famous pictures; at the end of his life he made a large colour version of it called 'The Ancient Days'.

Having finished *Europe* Blake's intention got totally involved in 'The Bible of Hell' that begins with *The Book of Urizen*, Blake's version of a parody of *The Book of Genesis*. And one may note that *The Book of Genesis* is written in short, unrhymed lines and illustrated with some of Blake's most powerful and moving designs. Urizen's world is not a true creation but simply the formation of the abstract Newtonian universe. In *The Book of Ahania*, Fuzon, a kind of reincarnation of Orc, forces rebellion against Urizen and tries to kill him. But the fact remains that Urizen is immortal and cannot be killed. Urizen in Freudian terms, is Blake's own super ego, with which he had to come to terms in order to gain spiritual integration. If on one level Los resembles with that of Blake, the creative artist, on the other hand his fall into the material world certainly expresses Blake's own agony on those years of painful struggle.

When Blake finished up his *The Song of Los* (1795) there prevailed a great gap in the sequence of Blake's engraved books and he poised himself into a mode of silence for long nine years. During this period he neither painted nor engraved. Meanwhile the Blakes left Lambeth and started living in a cottage at Felpham on the sunny coast where they stayed for three years. In the years 1795 Blake was given commission to make designs for Edward Young's popular poem *Night Thought* Blake found himself engaged on this project till the spring of 1797 and within this period he delivered 500 drawings but only 43 of which was engraved and published.

Blake displayed his genuine sense of uniqueness infusing this primitive power of mythical perception with a highly developed modern conceptual power of thought. In his *Visions of the Last*
Judgment Blake inspires us to be a companion of one of these images of wonder. Like Faerie Queen, The Four Zoas presents itself as a series of dream pictures and dramatic episodes infused with a note of symbolism.

Having returned to London in 1803 Blake concentrated on engraving the two epics - Milton and Jerusalem. Milton springs directly from the illumination that Blake received because of the illumination he received at Felpham. In his The Marriage of Heaven and Hell Blake indulges himself in the satire of Swedenborg though in the deeper level these works prove to be a satire of institutional Christianity and the contemporary version of Christian morality. But in The Marriage Blake firmly exposes one of his contraries and strongly ridicules the other. He is for hell against the heaven. In The Marriage Blake is ostensibly of the Devil's party and rejects the opposing point of view even though he admits its necessity.

But Blake was more than a poet who happens to be a painter. He modeled the sister arts, as they have never been before or since into a single body and breathed into it the breath of life. Blake's method of colouring was a secret which he kept to himself or confided only to his wife. He was convinced that it was revealed in a vision and that he was bound in heaven to conceal it from the world. The Vision of Daughter Albion dwells upon the ringing indictment of martial slavery and sexual repression. In fact, from the technical point of view the Visions has close proximation with The Book of Thel both in the beauty of its colouring and in the simple directness with which the designs portray the scene and characters of action. Northrop Frye has remarked that the independence of Blake's design from his words is rather surprising in view of the prevailing conventions within which he worked. The tradition of historical
painting tended to dictate a slavish fidelity to the text and the allegories of the emblem books were but an attempt to simplify the verbal meaning. And Blake's departure from traditional ways of connecting poetry and painting cannot be understood simply as an improvement in the quality of his use of two modes of expression. In the eighteenth century the idea of relating the sister arts of painting and poetry had become grafted to aesthetic concepts which were, in many ways alien to Blake's philosophy of art. In fact Blake freed the Western Art from slavish imitation of nature. And therefore it is a complete mistake to regard Blake as an isolated figure cut off from all tradition. On the contrary, like all great artists, he was traditional in the best sense of the word; he knew very much from which of his predecessors he could learn his work.

The paintings of Blake cited in this chapter amply demonstrate his sheer poetic art. The mellowing fluidity of Blake's paintings echo the inner illumination of his poetic device. And therefore the language of his paintings echoes the profound meaning of his poetry. One of the most distinctive of all English artists, William Blake was a brilliant poet as well as a great painter. A fiercely independent man, he started his career as a commercial engraver, but in his thirties began illustrating his own poems. He soon created a completely personal style and an original technique that perfectly expressed the full intensity of his visionary experiences. Blake is now recognised as one of the giants of the Romantic period, but in his lifetime his genius was appreciated by only a small circle of admirers. He had few patrons and much of his life was spent in poverty. But lack of material success was of little consequence to Blake – he was completely dedicated to his work and
lived in the world of the imagination and the spirit rather than the world of the flesh.

