

Consilium 30

Translated by

Ruth Breindel, Ben Revkin, and Daniel Carpenter of the Rhode Island Classics Association

Outline

A little boy of 15 months after a month-long fever overwhelmed by most serious syncope¹, entrusted to Blessed Faelix² in this case is revived and is perfectly healed/cured.

Summary

1. Other symptoms, except for syncope, are accustomed to deprive a man of every sense and motion.
2. Apoplexy³ is a disease of old age and ends the life in paralysis.
3. Also/indeed [quid] epilepsy.
4. Syncope is a sliding downfall of strength.
5. As soon as diseases of the heart begin, they kill a man.
6. By necessity those perish who are seized by great illness after another disease.
7. Long diseases are cured through the process of digestion [concoctions?].
8. Normally if anyone is suddenly freed from a disease, he has some notable purge.
9. Those who are often seized syncope, suddenly die.

1) As evidence of this miraculous condition becomes known to us, it must be decided, First, by what symptom this boy was overcome, for there are other symptoms beyond/besides syncope which are accustomed to deprive a man of every sense and motion, and they are especially apoplexy and epilepsy. To apoplexy all types of stifling are attributed, like from a noose, from water, from the smoke of charcoal, from the uterus⁴ and others of this type. Therefore the symptom, by which this little boy was seized, was either apoplexy, or epilepsy, or syncope. But it is clear that it was not that apoplexy⁵ from the nature of the disease and from the nature of the patient, since apoplexy is a disease of the old. Hippocrates, bk 6, *Aphor.* 57 *ibid*; Galen *in com* and many others; nor is it accustomed to damage boys in any way.

¹ syncope: heart failure in general

² Blessed Felix of Cantalice, a Capuchin Friar later canonized, who lived in the mid 1500s. He healed many sick people and is credited with bringing a child back from death.

³ *apoplexia* is probably Greek, while *apoplecticum* is Latin; same for *syncope* (Greek) and *syncopticum* (Latin).

⁴ perhaps a baby being strangled by the cord

⁵ one edition uses *apoplecticum*

2) Further it is clear, because apoplexy ends in paralysis. Galen bk 4, *de loc. aff.* chapter 2. Dan. Sennett⁶ book 1, *Pract.* Part. 2 chapter 33 in *Prognost.* num. 8. And indeed this disease without paralysis has been cured, nor would it have diminished anything from the Miracle, even if paralysis had followed. Finally it is clear, because in apoplexy the limbs are relaxed and become soft, but in syncope the teeth of the sick person and mouth close most strongly.⁷ The same Sennett, as above, as happened in this boy, about whom the 12th witness, who was the father of the little boy himself, thus stated at the 20th questioning: Suddenly he remained in my arms without movement or breath, black, cold, with the eyes and teeth fixed.⁸

From which it is clear enough that this symptom is not apoplexy. But even clearer it was not epilepsy, because in epilepsy there is convulsion of the limbs, since epilepsy itself is nothing else than universal

3. convulsion. Galen bk 1. *de symot. caus.* chapter 8 and there are other distinguishing signs between one instance, and another [instance] which [signs/symptoms] are altogether absent here [in the case of the boy], concerning which certainly mention would have been made by witnesses, since the signs are very much notable and most evident. Therefore it is left, that his symptom was syncope, in which way it is elicited most conclusively from the signs that appeared, and from those remembered by the witnesses, which agree with those [signs] which the practitioners explain in their own chapters concerning syncope and are able to be seen, if it is pleasing, Recentiores, Massaria, bk 2, chapter 9, Mercurial bk 1, chapter 10, Capivacc. bk. 2, chapter 9, Mercat. bk 2, chapter 10, Eustach. Rudius, bk 1, *Ars Med.* chapter 56, Sennett bk 2, part 4, chapter 6, Forest. *Obfer* bk 17, obs. 7, in scholia.

These things thus decided, it comes that the magnitude and destructiveness of the symptom must be considered; the overcoming of the boy himself [of] the other daily and serious disease; the swiftness and accomplishment of the cure; and the way by which the boy was cured.

4. And as far as the first, it was noted that syncope is a headlong collapse and ruin of strength. Galen bk 12 *Method. med.* chapter 5 and so savage and horrible is this symptom, that it is rightly said that syncope is an incipient death, and indeed death is the consummation for syncope, for the passage of

⁶ Daniel Sennett was an early –mid 1600s doctor in Germany. He also wrote about alchemy and chemistry (an early version of the atomic theory). He wrote *Practicae Medicinae*, published in 1635 in 6 volumes.

