and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,
my son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor faint when you are reproved by Him;

⁶ *for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,*
and He scourges every son whom He receives [Prov 3,11–12 LXX].

⁷ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons;
for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers,
then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

⁹ Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them;
shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them,
but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.

¹¹ All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful;
yet to those who have been trained by it,
afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

The addressees experience persecution that puts their faith to a severe test and creates a temptation to apostasy, the gravest sin. Wishing to cheer them up, the author points out that they have not yet fought their sin to the end and that they have not yet suffered the worst from their enemies — bloodshed in torture or martyrdom (Heb 12:4). At the same time, he tells them that they can and should read their sufferings as discipline from the Lord. He reminds them of the admonition (παράκλησις) of the Old Testament sage (Prov 3:11–12)²⁹ not to ignore this discipline (παιδεία) and not to lose heart when God puts a human being to the test (ἐλέγχω). Such discipline (παιδεύω) and scourging (μαστιγιώω) on the part of God testify that He loves (ἀγαπάω) this person and wants to accept him as a son (υἱός) (Heb 12:5–6). If anyone does not experience God's discipline (παιδεία), he is not His son, but an illegitimate child (νόθος). Therefore, the author calls for adherence to this discipline (παιδεία) and for surrender (ὑποτάσσω) to the Father of souls by which he may receive life. He rebukes (παιδεύω), but only having the

²⁹ The author cites the *Septuagint* exactly, adding only the pronoun μου ('my').

person's best interests in mind, that is, participation in His holiness. Each discipline (παιδεία) appears to be a trial (γυμνάζω) sad, not joyful, but it bears the fruit of peace and justice (Heb 12:7–11).

The author uses the family of terms παιδεία, παιδεύω, παιδευτής across a broad semantic field: to educate, instruct, exercise, correct, chastise, punish, scourge³⁰. He adds three verbs to them: ἐλέγχω ('to command, accuse, rebuke, discipline, test'), μαστιγῶ ('to flog, try, torment') and γυμνάζω ('to practice, train')³¹. All these terms express the idea of an upbringing consisting in theory and practice, and in preparation and testing. The element of punishment as a disciplinary measure was inherent in the pedagogy of ancient Israel and beyond. 'He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently' (Prov 13:24). In the Greek idea of education, παιδεία was primarily a physical exercise for children, but it also concerned crafts, arts, and philosophy³². Our text is not so much about punishing as about trying to be able to face difficulties and persevere in them. According to the author, God also educates His sons in this way. 'Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son' (Deut 8:5). His discipline is manifested in the sufferings experienced by the addressees of the letter. If sufferings take place, God does allow them, but only in order to educate His sons through them. This does not mean that the persecution is thereby justified or that sufferings must be sought in order to improve oneself, but only that sufferings can be regarded as one's being tested by God. They do not break a human being, but serve for his spiritual growth — internal cleansing, and greater adherence to God. Strengthening the relationship with Him as father and with other people as brothers, they develop perseverance in faith and in doing good. It is out of love that God allows trials, in order to bring people closer to Himself, and not to punish them or plunge them into despair. He treats His people as a loving father, while His enemies He treats as an unrelenting king (Wis 11:9–10).

The author justifies the usefulness and even the necessity of God's imposing such an upbringing on His people by comparing it to the educational relationship between a father and son in the family. God deals with us as (ὡς) a father (πατήρ) deals with his son (υἱός). It is normal for a father to educate and discipline (παιδεύω) his son because the child needs instruction and training. The father does not do this with his illegitimate child (νόθος), whom he does not care so much about, because he will not be his heir and will not take a higher position

³⁰ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, pp. 603–604; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, pp. 455–456.

³¹ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, p. 167, 249, 495; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, pp. 115, 189, 379.

³² Cf. S. Wronka, *Wychowanie w Biblii...*, p. 324.

in the society. In Greco-Roman law, the illegitimate child did not have full rights, and may have been despised. The father's authority did not extend to him and sometimes he would not be covered by state education. The author notes that all people are disciplined by their fathers — their educators (παιδευτής). Although they rebuke (παιδεύω), they do it only according to what seems right to them, during the short period of their sons' youth, and for a few days of human life on earth, they are respected³³ because they do their sons a favor (Heb 12:7–11). The noun υἱός means 'son, child, direct descendant', and in the extended sense, an adopted son, descendant in future generations, member of the nation, person spiritually related to another person or idea (for example son of peace), participant in some reality (for example son of God's kingdom). Here, it is used in the literal and strict sense of the rightful son of the father, and more broadly of the parents. It also includes daughters who were likewise subject to discipline from their fathers, from their parents. It is primarily about children from a few to a dozen or so years old, who can be brought up, reprimanded and punished, but adult children who remain also to some extent under the authority of their parents are not excluded. In relation to God, 'son' in our text means every person, because God's discipline applies to everyone³⁴.

