PUNCTUATION OF WILLIAM BLAKE'S SONGS

By KOCHI DOI

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Editors of William Blake's poems have hitherto shown very little respect for the original punctuation. Ellis and Yeats have scarcely mentioned it in their large edition of The Works of William Blake: Mr. John Sampson writes in the General Preface to his Oxford edition of The Poetical Works of William Blake as follows:—

In the matter of punctuation the poet has left his editors almost entirely to their own resources. Blake's autograph MSS. are, as a rule, without points of any kind, while those in the engraved books are inserted in such a haphazard manner that, if reproduced they would only serve to confuse the reader. I have accordingly supplied my own punctuation; though Blake's pointing, where it occurs, has been taken into consideration, . . . (p. viii)

Mr. Geoffrey Keynes in his Nonesuch editions generally follows Sampson in regard to the punctuation of Blake's early poems. I think it was Mr. Joseph Wicksteed who first gave us the right clue for the understanding of Blake's pointing. In his "General Introduction to Blake's Innocence and Experience," he writes:—

His punctuation is the most peculiar of all. Sometimes it is almost omitted, as in 'Holy Thursday' of 'Innocence', which is perhaps the loveliest page of print ever produced, and he may have considered that stops would spoil it. It has been suggested that all his stops were primarily decorative, and he certainly prefers full stops to commas and colons to semicolons. But I think they have much more to do with the music and movement of the verse than the decoration. A full stop means a pause and has nothing to do with grammatical construction. I have represented these by commas except at the end of sentences: otherwise I have attempted to reproduce the punctua-
tion exactly. Blake often omits exclamation and interrogation marks and sometimes full stops at the end of his verse or poem.” (p. 68)

As far as I know, Mr. Wicksteed has not worked out these conceptions in detail, nor explained Blake’s signs in any particular cases of his poems, so I should like to try my own explanation in the following pages.

II. INTERROGATION MARK

First let me cite a poem of his—

The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee  lamb  Y, S K,  thee  Y? S? K?
Dost thou know who made thee  thee  Y, S? K?
Gave thee life & bid thee feed,  life  Y, S, K,  feed  Y, S, K
By the stream & o’er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing woolly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice;
Little Lamb who made thee  lamb  Y, S K,  thee  Y?S? K?
Dost thou know who made thee  thee  Y? S? K?
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee,
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee;
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

Here I have faithfully reproduced in type the poem from the Illuminated Manuscript, and in the right-hand margin shown the variations in punctuation: lamb Y, S K, means that Yeats puts a comma after “lamb”, Sampson has nothing, and Keynes a comma. When their punctuation is the same as Blake’s I have shown only the latter.
In this poem Blake leaves out five interrogation marks which grammar demands, and the omission is not restricted to this poem. I have noticed that, as a rule, he omits that mark in the *Songs of Innocence*, but not in the *Songs of Experience*.

What may this mean? Doubting and obstinate questioning are born from Experience, and Innocence is that which as yet knows no such things. There are twenty two sentences in the *Songs of Innocence* which require question marks according to formal grammar. But twenty one of them are only rhetorically interrogative as those lines in the *Little Lamb* are. In the *Songs of Innocence* Blake does not ask questions in order to be replied to, he only asks attention. Blake who ever saw the spiritual body of a things, perhaps saw a crooked old woman in the sign of interrogation, and did not like to admit her into his idealized world of innocence.

The only instance where Blake puts the interrogation mark in the *Songs of Innocence* is in the *Infant Joy*,—

I have no name 
I Y''S'K'' name Y; S: K;
I am but two days old.—
old Y. ''S.' K.''
What shall I call thee?
I happy am 
I Y''S'K'' am Y, S, K,
Joy is my name.—
name Y.' S.' K.''

Here the poet asks a question and is answered by the Infant Joy.

In some editions of Blake's songs *The Little Girl Lost* and *The School Boy* are included in the *Songs of Experience*. These poems tell about innocent experiences, and were first published in the *Songs of Innocence*. (See, *Blake's Poetical Works* edited by John Sampson, p. 150, foot-note.) The style of Blake's handwriting also suggests that they were early poems, for in the Illuminated Manuscripts all the songs of Innocence and the pieces above mentioned are written in the upright style while all the other songs of Experience are in the oblique. *The Little Girl Lost* has three sentences, and *The*...
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School Boy has four lines to be punctuated with interrogation marks according to grammar, but Blake ends them with a comma or a period.

