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<sup>1</sup> *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957) 1: no. 61.

<sup>2</sup> See M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973 [1971]) 99-106.

<sup>3</sup> See Kenneth Neill Cameron, *The Young Shelley: Genesis of a Radical* (New York: Collier Books, 1962 [1950]) 428n54.

<sup>4</sup> *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991) 155-56, 157, 158, 162-63, 191.

<sup>5</sup> What I refer to as Burnet's "book" was originally published in Latin in two parts, each of which was Englished by Burnet himself, as follows: Part I in Latin, 1681, in English 1684; Part II in Latin 1689, in English 1690. See M. C. Jacob and W. A. Lockwood, "Political Millennialism and Burnet's *Sacred Theory*," *Science Studies* 2 (1972): 265-79. The printed title pages of the first three editions omit the word "Sacred," which does, however, appear in the engraved frontispieces.

<sup>6</sup> *The Theory of the Earth Containing an Account of the Original of the Earth and of all the General Changes Which it hath already undergone, or is to undergo Till the Consummation of all Things*. 3rd. ed. 2 vols. (London, 1697). Subsequent references are to this edition, cited by volume and page numbers.

<sup>7</sup> See Nicolas O. Warner, "Blake's Moon-Ark Symbolism." *Blake* 14 (1980-81): 44-59.

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Blake's "Infant Joy," in *The Songs of Innocence*, is not a major poem in the collection, but it has been a troublesome poem to interpret for a number of reasons, among them the significance of the infant's age as "two days old" rather than as some other specific number. The crucial lines in the poem are the first stanza:

I have no name  
I am but two days old. —  
What shall I call thee?  
I happy am  
Joy is my name, —  
Sweet joy befall thee. (E 16)

The first and second lines and the fourth and fifth lines seem to belong to the infant speaker, while the third and sixth lines (as well as the whole second stanza) belong to another voice, a respondent. Since babies of two days old are realistically too young to speak, various critics have offered a number of interpretations of these lines. Wicksteed is the one critic who specifically explains why the infant is "two days old." He identifies the infant's joy with God's creation of heaven as described in Genesis on the second day (123). Wicksteed suggests that the infant may be only two days past conception rather than birth, thus making the joy the joy of generation (123; 124n). Margoliouth finds Wicksteed's explanation of the second day "far-fetched,"

but he suggests that the two days may be two days of joy for the parents since the pregnancy has been established (55).

I propose a simpler reading. When the first speaker in "Infant Joy" says it is "but two days old," there is no reason not to take that literally to mean that the child was born two days ago. The fact that "I have no name" can be explained by the ancient custom of baptising (or christening) children on the third day after birth. For example, the birthdate of William Shakespeare has been accepted (not without some doubts) as April 23rd because he was baptised on April 26th and, according to Sidney Lee, "it was a common practice to baptise a child three days after birth" (8), a point that is also confirmed by Adams (21n1). Thus, the child is happy because it is completely innocent (in the Blakean sense) since it is free from all experience—all human institutions and limitations. Nor should line five, "Joy is my name," be taken to mean that the child is a girl with the actual given name "Joy," for as F. W. Bateson reminds us in his note on the poem in his edition of Blake's works, "in the eighteenth century, girls were not often, in fact, called Joy then" (115).

In sum, the infant at "two days old" is completely innocent, free, and joyful for probably the last time in its life, for after that (according to Blake's view of the world) the infant will be christened, or named, thus limited by repressive human institutions such as the church. Certainly the companion piece to this poem, "Infant Sorrow" in *Songs of Experience* (E 28), shows the restraint of an infant "Striving against my swaddling bands," or the repressions of society.

But a look at the longer manuscript of "Infant Sorrow" suggests the connection with baptism even more strongly, for the speaker in the poem says (lines 19-21): "But a Priest with holy look / In his hand a holy book / Pronounced curses on his head" (E 797). If we accept the manuscript emendation of "my" for "his" (E 799), then the speaker in "Infant Sorrow" may be saying that baptism was an occasion on which the priest "Pronounced curses on my head," an ironic Blakean view of the Christian rite of baptism.

My reading of the opening stanza of "Infant Joy" seems to make ordinary sense of the opening two lines of the poem, and, while it may not identify the respondent to the speaker—who could be the mother, the piper mentioned in the "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence* (as suggested by Gleckner, 298-99n1) or some unnamed speaker—it seems to simplify the context as well.

### Works Cited

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