Education combined with discipline and punishment is the right and duty of the father, of parents towards their sons, their children. Despite its unpleasantness, it is a benefit to the son who accepts it. The ability to accept admonitions from the father, from the parents, is a positive characteristic that the author associates with our relationship with God. Using the argument *a fortiori* (πολύ μᾶλλον), he argues that if we accept the imperfect and short-lived discipline of the father, we should all the more accept the discipline of God, who really knows what is beneficial for us and wants to lead us to eternal life in peace, justice and holiness. God adopted this method for His Son, whom He 'perfected through sufferings (πάθημα)' (Heb 2:10) and who 'learned obedience (ὕπακοή) through what He suffered (πάσχω)' (Heb 5:8). This method was understood by the Old Testament sages, and is expressed in their statements, apart from that already quoted in Prov 3:11–12. 'Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves (ἐλέγχω), So do not despise the discipline (νουθέτημα) of the Almighty' (Job 5:17). 'It is good for me that I was afflicted (ταπεινώω), That I may learn Your statutes'

³³ The verb ἐντρέπω can mean 'to shame, to respect'. The first meaning appears in the Pauline letters (2 Cor 4:14; 2 Thess 3:14; and Titus 2:8), the second in the Gospels (Matt 21:37 || Mark 12:6 || and Luke 20:13; 18:2 & 4). Here the meaning 'to respect' is more appropriate, advocated by most Hebrew translators and commentators. The meaning 'to shame' is adopted by A. Malina, *List do Hebrajczyków...*, pp. 502, 514.

³⁴ Cf. A. Malina, *List do Hebrajczyków...*, pp. 510–516; S. Łach, *List do Hebrajczyków...*, pp. 273–276; C.R. Koester, *Hebrews...*, pp. 525–530, 537–539; C.S. Keener, *Komentarz...*, pp. 526–527; A. Tronina, *List do Hebrajczyków...*, pp. 151–155.

(Ps 119/118:71; cf. v. 67, 75). The sages took advantage of God's discipline, which enabled them to become mature followers of God. The author of the letter encourages the addressees and readers of all times to adopt this attitude³⁵.

5. Full obedience (1 Pet 1:14–16)

The text of 1 Pet 1:14 belongs to the first part of the letter (1 Pet 1:3–2:10), which deals with the dignity of the Christian vocation. This part can be divided into three sections: 1 Pet 1:3–12 the foundations of Christian hope; 1 Pet 1:13–25 the moral consequences of the Christian life; and 1 Pet 2:1–10 the children, the cornerstone, and the chosen people. Our text is in the second section, which contains invitations to hope (v. 13), to holiness (vv. 14–16), to respect for God (vv. 17–21), and to brotherly love (vv. 22–25). These calls are justified by the author of the letter. The hope for grace in the Parousia of Christ is possible with sober thinking and acting. Holiness is required of Christians because the God who called them is holy. They are to behave in fear combined with faith and hope in God as a father and impartial judge, because they have been redeemed from their previous base conduct through the blood of Christ. Their love for their brothers is based on being born again into life from the everlasting word of God; they heard it as the Good News and heeded its truth. Section 1 Pet 1:13–25 has a parenetic character, it encourages people to live in accordance with the dignity received through their calling and baptism — to reject the previous useless, wrong conduct, and to follow the path of holiness in obedience to God's truth. The image of a child is used in the call to holiness (1 Pet 1:14–16)³⁶.

¹⁴ ὡς τέκνα ὑπακοῆς
μὴ συσχηματιζόμενοι ταῖς πρότερον ἐν τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ ὑμῶν ἐπιθυμίαις

³⁵ People living close to God treated suffering as a correction or even a punishment administered by God. Among them was Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland, who, on January 18, 1954, during his internment in Stoczek Warmiński, wrote, 'And yet, freely, consciously, I must admit to You [God] that all Your ways — mercy and truth! The suffering dissolves in the love experienced. The punishment ceases to be retaliation because it is a medicine, given with paternal delicacy. The sorrow that torments the soul is plowing on fallow, for new sowing. The loneliness is watching you closely. The human malice is a school of silence and humility. The distance from work increases zeal and devotion of the heart. The prison cell is truth that we do not have a permanent residence here...' — S. Wyszyński, *Zapiski więzienne*, (Znaki czasu 42), Paris 1982, p. 54.