In the Songs of Experience there are twenty seven places where grammar demands interrogation marks; and Blake himself has not left them out, except in the following three cases,—

Turn away no more:
Why wilt thou turn away

Can delight
Chain'd in night
The virgins of youth and morning bear.

The above lines are not questions but chiding or rebuke.

I. In the upright style

1. Songs of Innocence (except The Voice of the Ancient Bard).

II. In the intermediate style

1. The Book of Thel.

III. In the oblique style

1. The Voice of the Ancient Bard.
2. Songs of Experience with the exception of I, 2 and II, 2.
3. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, with the exception of I, 5.
4. The Prophetic Books.

As regards the date of the Marriage of Heaven and Hell Mr. Keynes writes that it was “Etched about 1793”; Mr. Sampson and Mr. Wicksteed say that the book is not dated. But I see the half erased date “1790” in the page after the Argument, under the left hand corner of the picture, and above the first line “As a new heaven is begun...”

It is possible that this was the first page and Blake began to etch the book in 1790, and the Argument, which had been written earlier, was prefixed to the book at its completion.
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Are such things done on Albion's shore.
_A Little Boy Lost_, l. 24.

This is also not question; they are things that ought not to be done, but which the poet sees in his vision are done.

Excepting these cases Blake never has left the question marks out. Then we may say that there is method in his eccentricity.¹

III. OMISSION OF SIGNS WITHIN A VERSE LINE

If Blake's own punctuation suggests his manner of chanting or speaking his verse, we may presume that he paused at the end of almost every line, but seldom in the middle of a line unless to give emphasis to a special word.

Throughout Blake's own text of 46 Songs of Innocence and Experience there are only 81 interlinear pauses while Sampson places 214 commas, semi-colons or colons in his text. Here are a few examples:

¹ In the _Book of Thel_ the sign is substituted by other signs in the following three places,—

Then why should Thel complain,
Why should the mistress of the vales of Har utter a sigh.

_Part I. Il. 26–27._

Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?
Why a Nostril wide inhaling terror, trembling & affright!
Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy!
Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire!

_Part IV. Il. 17–20._

The first passage expresses chiding, and is rhetorical: the second begins with questions but the doubt deepens into horror and wonder, and the sign of admiration may better express it.

In the _Marriage of Heaven and Hell_ I notice only one question mark omitted at the end of the following sentence, which is again only rhetorically interrogative.

This said he, like all firm persuasions, is come to pass, for all nations believe the Jews code and worship the Jews god, and what greater subjection can be

(A Memorable Fancy)
For Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is God our father dear:
And Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is Man his child and care.
(Blake’s own punctuation, The Divine Image, ll. 5–8)

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.
(Sampson’s and Keynes’ punctuation.)

In this particular case I think Blake has reason to read ‘Mercy
Pity Peace and Love’ in one continual breath without any inten-
tional or conscious breaks, because Blake sees them as making
one body, which cannot be chopped into four pieces. But when
he gives emphasis to a particular word, he puts a comma after it.

Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell,

IV. EXCLAMATION MARKS

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
(Blake’s punctuation, The Tyger, ll. 1–2)

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright K. TYGER! Tyger!
In the forests of the night,
(Sampson’s and Keynes’ punctuation)

Blake uses exclamation marks sparingly. Throughout his own
text of Songs of Innocence and Experience there are 29 exclamation
marks while Sampson swells the number to 64. These facts may
suggest that Blake spoke his verses quietly and smoothly, and did
not like to declaim them, tearing a passion to tatters. Blake did
not try to deepen the impression of a tiger by exclamation, but
the silence after the word and at the end of the line.
V. PUNCTUATION TO MARK TEMPO

In the so-called Rossetti Manuscript the earliest drafts of some of the *Songs of Experience* are preserved. In that MS. the poems are divided into lines and stanzas, but there is no punctuation at all. Blake’s songs are perfectly simple in syntax, and when they were written down in verse form, he must have seen that no grammatical punctuation was needed to make the meaning clear. For his songs, punctuation was only necessary to indicate the various length of pause and the variation of rhythm or tempo. If he composed a poem in a uniform or monotonous rhythm, then it had nothing to do with punctuation, so he left such a poem without it. *Nurse’s Song,* and *Holy Thursday* in the *Songs of Innocence* are such poems. *The Blossom* is like two flower buds which cannot yet be divided into petals, and so has a full stop only at the end of each stanza. In other poems Blake uses punctuation to mark the varied rhythm and tempo. For example,—

A CRADLE SONG

Sweet dreams form a shade,
O’er my lovely infants head,
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams,
By happy silent moony beams.