Blake's "Prophecies" of the 1790s are marked by a sense of urgency, for they attempt to interpret the course of the French Revolution as it actually unfolds. As a concept revolution appears both creative and destructive: it creates a new world but it could end by usurping the tyranny it destroys. These ambiguities are embodied in the Promethean figure of Orc, whose fiery ambition reflects that of Milton's Satan. At one extreme he is Christ-like in that he represents the hope that revolution will be a prelude to the Second Coming; at the other he is a pretender to the throne of Urizen, whose place he will take as the upholder of Moral Law.

In fact the first cycle of Prophecies ends inconclusively by 1796 with the completion of *The Book of Ahania* and *The Book of Los*. Blake seems to have begun almost immediately to reconstruct the myth within a single volume, which he initially called *Vala* and later *The Four Zoas* abandoning it some time after 1804.

*Jerusalem*, in brief is an account of the spiritual history of man in the context of an ecstatic vision in which all contraries are finally reconciled and man returns to his primal unity. Los in *Jerusalem* is thus a link between Blake as visionary artist and the actual practice of art. However he is not an engraver, painter or poet but a blacksmith sculptor who casts gigantic figures in a furnace. Although this visionary art will transcend the individual arts it will not eliminate the senses, the individual arts will retain their identity and continue to appeal to the sense, but in combination they are supposed to create a heavenly form of conversation. So, all those who are in a sense of Redemption will converse naturally in all the forms of art, whether it be painting, poetry or music, moving freely from
one to another. Although seemingly conventional in structure and recognizable in terms of traditional iconography, as an attempt to encompass the history of human spirit from Fall to Redemption, it is an equivalent in pictorial terms of Jerusalem, which itself was the culmination of Blake’s efforts, beginning with the prophecies of the 1790s, to create a Bible of his own. In this context Blake’s remarks on Laocoon engraving: “Praise is the practice of Art. The outward ceremony is antichrist” – stands fully justified.

In fact Blake was well aware of the fact that most of his contemporaries could not understand him properly and that this incomprehensiveness gave him a protection that was essential to him especially in the period of antiradical reaction in England in the 1790s. As far as The Visions of The Daughters of Albion is concerned, it is a ringing indictment of sexual repression and of martial slavery. The poem that Inculcates the preaching of the Gospel - Innocence lacks its exuberant borders. Technically the Visions resembles both in terms of its colouring and in the simple directness with which the design portrays the scene and characters of the action. In fact Blake’s mind was charged with the beauty of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. He actually got deeply influenced with the impact of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained.

The traditions of the sister arts as modified in the eighteenth century is useful for showing the kinds of things Blake was reacting against as he set about uniting the verbal and graphic arts. In the opinion of Blake the attempt to make poetry visual and to make pictures ‘speak’ is not a flawless conception, not because it ignores the fundamental differences between the two art forms but mainly because of the basic differences between the two art forms and
principally because it mainly presented the independent reality of space and time and treated them as an inseparable element.

The principal characters in The Four Zoas personify the whole human being, who is also mankind, and man's four constituent faculties or forces: these are called Zoas and are portrayed as males. Each of them has an Emanation, portrayed as female, who represents the distinctive product, activity, or external manifestation of the Zoa who is her counterpart. The Four Zoas is, among other things, an epic and Blake shared opinion with his brother Romantics and Milton. Blake also kept in mind that he held the same views that epic is a mode of therapeutic public statement along with Wordsworth, Milton or Virgil. The Zoas initially appears to have no external context but by the end it has established a number of contacts with the world, known to every body.

In his immediately ensuing works, Blake developed the theme of freedom. Visions of The Daughters of Albion, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Songs of Innocence and of Experience, The French Revolution, America, Europe and The Song of Los ...... all contain a strong political social reference. Together they contain a wide-ranging critique of the attitudes of his society towards children, political liberty and sexual relationship. Blake often used his mythology in these works. Actually from 1793, when England was at war with France, it became increasingly difficult to pronounce open objections against the government. An introspection makes a display that Blake's mythological thinking in these works shows that it often creates a controlling irony within them. Even when liberty being advocated, political and social forces are displayed to be the theme to greater laws and to form part of a greater cycle of events, which are evolving out its own inexorable way. At the same time, a more
profound force was slowly carrying Blake away from immediate political and social issues. After the Reign of Terror in France, it became steadily more difficult for him to identify the forces of Liberty with those at work in the revolution.

Blake's "The Book of Urizen" attempts to present the eternal struggle between the conflicting powers of this world. Such a world can be ordered by reason in a way the other identity cannot. But at the same time it is a place of doubt and despair. In fact Urizen's benevolence leads him into error:

Joy & Woe are woven fine
A Clothing for the Soul divine

Again Blake displays his insight into the eighteenth-century mind. On the other hand Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty' shows the same eighteenth-century bias towards permanence, even if the expression is 'romantic':

Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance-desires
My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose that ever is the same.  