³⁶ Cf. S. Hałas, *Pierwszy list św. Piotra. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament 17), Częstochowa 2007, pp. 47–53, 76–77, 97–100, 128–129; F. Gryglewicz, *Listy katolickie. Wstęp — przekład z oryginału — komentarz*, (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu 11), Poznań 1959, pp. 171, 186.

¹⁵ ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸν καλέσαντα ὑμᾶς ἅγιον καὶ αὐτοὶ ἅγιοι ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ γενήθητε,

¹⁶ διότι γέγραπται ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιος.

¹⁴ As obedient children,

do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance,

¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior;

¹⁶ because it is written, *You shall be holy, for I am holy* [Lev 19:2 LXX].

Christians are called to be like (ὡς) children of obedience (τέκνα ὑπακοῆς)³⁷. In this comparison, children's obedience is assumed to be a positive characteristic and a very necessary attribute for them to be able to grow up. The obedience of children was highly valued in antiquity; Jewish and Roman law commanded it. The noun τέκνον, like in Col 3:20 and Eph 6:1, generally denotes a child from a few to a dozen or so years old, when obedience is of great importance in their lives. Over the years, its role weakens, although it never ends, because a man always owes a certain obedience in the family and in social relations. For obedience, the verb ὑπακούω is not used here, which in 1 Pet describes only Sarah's reference to Abraham (3:6), but the noun ὑπακοή, which means 'obedience, submission' to people, God, Christ, or some idea. The genitive attributive ὑπακοῆς ('of obedience') instead of the adjective ὑπήκοος ('obedient'), known in the New Testament, is Semitism (*genitivus hebraicus*). The expression 'child of obedience' reflects more strongly the feature of obedience, emphasizing that the child in a way is rooted in it and is constantly bound by it³⁸. It is therefore about a very obedient child who can be a model for others.

In the New Testament epistles, such Semitic expressions occur more frequently: τέκνα φωτός — 'children of light' (Eph 5:8), υἱοὶ φωτός — 'sons of light' (1 Thess 5:5), υἱοὶ ἡμέρας — 'sons of day' (1 Thess 5:5). They express a strong relationship between a person and a certain material, moral, or spiritual reality, similar to the relationship between a child and his parents. A stronger expression of such a relationship is to identify a person with this reality as in Eph 5:8, 'you are light'. A strong bond between a child and parents is something positive, it can be used to express the relationship of a person with God and with values. In contrast, a child's developing such a bond in submission to evil and becoming associated with it is viewed negatively. Such a dependence cannot be approved, but rather must be avoided, which is more problematic for a child than for an adult.

³⁷ Closer to the Greek text would be the syntax, 'As children of obedience, do not adapt...', which is accepted by many translations.

³⁸ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, p. 837; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, p. 623; S. Hałas, *Pierwszy list św. Piotra...*, p. 103.

In our text, the image of a child is transferred to the religious plane. The Christians are to obey God like good children as they call him father (πατήρ). The obedience goes hand in hand with fear (φόβος), which means respect for God as father and judge (κρίνω) (1 Pet 1:17), as well as with faith (πίστις), and hope (ἐλπίς) (1 Pet 1:21). The idea of obedience is strongly emphasized in 1 Pet since the noun ὑπακοή is already in the address of the letter (1 Pet 1:2). Here, it defines the answer — to which the addressees are called — to God's election and sanctification by the Spirit so that they might be able to participate in the covenant sealed with the blood of Christ. Then, it has to be an overall attitude of a Christian born to the new life³⁹. The Greek noun appears still in 1 Pet 1:14 & 22, creating an inclusion of the parenetic section in question: 1 Pet 1:13–25. This confirms the great importance of obedience in the conduct of Christians. Obedience to the truth (ὑπακοή τῆς ἀληθείας), is mentioned in 1 Pet 1:22, thanks to which they have sanctified themselves (ἀγνίζω) and are capable of sincere brotherly love (φιλαδελφία) from pure hearts. This truth is the word of God (λόγος θεοῦ) by which they were born again, also called the word of the Lord (ῥῆμα κυρίου) from Isa 40:8 according to the *Septuagint* (ῥῆμα θεοῦ). This word was preached to them as the Gospel (εὐαγγελίζομαι) (1 Pet 1:23–25).

