

DAILY BREAD

“Grain of Hope : Slice of Heaven”

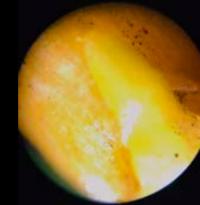
WILLIAM BLAKE



The visionary poet, painter and printmaker, William Blake was baptised at St James's Piccadilly in 1757. Blake lived in London all his life.

Although he was little known in his lifetime, he is now a considered a seminal figure of the Romantic Age. Blake railed against social injustice and an over reliance on rational thought ; he was worried science would destroy imagination and a spiritual perception of the world.

*“To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour...”*



Above. Microscope slide of a wheat Plumule - the first shoot of the embryo plant .

The font is attributed to Grinling Gibbons. The white marble font consists of a oval bowl raised on a stem carved to represent the **Tree of Knowledge**, with the serpent intertwined about it; Adam stands on one side and Eve on the other.

St. James's: 11 December 1757

You might spot him, snug in his mother's arms,
as the family group cross Air Street, skirting dung;

or perhaps catch a glimpse when they reach the
courtyard,
his brother straggling behind. Before long, this child

will know that every moment is a gateway
into eternity. If that is so,

unlock your vision. You will surely see him
in the winter-dim church, held beside a font

with snaking roots, with a trunk branching leaves
and fruit which wrap themselves around the bowl

of baptismal water. This is the Tree
of Good and Evil. The priest dips his finger

and signs the cross over the tiny forehead.
The baby cries. No-one pays attention

to the church-furniture. No-one dreams that this child
will show how that tree contorts and twists

the human brain, dangles the temptation

to see each living thing as a money-source;

how science feeds the reaching, grasping growth
of the tree whose bitter fruit is a world turning
into a wasteland;

.....

A blink
of nearly two and a half centuries, and now,
close to the marble tree,
a different sprouting.
Wheat rising green, its growth-wonders
revealed by science.

In the virtual world
sited on screen, a microscope penetrates
to the very quick of life,
source of our food,
to show how wheat springs out of shapeless soil
with fearless symmetry,

subtle design.
We find a planet in each globular cell.
We learn to see a world in a grain of sand.

.....

The baby is carried out through the courtyard.
Wheat as yet known only to God

brushes his cold face, sweeps in a green
cradle around him. Later he will see

how all times interpenetrate. But now
the limit of his longing is a breast

warm with milk. Soho streets sweep past
in a noise-erupting blur. He is returned

to a low-ceilinged room whose air is tarred
with a sea-coal fire, to flickering candle-light.

Diane Pacitti, 2020

Above. Detail of microscope slide of a wheat plumule one week after sowing overlaid on a photograph of blades of wheat photographed after one month after sowing.



St James's Church
197 Piccadilly
London
W1J 9LL