Sweet sleep with soft down,
Weave thy brows an infant crown.
Sweet sleep Angel mild,
Hover o’er my happy child.

Sweet smiles in the night,
Hover over my delight.
Sweet smiles Mothers smiles
All the livelong night beguiles.

*Nurse’s Song* has three interlinear commas to mark the pause and rhyme, and *Holy Thursday* has only one comma after “pity” which is emphatic.
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Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes,
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dovelike moans beguile.

Sleep sleep happy child.
All creation slept and smil’d.
Sleep sleep, happy sleep.
While o’er thee thy mother weep.

Sweet babe in thy face,
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe once like thee,
Thy maker lay and wept for me

Wept for me for thee for all,
When he was an infant small.
Thou his image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee.

Smiles on thee on me on all,
Who became an infant small.
Infant smiles are his own smiles.
Heaven & earth to peace beguile.

The mother begins the song very quietly, and she pauses at the end of almost every line. The song is monotonous enough to lull the baby to sleep. In the Nurse’s Song the rhythm is harsh and monotonous; but here it is the mother who is singing, and the subtle change of the motherly feeling is reflected in the punctuation. The song becomes quieter, and as she sings the fifth stanza the baby sleeps. Here every phrase is rounded with a silence. The mother still sings, gazing on the sweet happy face of the baby who sleeps and smiles. She is now singing not to the baby alone but also to herself. The song becomes her meditation over the child. When she sings

Thy maker lay and wept for me
she hurries on to say that the bliss was not for her alone, but also for the baby.

But when she sings—

Heavenly face that smiles on thee.

She pauses, dwelling on the thought for some time. The child, the mother, and all are in her mind not divided beings, and are not separated with commas. The last stanza is again steeped in silent meditation. If we pay attention to Blake’s punctuation we shall perceive that his poems are very subtly varied in tempo. For another example, the Little Lamb above cited, has the rhythm light and quick in the first stanza, which becomes quieter and deeper in the second.

VI. OMISSION OF THE FULL STOP

I suppose that Blake read the following lines “trippingly on the tongue”.

Spring
Sound the Flute!
   Now it’s mute.
Birds delight
Day and Night.
Nightingale
In the dale
Lark in Sky
Merrily
Merrily Merrily to welcome in the year
Little Boy
Full of joy.
Little Girl
Sweet and small.
Cock does crow
So do you.
Merry voice
Infant noise noise Y; S, K,
Merrily Merrily to welcome in the Merrily Y, S, K, Merrily Y S, K,
year year Y. S. K.

Little Lamb Lamb Y, S, K,
Here I am, am Y; S; K;
Come and lick
My white neck. neck Y; S; K;
Let me pull
Your soft Wool. Wool Y; S; K;
Let me kiss
Your soft face. face Y; S: K;
Merrily Merrily we welcome in the Merrily Y, S, K, Merrily Y S, K,
Year Year Y. S. K.

In the first stanza the rhythm flows on, when once started, like the never ceasing warbling of a lark or a nightingale. In the third stanza the child talks to the lamb softly and quietly. But it is puzzling to find no stop at the end of the burden. In the engraved book we find at the end of the line a patterned grass growing, and we may fancy that Blake has substituted this grass for a period. We may fancy moreover that this merry burden never ceases in the spring field, so the poet puts no stop to it. He ends his London in the same way.—

How the chimney sweepers cry
Every blackening church appalls.
And the hapless soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls
But most thro’ midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlots curse
Blasts the new born Infant tear
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse

London, ll. 9–16.