The author does not give many details as to what this obedience is to be expressed in. He puts it generally in the antithesis, 'not—but' (μή–ἀλλά). First, one cannot conform (συσχηματίζομαι) to one's previous desires (ἐπιθυμία), that is, one cannot allow the shape (σχήμα) of life to be determined by evil passions (1 Pet 1:14; cf. Rom 12:2). The noun ἐπιθυμία means a strong desire, a longing that can be neutral (Mark 4:19; Rev 18:14) or good (Luke 22:15; Phil 1:23; 1 Thess 2:17), but most often it is a bad passion. This is always the case in 1 Pet⁴⁰. They are fleshly desires that fight against the soul (1 Pet 2:11), human desires contrary to the will of God (1 Pet 4:2). They characterize the conduct of the pagans and take the form of licentiousness, abuse of wine, gluttony, drunkenness, idolatry, and debauchery (1 Pet 4:2–3). The addressees once did this without knowing (ἄγνοια) the word of God, but now that they have come to know the truth and have been redeemed by the blood of Christ from the evil conduct inherited from their fathers (1 Pet 1:18–19), they cannot go back to their old way of life. In 1 Pet 1:13, they were called to gird their minds (διάνοια) and to be sober (νήφω), that is, to awaken their thinking in accordance with their vocation, and to vigilantly follow the path of salvation⁴¹.

³⁹ Cf. S. Hałas, *Pierwszy list św. Piotra...*, pp. 69–75; F. Gryglewicz, *Listy katolickie...*, pp. 173–176.

⁴⁰ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, p. 293; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, p. 221; S. Hałas, *Pierwszy list św. Piotra...*, p. 104.

⁴¹ Cf. S. Hałas, *Pierwszy list św. Piotra...*, pp. 100–102; F. Gryglewicz, *Listy katolickie...*, pp. 186–187.

From a positive standpoint, the obedience to the known truth is to lead the addressees to become saints (ἅγιος) in all their behaviour (ἀναστροφή) on the model (κατά) of God, who is named here 'Holy' (1 Pet 1:15). The adjective describes God very well: separated from the world, perfect, and unlimited in the existential and moral sphere. He has called the addressees and wants them to become saints, to be conformed to Him, and to share in His holiness, which should mark all their thinking and acting. The author justifies this call with a quotation from Lev 19:2 in the version of the *Septuagint*, which has its variants still in Lev 11:44–45; 20:7 & 26. We are to be holy because (ὅτι) God is holy. This obedience is to lead a person to imitate God and to reach His ideal⁴².

Children's obedience is valuable since it binds them to their parents and allows them to draw from their love, experience, and help. If their obedience is perfect, they avoid what their parents do not like and follow what is good. Thanks to this bond, they follow their parents and become mature persons like them. It is similar in man's relationship with God, who is his father and who begot him to the new, indestructible life (1 Pet 1:3–4 & 23). Full obedience to God mobilizes a human being to follow Him in thinking and acting. It allows him to restrain himself from unwise, disastrous desires and become holy like God. In this way, the human being can attain perfection and participate in God's reality.

6. Desire for healthy milk (1 Pet 2:1–3)

The section 1 Pet 2:1–10 ends the first part of the letter (1 Pet 1:3–2:10). The author writes here of the growth of the Christians reborn to a new life. They are to eat unadulterated food, so that they might reject all evil, and walk in the way of salvation (1 Pet 2:1–3). Thus, they will approach Christ, who is the cornerstone chosen by God, though rejected by people. The Christians are built like living stones on Him to constitute a spiritual temple and to offer spiritual sacrifices as priests. They must be careful that they do not fall through lack of faith and disobedience to the word (λόγος), lest Christ be for them a stumbling stone and a rock of scandal (1 Pet 2:4–8). For they are a chosen tribe, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people owned by God, and are to glorify His wondrous qualities and works (ἄρετή). They once lived in darkness, were outside of God's people, deprived of mercy; now God called them to the light, made them His people, showed mercy (ἐλέεω) (1 Pet 2:9–10). The author draws attention to the great dignity of the Christian vocation realized in the Church, which is the subject of the first part of the letter (1 Pet 1:3–2:10). The Christians owe this dignity to

⁴² Cf. S. Hałas, *Pierwszy list św. Piotra...*, pp. 104–107; F. Gryglewicz, *Listy katolickie...*, pp. 186–188; C.S. Keener, *Komentarz...*, p. 551.

God's mercy, which makes the inclusion that binds this part (1 Pet 1:3 ἔλεος — 'mercy'; 2:10 twice ἐλεέω — 'to show pity, mercy'). They enjoy a calling that sets them apart from the Gentiles, among whom they feel as though in a foreign country (1 Pet 1:1 & 17; 2:11). It is not about a strict sociological definition of Christians as foreigners (maybe Roman colonists) in Asia Minor, but about their alienation in a pagan environment due to different religious beliefs and a completely different morality. Their faith is rooted in the eschatological perspective of the heavenly homeland towards which they are headed through the earthly life. In the moral exhortations contained in 1 Pet 2:1–3, the author refers to the image of an infant⁴³.