⁷ Note: *molliores* should be *molliora*, agreeing with *membra* for logical sense. In addition, remove the comma after *dentes*.

⁸ this is in Italian.

syncope is to death, for which reason it is called by the Greeks *oxyntona*⁹, this is swiftly strangling¹⁰ as from Aretaeus bk 1, *Acut.* chapter 3. I have said other things: bk 4 *Quaest Medico-leg* tit. 1, quaest ult. from which/where a place is not given for remedies in this state [of the body]. Paul. bk 3 *Med ch* 34 and here because he cuts the throat¹¹ too quickly,

5. since this is an illness of the heart itself, and diseases of the heart itself, as soon as they have begun, kill a man; Galen bk 5, *de loc aff* 3 and comm 2 *Aphor* 41.

Added to these there are overcomings of so deadly a disease, a disease now daily and severe, for he had suffered now through a month with continuous fever, all the witnesses unanimously said at the 20th questioning. And so, sick and because of his age, because he was a little boy of 15 months, and on account of the disease, serious because of its own nature, and because of which he had been vexed for a month already, placed in the greatest debility, snatched by the most severe and greatest disease, he was being forced to breathe out his spirit from the necessity of nature; since the daily trial continues/stays, by necessity those perish who are snatched by a great disease after

6. another disease¹², and better spirits taken away, nature is not able to wrestle any more with the disease, and so from this cause diseases press upon those relapsing/falling back more than from the beginning. Hippocr bk *de inter aff*, Avic. 2.4, tract 1, ch 95. Moreover, the swiftness of healing comes together most obviously at this supernatural effect/outcome, when the little boy right then by the recommendation of Felix Blessed servant of God, he returned into life, he was healed; which healing was not able to proceed naturally in so short a time because the boy was being held back by a chronic and long disease; which was not able to be healed naturally unless by a potion in a long amount of time.

7. For diseases of this type and abscesses are healed through potions, which healing comes after in a long time; Gal. numm. 6, *Aphor* 36, so that more and more this healing appears miraculous, it comes about on all sides absolute and complete, no trace being left of the advanced disease, although of such ferocity and deadliness, as is collected from the case and from the testimony of witnesses.

8. Finally, the manner by which this boy is healed, recedes altogether from the accustomed manner of nature and exceeds altogether its strength. For nature, if anyone is suddenly freed from disease,

⁹ oxyntona: perhaps acid reflux? a sharp pain: oxyn = acid, tona = strike; perhaps from Greek oxyntic, which has to do with "sharpen."

¹⁰ perhaps there is no distinction between a heart attack and a stroke.

¹¹ perhaps a tracheotomy.

¹² perhaps a secondary infection.

altogether some purging happens to him worth of mention, either through vomit, or through the discharge of the stomach¹³, or sweat or urine¹⁴ or a flow of blood from the nose, or from the seat through hemorrhoids and etc., which words are Gal. bk 3, *de Crisib*, ch 7. When therefore this boy became freed from great disease and from the greatest symptom suddenly and in an instant, and recalled from death to life, and without any similar purge and without any motion of nature, certainly it ought to be affirmed, that he, not naturally but supernaturally had recovered his health which must be noted that [or: it should be noted] more and more that in syncope, as has already been said, the headlong sliding of strength comes about because of its decline and the sudden resolution of vital powers and the stoppage of their flowing in from the heart to other parts of the body; here it happens, that [as a result] if any people should recover from syncope, through a long time they experience the greatest debility¹⁵ of the body, nor are they restored so easily to their former vigor, nor so quickly, and so quickly the regeneration of destroyed powers is able to happen from where those who are often seized by this, not only are they always with strength cast down but are of unpraiseworthy aspect, and with pale face, and emaciated, and from when they also suddenly die, as Hippocrates teaches bk 2, *Aphor* 41. Nevertheless here no remnants of this type of disease having advanced appear, but the boy returned to his former vigor by the intercession of B. Felix in this case. Therefore ... [for which reason and the rest]

¹³ perhaps diarrhea

¹⁴ one manuscript leaves this out

¹⁵ In one version, the word *liberitatem*, freedom, is used instead of *debilitatem*