We may again fancy that these miserable voices ever permeate the London night. I have here gathered such lines as end without a period.
Till our grief is fled & gone
He doth sit by us and moan
The last two lines of On Another's Sorrow.

The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd
And all the hills echoed
The last two lines of Nurse's Song.

Sleeping Lyca lay;
While the beasts of prey,
Come from caverns deep,
View'd the maid asleep
The 9th stanza of The Little Girl Lost.

Pale thro' pathless ways
The fancied image strays,
Famish'd weeping, weak
With hollow piteous shriek.
The Little Girl Found, ll. 13-16.

Prison'd on wat'ry shore
Starry Jealousy does keep my den
Cold and hoar
Weeping o'er
I hear the father of the ancient men
EARTH'S Answer, ll. 6-10.

And I wept both night and day
And he wip'd my tears away
And I wept both day and night
And hid from him my hearts delight
The Angel, ll. 5-8.

I dried my tears & armed my fears,
With ten thousand shields and spears
The Angel, ll. 11-12.

There grows one in the Human Brain
The last line of The Human Abstract.

Except for those already cited, these are exhaustive instances where full stops are omitted. I suppose that these omissions are
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intentional. They are all very important and emphatic lines and somehow indicate continuity. In the Prophetic Books Blake sometimes omits a period when he states a timeless fact and gives the statement special emphasis. Here I have picked up a few examples from the Marriage of Heaven and Earth.

Good is the passive that obeys Reason
Evil is the active springing from Energy (p. 3)
Energy is Eternal Delight (p. 4)
The cistern contains: the fountain overflows (p. 8)
Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires (p. 10)
Enough! or Too much (p. 10)
For every thing that lives is Holy (p. 27)

VII. QUOTATIONS

Except in one instance Blake does not use inverted commas at all; and quotations are marked by the different length of pause. When the verb "say" introduces a direct quotation which begins in the same line with the verb, Blake has a long pause before the quoted passage.——

We shall hear his voice,
Saying: Come out from the grove, my love and care,
The Little Black Boy: ll. 18–19.

But when the quotation makes a new paragraph or a stanza he hurries on lest we should lose the connection between the quotation and its introductory words. In this case a comma is put at the end of the stanza preceding the quotation.

And he laughing said to me,
Pipe a song about a Lamb:
Introduction to Songs of Innocence, ll. 4–5.

And heart-broke I heard her say,
O my children! do they cry,
Do they hear their father sigh,

A Dream, ll. 8–10.
When the quotation precedes the verb ‘to say’, he has no punctuation.

Lo what a fiend is here said he,

_A Little Boy Lost_, l. 14.

When the quotation is an answer, and preceded by such words as ‘to reply’, Blake seems to consider that a comma is enough to mark it.

Who replied, What wailing wight
Calls the watchman of the night.

_A Dream_, ll. 15–16.

When such verbs as ‘cry’ or ‘sing’ introduce a few words he seems to consider that no punctuation is necessary:

And my father sold me while yet my tongue,
Could scarcely cry weep weep weep.

_The Chimney Sweeper_, ll. 2–3.

With their sweet round mouths sing Ha, Ha, He.

_Laughing Song_, l. 8.

When the whole poem consists of a monologue Blake sees no need to distinguish the phrase led by ‘I said’ from those led by ‘I did’, ‘I thought’ etc.

But I said I’ve a Pretty Rose-Tree,

_My Pretty Rose Tree_, l. 3.

But when the words uttered by another person are inserted in a monologue Blake had to mark them by inverted commas. The following stanza is spoken by Lyca, and the last line is imagined to be spoken by her parents, and this is the only instance in which Blake uses the inverted commas. I suppose that here he demands the change of voice by the sign.

Sweet sleep come to me
Underneath this tree;
Do father, mother weep,
“Where can Lyca sleep.”

_The Little Girl Lost_, ll. 17–20.
Blake’s treatment of punctuation in the above passages may show that it is intended for the ear more than for the eye.

VIII. EMPHASIS

Thus far I have dealt with his omission of signs, and now I shall consider his positive use of them. They may be explained when we perceive that Blake’s use was rhythmic or emphatic, but neither logical nor grammatical.