- ¹ Ἀποθέμενοι οὖν πᾶσαν κακίαν καὶ πάντα δόλον καὶ ὑποκρίσεις
καὶ φθόνους καὶ πάσας καταλαλιάς,
² ὡς ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα ἐπιποθήσατε,
ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ ἀύξηθῆτε εἰς σωτηρίαν,
³ εἰ ἐγένεσασθε ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος.

- ¹ Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy
and envy and all slander,
² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word,
so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,
³ *if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord* [Ps 34/33:9].

The noun βρέφος means a child in mother's womb (Luke 1:41 & 44) or a newborn, an infant fed on mother's milk (Luke 2:12 & 16; 18:15; Acts 7:19; 2 Tim 3:15)⁴⁴. Our text is about a newly born (ἀρτιγέννητος) infant who is fed on the milk (γάλα) of its mother or nurse. In antiquity, woman's milk was essential for a baby to survive and grow. Milk from a cow, goat, sheep, or mare was not able to completely replace it, therefore, children were rarely fed on animal milk, only in exceptional circumstances, and there were no other substitutes. The woman's milk had to be authentic, healthy, and without any additives, otherwise it could harm the baby. The child craves this milk with all his strength, demands it because his life and proper development depend on it.

The author compares (ὡς — 'like') the Christians to such infants and encourages them to desire with all their strength (ἐπιποθέω in the imperative aorist)

⁴³ Cf. S. Hałas, *Pierwszy list św. Piotra...*, pp. 71–73, 128–129; F. Gryglewicz, *Listy katolicke...*, pp. 174, 186, 194.

⁴⁴ Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon...*, p. 147; R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik...*, p. 100; X. Léon-Dufour, *Słownik Nowego Testamentu...*, p. 235; G. Braumann, *Fanciullo, bambino, figlio...*, p. 607.

spiritual (λογικός) and unadulterated (ἄδολος) milk (1 Pet 2:2). The verb also expresses the ardent desire for God (Ps 42/41:2), for friends (Rom 1:11), and for their glorified bodies (2 Cor 5:2). The term λογικός means 'rational, spiritual' and can figuratively mean spiritual (πνευματικός) milk (1 Pet 2:5) as opposed to material milk. However, it can also refer to the word (λόγος) of God, the Gospel of Christ, thanks to which the Christians were born again and to which they should be obedient (1 Pet 1:22–25). The second adjective ἄδολος means 'without deceit, unadulterated' and indicates food in which there is no trick or falsehood (δόλος). In the case of breast milk, it ensures that it is not mixed with any other substance. In ancient trade documents, the term denoted unadulterated food⁴⁵. Such unadulterated food for the Christians is the word of God, the truth of the Gospel free from all deception and falsehood, containing healthy, nutritious doctrine. The food of Christians is therefore the word of God, the Gospel of Christ, whose goal (ἵνα) is the growth (αὐξάνω) of a Christian like a child, but in this case growth aimed at the salvation (εἰς σωτηρίαν), that is eternal life in God's glory.

The author motivates the Christians to seek spiritual milk, referring to their experience and using Ps 34/33:9a (1 Pet 2:3). The conjunction εἰ having primarily the meaning of the conditional 'if', here takes the causal aspect 'since, if only' (1 Pet 1:17; 4:14, 17 & 18). Some manuscripts put the conjunction εἴπερ ('if indeed, since'), which more strongly expresses the causal aspect. The Christians should be thirsty for spiritual milk since they have already tasted (γεύομαι) that the Lord is good (χρηστός)⁴⁶. In the *Septuagint* we read, 'Taste and see that the Lord is good'. The author of the letter omits the verb 'to see' because he concentrates on tasting the milk, and instead of the imperative, he uses the indicative mood in the aorist 'you tasted' because it refers to the experience of the addressees. In the psalm, God is Lord, but here the author means Christ, whom he speaks of in 1 Pet 2:4–8. The addressees of the letter have already tasted the Lord's goodness, therefore, the thirst for His food should come to them spontaneously, just as a child instinctively craves milk because it has learned its pleasant taste and beneficial effects.

The desire for spiritual food should be preceded by a firm rejection (ἀποτίθημι in the form of participle in the aorist) of all evil (πᾶσα κακία) (1 Pet 2:1). This general expression is more precisely defined by successive terms that make up a small catalog of vices, as in 1 Pet 4:3 (cf. Mark 7:21–22; Rom 1:29–31;

⁴⁵ Cf. C.S. Keener, *Komentarz...*, p. 552.

