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**BLAKE**

M I N U T E  
P A R T I C U L A R

## Holy Thursday

M.

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Roscoe, his son, and many of his friends and associates are listed as *Grave* subscribers.

<sup>2</sup> On the "List of Subscribers" is "George Frederick Cooke, Esq. Covent Garden Theatre." Since the theatre burned down on 20 September 1808, Cromek needed a new address for Cooke.

<sup>3</sup> Cooke's title approximates that on the label glued to the boards of the folio "Subscriber's Copy": "Blake's Illustrations of Blair's *Grave*, Engraved by Schiavonetti. 13 Plates.--Price Four Guineas."

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Bensley, Bolt Street, the printer of *The Grave*, was known for his quality work.

<sup>5</sup> The *Gazette* advertisement is reproduced in Geoffrey Keynes, "Blake in the Provinces," *Blake Newsletter* 34 (Fall 1975), p. 41.



The Baptismal Font, St. James's Church, Piccadilly

## Blake's Baptismal Font

by C.M. Henning

St. James's Church, Piccadilly, is the only West End Church designed by Wren. Blake was baptized in the church when Charles Moss was rector, in a font designed by Grinling Gibbons. It is one of few Gibbons sculptures in marble. The bowl shows three bas-reliefs: of Noah's Ark, the baptism of Jesus, and the baptism of the Treasurer of Candace by St. Philip. The stand represents the tree in the Garden of Eden, with the serpent coiled about it and Adam and Eve on either side.

By a strange twist of fate, William Pitt the elder was also baptized in the font.

In the north vestibule of the church is a tablet by Flaxman commemorating James Dodsley (d. 1797), the brother and partner of Robert Dodsley, the publisher-patron of Johnson, and a modern tablet commemorating Blake's baptism.

## Holy Thursday

By M.

Sir Geoffrey Keynes recently called our attention to the following letter, which appeared in the *Monthly Magazine*, 23 (1 July 1807), 554-56.



To the Editor of the *Monthly Magazine*.

SIR,

HAVING attended the annual meeting of the charity-children at St. Paul's, on the 28th of last month, I can hardly find words to express how highly I was gratified, as well with the spectacle of upwards of six thousand poor children clothed, maintained and educated at the public expence, as with the astonishing effect produced by the union of sounds from so many voices, chanting the praises of their great Creator.

I should not, however, have troubled you with this, were it not at the same time to transmit some observations I made whilst there, in the hope, that by communicating them to the public through your widely-extended miscellany, they



may be attended to by those concerned, and the effect of the whole improved to the greatest degree possible.

As I was there pretty early, and before many of the children had taken their places, the first observation I made was that, notwithstanding the immense theatre erected and provision made, there was yet hardly sufficient room to accommodate the whole of the different schools; many of the children finding a difficulty in seating themselves, and, when settled, were much crowded. Owing to this probably it was, that some few were occasionally had down to the school-mistresses below, to be plied with smelling-bottles to be kept from fainting. And this would perhaps have happened to a much greater degree, had not the day been as favourable as possibly could have been for the purpose, without either rain or extreme heat.

As each school must doubtless be made acquainted



acquainted with the number of seats allotted to it, this inconvenience might certainly be remedied, by leaving as many of the younger children behind, (whose voices can hardly be expected to add much to the general effect,) as may enable the remainder to be well accommodated.

My next observation was upon the choir of St. Paul's, which sang alone in the Te Deum and Jubilate, and in the greater part of the Coronation-Anthem and Hallelujah from the Messiah, and which appeared to me to be much too weak for that occasion, especially after the charity-children had added their voices in the two latter; contrasted to the immense force of which the choir seemed as it were annihilated; scarcely any thing but the organ (at least where I sat) being to be heard. Surely upon so great an occasion as this may justly be reckoned, the choirs of the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey might be requested to lend their assistance, as at the Festival for the Sons of the Clergy, with which aid the contrast would not be carried to such an extreme, as must be

the case with a single choir opposed to such a force.