I have said that he seldom pauses in the middle of a line; and when he does, it is for giving a distinction to the word preceding or following the pause. For example:

And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briers, my joys & desires.
_The Garden of Love_, ll. 11–12.

Witless woe, was ne’er beguil’d!
_The Angel_, l. 14.

When the voices of children, are heard on the green,
_Nurse’s Song_, l. 1.

Think not, thou canst sigh a sigh,
And the maker is not by.
_On Another’s Sorrow_, ll. 29–30.

Whenever Blake has an interlinear rhyme he puts a comma after the first rhyming word;

Who in sorrow pale, thro’ the lonely dale
Her little boy weeping sought.
_The Little Boy Found_, ll. 7–8.

Besides in the sky, the little birds fly
_Nurse’s Song (Songs of Innocence)_, l. 11

Your spring & your day, are wasted in play
_Nurse’s Song (Songs of Experience)_, l. 7.

When a copula or a verb is omitted a comma is put instead of it,—
Kochi Doi

For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face:
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

*The Divine Image*, ll. 9–12.

The modest Rose puts forth a thorn:
The humble Sheep, a threatening horn:

*The Lily*, ll. 1–2.

We must pause after “hand” in the following line if we wish to pronounce the word distinctly, and not as handare.

What the hand, dare seize the fire?

*The Tyger*, l. 8.

In the following lines the meaning is quite clear—

In his arms he bore,
Her arm’d with sorrow sore:

*The Little Girl Found*, ll. 21–22.

while Yeats, Sampson and Keynes prints the lines as—

In his arms he bore
Her, arm’d with sorrow sore;

and make it uncertain whether it was she or he who was armed with sorrow.

The following lines mean that the golden hair of the lion was like a crown on his head, and it flowed down on his shoulder. Blake’s picture on the page confirms this interpretation.

On his head a crown
On his shoulders down,
Flow’d his golden hair.


Sampson prints the lines as—

On his head a crown;  
On his shoulders down  
Flow’d his golden hair.
This seems to suggest that the lion had a real crown on his head.

IX. THE RELATIVE VALUE OF THE SIGNS.

Generally speaking Blake punctuates at the end of his lines more heavily than most poets. This may be explained as follows. As I said above Blake seems to have chanted his verse with a short pause at the end of almost every line.

Blake would have given at least a comma to every one of his lines. Then he would need a semi-colon to indicate a longer pause.

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forest of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

The Tyger, ll. 1–4.

Moreover he would see the need of giving subtle variation to the movement of each stanza. A Cradle Song cited above is a good example of such variation.

In this manner Blake used more colons and full-stops than other poets. But after all, the value or length of these pauses is relative; and some of his full stops and colons may correspond to the colons and semi-colons of other poets who used these signs sparingly.

X. BLAKE’S PUNCTUATION OF THE INTRODUCTION TO THE SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

I suppose I have explained almost all the anomalies in regard to his punctuation, if I make the following poem an exception. To conclude my short study I should like to say that his use of punctuation is explainable although abnormal, and in many cases preferable to the grammatical punctuation of his editors. But I must say that this irregularity made his poems obscure. Ten men may read the following piece and each may interpret it in different ways. As regards the punctuation this is the most difficult of Blake’s poems.
Introduction.

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, & Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word,
That walk'd among the ancient trees.

Calling the lapsed Soul.
And weeping in the evening dew:
That might controll,
The starry pole;
And fallen fallen light renew.

O Earth O Earth return!
Arise from out the dewy grass:
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.

Turn away no more:
Why wilt thou turn away
The starry floor
The watry shore
Is given thee till the break of day.

This introductory song is not in the Rossetti MSS. and seems to have been composed when all the other songs were ready to be engraved. We may almost imagine that he offhandedly composed the poem on the plate. At the end of the first line he puts an exclamation mark and a full stop: he has not used double marks in any other place, and I suppose that he at first put an exclamation mark, but changed his mind and placed a full stop. He sparingly used the exclamation mark, and the position of these two marks assures us that it is not probable that he wished to change the full stop into the exclamation mark. He would not strike out a word or a sign from his engraved plate. In the first line of the Book of Thel there is another example of a word left unc cancelled.

Blake
Introduction.

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past & Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word;
That walked among the ancient trees.

Calling the lapsed Soul,
And weeping in the evening dew;
That might control.
The stony pole;
And fallen fallen light renew.