⁴⁶ There is a variant where instead of the adjective χρηστός ('useful, good, noble, healthy, pleasant, sweet, polite, gracious' in relation to people and things) stands the noun χριστός ('anointed, Messiah, Christ'), but it is not well attested, it differs from the *Septuagint* and worse fits the context, 'You have tasted that Christ is Lord'.

1 Cor 5:10–11; 2 Cor 2:20; Gal 5:19–21; 2 Tim 3:2–5). The attitude that must be rejected is every trick, falsehood (δόλος). This is the opposite of the unadulterated (ἄδολος) food that Christians should crave. The author still speaks of deception in the context of speech in 1 Pet 2:22: in the mouth of Jesus there was no deception (Isa 53:9 according to the *Septuagint*), and in 1 Pet 3:10: deception is incompatible with life and happiness (Ps 34/33:13–14 according to the *Septuagint*). A close term is hypocrisy (ὑπόκρισις), expressed in the plural, which may indicate numerous manifestations of a hypocritical attitude. It is contradictory to the call to a sincere (ἀνυπόκριτος) brotherly love (1 Pet 1:22). Then jealousy (φθόνος) is listed also in the plural. The list ends with all evil speech (κακαλαλία), that is, all slander and defamation. Gentiles denigrate (καταλαλέω) the Christians (1 Pet 2:12; 3:16), but they should not repay them the same (1 Pet 2:19–23). The mentioned attitudes and behaviours, present among the Gentiles, are incompatible with the word of God that the Christians should feed on⁴⁷.

The infant instinctively craves its mother's milk; it demands it in order to live and grow. This attitude is recommended for the Christians. They, like infants, should desire the spiritual milk which is the word of God as they have already known how good its giver is. Thanks to this word, they can grow until they reach salvation, which means the full life in intimacy with God. It requires a firm rejection of all evil in speech and action: deception, hypocrisy, jealousy, or slander, following the example of Jesus and in opposition to the pagan environment. The Christians should be as incapable of such attitudes as infants (1 Cor 14:20; 1 Thess 2:3–7).

7. Expressions containing descriptions of children

In our analyses, we did not take into account the texts from 1 Tim, which also refer to children's attitudes, but which are found in instructions addressed to other people and without metaphorical applications. According to 1 Tim 3:4, a bishop is to keep his children (τέκνον) in submission (ὑποταγή). Therefore, the submission of the child to the father is recommended here. In turn, deacons are to rule (προΐστημι) their children (τέκνον) well, which also implies submission and obedience on the part of the children (1 Tim 3:12). The children's attitudes mentioned in these texts are to be the object of parents' concern more than the result of the children's efforts, and they have not been used in a figurative sense, although they could be combined with the calls to accept discipline and obedience (Eph 6:1–3;

⁴⁷ Cf. S. Hałas, *Pierwszy list św. Piotra...*, pp. 129–139; F. Gryglewicz, *Listy katolickie...*, pp. 194–196; C.S. Keener, *Komentarz...*, p. 552; R. Cavado, *Bambino*, in: *Nuovo dizionario di teologia biblica*, a cura di P. Rossano, G. Ravasi, A. Girlanda, Cinisello Balsamo 1988, p. 145.

Col 3:20; Heb 12:4–11; 1 P 1:14–16). Finally, the children (τέκνον) and grandchildren (ἔκγονος) of widows should learn to respect (εὐσεβέω) their own home and recompense (ἀμοιβή) their parents concretely (1 Tim 5:4). In the context of 1 Tim 5:3–16, this means taking care of the maintenance of the widowed mother and grandmother, so that she is not a burden for the Christian community. It is, therefore, about grown-up children and grandchildren who can provide the closest person with a means of subsistence in place of the deceased father and grandfather. The attitudes of adults go beyond the area outlined in this article.

Positive characteristics of children are assumed in expressions with the *genitivus hebraicus* denoting some positive reality: ‘children/sons/daughters of God’ — τέκνα/υιοὶ/θυγατέρες θεοῦ (Rom 8:14,16,17,19 & 21; 9:8 & 26; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26; Phil 2:15; 1 John 3:1,2 & 10; & 5:2), ‘sons of Israel’ — υιοὶ Ἰσραήλ (Rom 9:27; 2 Cor 3:7 & 13; Heb 11:22), ‘children of the Lady [of the Church]’ — τέκνα κυρίας (2 John 1,4), ‘children of the Sister [of the Church]’ — τέκνα ἀδελφῆς (2 John 13), ‘children/sons of Abraham’ — τέκνα/υιοὶ Ἀβραάμ (Rom 9:7; Gal 3:7), ‘children of Sarah’ — τέκνα Σάρρας (1 Pet 3:6), ‘son/children of the free’ — υἱὸς/τέκνα τῆς ἐλευθέρως (Gal 4:30–31), ‘children of the lonely’ — τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου (Gal 4:27), ‘children of the promise’ — τέκνα ἐπαγγελίας (Rom 9:8; Gal 4:28), ‘children/sons of light’ — τέκνα/υιοὶ φωτός (Eph 5:8; 1 Thess 5:5), ‘sons of the day’ — υιοὶ ἡμέρας (1 Thess 5:5), ‘children of obedience’ — τέκνα ὑπακοῆς (1 Pet 1:14). These expressions emphasize the strong relationship between man and the positive reality, be it divine or human, spiritual or material, concrete or symbolic, as in the relationship between a child and parents. The child comes from its parents, is dependent on them, follows them, and inherits their features and goods. The Christians should seek a similar relationship with God, with His people, and with values. They should see their source in these realities, be dependent on them, and allow themselves to be moulded by them to have a part in them. A childlike attitude, full of trust, devotion and love is an adequate response to man’s endowment from God, people and values.