My third observation was upon the performance of the charity-children themselves, whose extreme steadiness and accuracy was astonishing; and did the highest credit as well to themselves, as to the persons that had instructed them. In, however, the beginning of the 100th psalm, with which the service commenced, the effect was not so great as I had expected, owing probably to a want of courage in many of the children, which might prevent their putting out their voices so much as they did in the latter verses. But in the 113th Psalm, before the Sermon, they made ample amends, as nothing, I think, could exceed the wonderful and striking effect occasioned by the transition from the full chorus, to the voices of the girls alone on one side, and thence again to the full chorus, as was also the case in the Hallelujah succeeding it. The cathedral responses and amens too were very accurately performed by them, and well in time. I cannot, however, help thinking, but that, in the Coronation-Anthem, and Hallelujah chorus from the Messiah, a considerable improvement in the effect may yet be made, by a different arrangement of the air, or tune, in the parts where the children join, by not merely taking the treble notes, to which the melody is by



no means confined. For when the composer thus formed his score, he naturally supposed that the different voices would in general be pretty equally arranged, and that therefore it would be of little consequence whether the principal air was in the treble or any other part. Could he however have foreseen that, upon some future occasions, there would be about two thousand trebles, (supposing only a third part of the children to sing in these chorusses,) to about three or four tenors and basses, or had the present annual meeting and performance been instituted in his time, he would undoubtedly in the full chorus have thrown the air as much as possible into that



part, which cannot so justly be said to predominate over the others, as to drown and annihilate them. My principal allusion is to the first three bars of the last movement of the Coronation-Anthem, "God save the King," &c. and the same as repeated towards the end, which as a loyal *exclamation* in unison, appears striking enough, but can hardly be called singing, being nearly all upon one note. As, therefore, the air is here evidently sung by the counter-tenors and tenors, supported by the violins in the octave above, I should propose in these three bars, the boys taking the counter-tenor part, and the girls the tenor in the octave above, or in unison with the second violin part. And this, being in fact but one bar three times repeated, need not startle those who with great reason object to the children being taught to sing in parts, to which I would make this the sole exception. In like manner, as at the repetition of the same words in the key of A at the 17th bar, the principal air is in the tenor part; I would have the children taught to sing that part in the octave above, instead of the proper treble part, as being likely to produce a more striking effect.

In other parts of the Coronation-Anthem, and in the Hallelujah chorus, similar improvements may be made, by selecting such parts from the score, as have most air or time in them, for the children to sing, either in unison or in the octave above, as may best suit their voices.

I have yet a fourth observation to mention which I made, viz. the want of an organ of more power in the bass to qualify the prodigious strength of treble; although Mr. Attwood, by his full and judicious accompaniment, made the most that he could of that, (upon all other occasions

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as it may be reckoned,) complete and noble instrument. Indeed, since these annual meetings have been established, one cannot but lament that the proposal of Mr. Rhenatus Harris, mentioned in the 552d number of the Spec-

tator, of erecting an organ of the greatest powers and dimensions over the great west door of the cathedral, has not since been carried into execution. The present organ, however, might be enlarged for this occasion, by the exchange of the trumpet stop for one of more power than the present, and addition of a double trumpet bass, with likewise (if room should be found,) a clarion, or octave trumpet. With these powerful reed stops, and additional voices proposed, there would be something considerable left when the children's voices cease in the Coronation Anthem, &c. and in the full chorus the great force of the trebles would be qualified and contrasted by a bass bearing some proportion to it, and a grandeur would be given to the whole, which would wonderfully improve the general effect. Should however the additions to the organ here proposed, be not found practicable or expedient, then perhaps one or two bass trombones, used merely when all the children sing, might answer the purpose.

I cannot conclude without paying my small tribute of approbation to Mr. Page, as well for the very great pains he must have taken, and time he must have bestowed, in preparing the children at the different schools so as to enable them to perform by ear, and without the least knowledge of the science, with such great accuracy and precision; as for his clear, distinct, and animated manner of conducting so large an assemblage of voices, actuated as it were by one mind; thereby producing an effect that is probably not equalled in Europe.

Your's, &c.  
M.