O Earth, O Earth return!
Arose from out the dewy grass;
Night is worn.
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.

Turn away no more:
Wise, wilt thou turn away
The starry floor
The water shore
Is given thee till the break of day.
begins that poem with the line—

The daughters of Mne Seraphim led round their sunny flocks,

Here, as Yeats conjectured, it seems probable that Blake at first intended to write Mnetha and changed his mind to make it 'the Seraphim', but left the meaningless 'Mne' without erasing it from the plate.

The second line has no stop. Has he forgotten it? Or, is it intentional, because the action here stated is never ceasing?

Blake concludes the first stanza with a period. This has been changed into a colon by Swinburne, a semicolon by Yeats, and a comma by Sampson and Keynes. They seem to understand that the second stanza modifies the 'Holy Word' and not 'the voice of the Bard'. The third and the fourth stanzas are most probably the voice of the Bard; for the contents of these two stanzas are very similar to those of The Voice of the Ancient Bard which is commonly placed at the end of the Songs of Innocence, forming a connecting link with this Introduction.

While Blake were composing Songs of Experience, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, The Book of Urizen, and The Book of Ahania, etc. his mind was preoccupied with the problem of free love. The Rossetti MSS. which were the first draft of the Songs of Experience, show us that the piece entitled My Pretty Rose Tree was the first to be composed. This may suggest that his own domestic experiences in connection with that conception of love were the starting point of the Songs of Experience. He thought that the gratification of the soul of sweet delight was the source of creative energies, and the repression of it the source of corruption, hypocrisy, secret impurity, and selfhood.

The Holy Word,
That walk'd among the ancient trees.

is a reference to Genesis, iii, 8. Then the "Word" is that of "the God of the Jews," or "the father of the ancient men". The succeeding poem, Earth's Answer has lines (the third stanza) which
are similar to the final stanza of the Book of Ahania, which is Ahania address to Urizen. Thus we are tempted to think that the "Holy Word" was Urizen's, although the word 'Holy' makes us hesitate to do so. But we may notice that Blake uses the same word in the Songs of Experience, and Innocence, with a quite different point of view. For instance, The Divine Image in the Songs of Innocence is that of Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love; while A Divine Image in the Songs of Experience is that of Cruelty, Jealousy, Terror, and Secrecy. So also with regard to the word 'Holy' he tries, in the Songs of Experience, to reveal its meaning as used in the hypocritical world. 'Holiness' in the Holy Thursday is bitterly questioned. I feel in the following lines some irony or bitterness.

And burn'd him in a holy place

A Little Boy Lost, 1. 21

But a Priest with holy look,
In his hands a holy book,
Pronounced curses on his head
Who the fruits or blossoms shed.

Infant Sorrow, ll. 21-4.

What the Bard sees in the Past is the retributive law and repression of human nature.—

In A Little Girl Lost, which is his own version of Eve's story simplified to the extreme, he writes

Children of the future Age
Reading this indignant page;
Know that in a former time
Love! sweet Love! was thought a crime.

A Little Girl Lost, ll. 1-4.

What he sees at present is the fallen state of mankind. He also sees in the future that the annihilation of selfhood, and mutual forgiveness, will regenerate the world.

In futurity
I prophetic see
That the earth from sleep
(Grave the sentence deep)
Shall arise and seek
For her Maker meek;
And the desert wild
Become a garden mild.

The Little Girl Lost, ll. 1-8.

If we can interpret the first stanza in this way, can we not think that it is the Bard who is calling the lapsed soul, and weeping in the evening dew?

The second stanza is very heavily punctuated: I can not tell whether the dots after 'Soul' and 'Controll' are commas or full stops. These are smaller than other dots and may stand for shorter pauses, or perhaps the dots lost the tails in his printing. Sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish Blake's period from his comma. The pause after 'Controll' may emphasize the following words by the suspense, as in the case of

Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word,

or may by that pause suggest the distance through which the influence reaches. We can cite a parallel example—

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

The Tyger, ll. 5-6.

There will be little doubt that the third and fourth stanzas are the voice of the Bard and not the Holy Word. 'Why wilt thou turn away' is a question only in form, so the question mark is omitted.