The letters also include the names of children, sometimes with the added attribute ‘my’, ‘beloved’, or ‘true’, in addresses targeted to adults: τέκνον — ‘child’ (1 Cor 4:14 & 17; 2 Cor 6:13; Gal 4:19; 1 Tim 1:2 & 18; 2 Tim 1:2; 2:1; Titus 1:4; Phlm 10; 3 John 4), τεκνίον — ‘little child’ (1 John 2:28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21), υἱός — ‘son’ (1 Pet 5:13), παιδίον — ‘very young child, infant’ (1 John 2:18). This familiar form of address does not mean that the authors treat adult Christians as children and want them to be infantile. They merely emphasize a close and cordial relationship with members of Christian communities who treat the evangelizers and superiors of communities as fathers and refer to them as children with trust, gratitude, and obedience. This shows that such attitudes of children are seen positively and should be maintained in a form appropriate for adults in relationships between Christians.

Conclusions

The references to children in the New Testament epistles are quite numerous. We took into account those texts in which children's attitudes and behaviours are assessed directly or indirectly as being positive and used metaphorically as appropriate examples in the addressees' relationships with God, with Christ, and with other people. We often deal with a comparison introduced by the preposition or conjunction ὡς ('as, like'). These texts appear both in Paul's epistles and in the Catholic ones. As in the Gospels, the image of a child is used spontaneously in the epistles, it is difficult to see any intention to create a synthesis of children's attitudes that would constitute the ideal of a Christian. These are loose and fairly general associations, not elaborated more broadly except for the slightly longer text of Heb 12:4–11. Some elements of the child's reality are assumed, they need to be brought out so that the picture is more understandable and speaks more fully. Somewhat intriguing is the fact that in the epistles there are no direct references to, and even fewer citations of the Gospel texts about children. The authors of the letters have their own associations, which are generally more specific than the statements of the Gospels.

We analyzed six texts that highlight different positive attitudes and characteristics of children. In Phil 2:22 the child's (τέκνον) service to his father is mentioned, full of devotion, attention, diligence, and offered in an atmosphere of trust and love. To such service Paul compares (ὡς) the service that Timothy performs with him, his spiritual father and teacher, to the Gospel and to Christ. Timothy does not seek his own interests, but cares for the causes of Christ and the Christian community, and he also supports Paul and other co-workers. The household codes recommend that children (τέκνον) obey their parents in everything (Col 3:20; Eph 6:1–3). Such an attitude is a socially recognized value and consistent with the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. The obedience is to be practiced in the Lord, that is, because of Him and in imitation of Him, which guarantees that it will not lead to humiliation and abuse of the children. There is no reference to religious relations in these texts, but obedience to God occurs in 1 Pet 1:14–16. In 1 Thess 2:7, Paul identifies himself and his co-workers with infants (νήπιος) to indicate that they are modest and innocent, without pretensions or excessive demands, without insidious intentions or desires to dominate. An infant is completely incapable of such bad behavior (cf. 1 Cor 14:20). In Heb 12:4–11 it is recommended that the son (υἱός), that is every child, adopts the father's educational activities — instruction, admonition, and discipline — which are burdensome but necessary because they lead the child to maturity. These actions testify to the love of the father who wants to have a worthy heir. In this way, he does not raise an illegitimate son (νόθος). The author compares (ὡς) the situation of the son to the Christians' relationship with God. He encourages them to perceive

the experienced sufferings as a discipline from God, who loves them and wants to accept them as true sons. This does not mean justifying persecutions, but it is intended to strengthen the addressees in the face of a difficult trial. The text of 1 Pet 1:14–16 emphasizes the obedience of children (τέκνον), thanks to which they can avoid evil and follow what is good, imitating their parents. Similarly (ὡς), an attitude of full obedience combined with respect and trust is needed by the Christians in their relation to God. It prevents them from returning to the previous unseemly desires, characteristic of pagans, and assists them to become holy in all behavior, like God, the Father. Without obeying God, it is impossible to reach a mature form of life. In 1 Pet 2:1–3 it is noted that a newly born baby (βρέφος) wants with all its strength its mother's healthy milk, which is necessary for its life and proper growth. The author encourages the Christians to have a similar (ὡς) thirst for unadulterated, spiritual milk, which is the word of God. Such spiritual food is also necessary to reject all evil in speech and action, and to grow until reaching salvation, that is, full union with God in eternity.

In Semitic expressions such as 'children of Abraham' or 'children of obedience', such characteristics of a child as being descended from parents, sharing in their goods, devotion, dependence, and imitation of them, come to the fore. These features are useful for any human being in his relations to the persons and values indicated in the genitive. Conversely, in addressing the recipients in a familiar way, 'my children' or 'my babies', cordiality, trust, and devotion typical of children are used and recommended in relations between Christians, but without falling into infantilism and sentimentality.

As can be seen, the authors of the New Testament perceive that children have a number of positive attitudes and characteristics: service to the father, obedience to parents, modest demands, inability to do evil, acceptance of the father's discipline, craving for the mother's healthy milk, dependence, devotion, and affection. They recommend that the Christians adopt similar attitudes towards God, Christ, the Gospel, and their brothers, so that they can reach that full maturity, the eternal salvation, to which they have been called and into which they have been reborn. Although these authors do not refer to statements about the attitudes of children contained in the Gospels, their perception of children is similar to the view of the Lord Jesus. However, they more often indicate negative characteristics of children, but this will be the subject of a separate study.

Summary

The subject of the article is the attitudes and characteristics of children, which the authors of the New Testament epistles evaluate directly or indirectly as positive and recommend to their addressees in their relation to God, Christ, the Gospel, other people and values. Such attitudes include: service (Phil 2:22), obedience (Eph 6:1–3; Col 3:20; 1 Pet 1:14–16), modesty and innocence (1 Thess

2:7), receiving discipline (Heb 12:4–11), the desire for healthy mother's milk (1 Pet 2:1–3). Besides, Semitic expressions such as 'children of Abraham' or 'children of obedience' emphasize the child's origin and dependence on parents and participation in their goods. While in familiar phrases such as 'my children' or 'my babies' the cordiality, trust and devotion characteristic for children come to the fore. By recommending children's attitudes to adult Christians, the authors of the letters do not want to lead them to infantilism, but to preserve the child's soul. Although they do not refer to the positive statements of the Lord Jesus about children, their view of children is similar. They only pay more often attention to the negative attitudes of small persons.

Keywords

New Testament, epistles, letters, child, infant, son, attitude, service, obedience, modesty, innocence, education, discipline, breast milk, dependence, devotion, cordiality

Pozytywne postawy dziecka w listach Nowego Testamentu

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem artykułu są postawy i cechy dzieci, które autorzy listów Nowego Testamentu oceniają wprost lub pośrednio jako pozytywne i zalecają swoim adresatom w ich odniesieniach do Boga, Chrystusa, Ewangelii, innych ludzi i wartości. Do takich postaw należą: służba (Flp 2,22), posłuszeństwo (Ef 6,1–3; Kol 3,20; 1 P 1,14–16), skromność i niewinność (1 Tes 2,7), przyjmowanie karcenia (Hbr 12,4–11), pragnienie zdrowego mleka matki (1 P 2,1–3). Poza tym semickie wyrażenia typu „dzieci Abrahama” czy „dzieci posłuszeństwa” podkreślają pochodzenie i zależność dziecka od rodziców oraz udział w ich dobrach. Natomiast w poufanych zwrotach w stylu „dzieci moje” czy „dzieciątka moje” dochodzą do głosu serdeczność, zaufanie i oddanie charakterystyczne dla dzieci. Zalecając postawy dziecięce dorosłym chrześcijanom, autorzy listów nie chcą doprowadzić ich do infantylizmu, ale do zachowania duszy dziecka. Mimo że nie nawiązują do pozytywnych wypowiedzi Pana Jezusa na temat dzieci, ich spojrzenie na dzieci jest podobne. Zwracają tylko częściej uwagę na negatywne postawy małych osób.

Słowa kluczowe

Nowy Testament, listy, dziecko, niemowlę, syn, postawa, służba, posłuszeństwo, skromność, niewinność, wychowanie, karcenie, mleko matki, zależność, oddanie, serdeczność

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