But the limitation of two fold vision is poised against Urizen's solitude:

But no light from the fires, all was darkness.
In the flames of Eternal fury.  

In his headlong flight to hide from the flames, Urizen rears mountains and hills against them. At last he constructs a vast cavern:

...a roof vast petrific around,
On all sides He fram'd: like a womb;
Where thousands of rivers in veins
Of blood pour down the mountains to cool
The eternal fires beating without
From Eternals; & like a black globe
View'd by sons of Eternity, standing
On the shore of the infinite ocean
Like a human heart struggling & beating
The vast world of Urizen appear'd.\textsuperscript{11}

At some points Los's own creative urge fluctuates as he also endures the limitation to which he has given form, being at one with Urizen:

A nerveless silence, his prophetic voice
Siej'd; a cold solitude & dark void
The Eternal Prophet & Urizen clos'd
Ages on ages rolld over them
Cut off from life & light frozen
Into horrible forms of deformity.\textsuperscript{12}

In some cases Urizen takes up a globe of fair and uses it to explore his visionless world:

And his world teemd vast enormities
Frightning; faithless; fawning
Portions of life; similitudes
Of a foot, or a hand, or a head
Or a heart, or an eye, they swam mischevous
Dread terrors! delighting in blood.\textsuperscript{13}

And with the flow of the time Urizen wonders on as he comes to see his race enclosed in darkness; he perceives that all life feeds on death:

he wept, & he called it Pity
And his tears flowed down on the winds.\(^{14}\)

In fact Orc got reproduced in seven days of shrinking:

And on the seventh day they rested
And they bless’d the seventh day, in sick hope:
And forgot their eternal life.\(^{15}\)

Now Fuzon places his part to play the part of Moses:

So Fuzon call’d all together
The remaining children of Urizen:
And they left the pendulous earth:
They called it Egypt, & left it.\(^{16}\)

The Book of Ahania naturally follows The Book of Urizen. The continuation of Exodus-theme implies a definite meaning:

Fuzon, on a chariot iron-wing’d
On spiked flames rose. ...\(^{17}\)

Urizen them identifies Ahania with Sin:

He groand anguishd & called her Sin,
Kissing her and weeping over her...\(^{18}\)

With this we see that Blake’s version neither belongs to Old Testament nor to Milton; but he draws upon the resources of both the following lines which stand relevant to echo Blake’s frame of mind:

Oppos’d to the exulting flam’d beam
The Broad Disk of Urizen upheav’d
Across the Void many a mile.
It was forg’d in mills where the winter
Beats incessant: ten winters the disk
Unremitting endur'd the cold hammer.
But the strong arm that sent it, remember'd
The sounding beam...^{19}

Blake's final work in this genre was called *The Book of Los*. It does not fall into clear sequence with the other two, but simply tells the same myth in a new framework, setting Los instead of Urizen at the centre. In fact the following lines expresses Blake's best poetic gift:

'But Covet was poured full:
Envy fed with fat of lambs:
Wrath with lions gore:
Wantonness lulld to sleep
With the virgins lute,
Or sated with her love.
Till Covet broke his locks & bars,
And slept with open doors:
Envy sung at the rich mans feast:
Wrath was follow'd up and down
By a little ewe lamb
And Wantonness on his own true love
Begot a giant race...^{20}

Actually Blake seems to have found no respite from this flaming fires:

A vast solid without fluctuation,
Bound in his expanding clear senses...^{21}

In the end Los's impatience and fury are too much for his bondage:
With a crash from immense to immense
Crack'd across into numberless fragments. 22

Some time in Blake's poetry the image of the Satan of Paradise
Lost comes to light; here Blake's powers seems to be in full control:

Falling, falling! Los fell & fell
Sunk precipitant heavy down down
Times on times, night on night, day on day
Truth has bounds. Error none: falling, falling:
Years on years, and ages on ages
Still he fell thro' the void, still a void
Found for falling day & night without end.
For tho' day or night was not: their spaces
Were measurd by his incessant whirls
In the horrid vacuity bottomless. 23

But the void in this world is sometimes a mental void and
Blake explores this void brilliantly in his poetry:

pliant to rise,
Or to fall, or to swim, or to fly:
With ease searching the dire vacuity. 24

Again with the appearance of light Urizen's presence is
recognized:

Los beheld
Forthwith, writhing upon the dark void
The Back bone of Urizen appear
Hurtling upon the wind
Like a serpent! Like an iron chain
Whirling about in the Deep. 25
Then Blake seeks to recapture the immense form of ‘Orb of fire’. Los smiles with joy and binds the vast spin of Urizen down to the glowing illusion.

In his poetry Blake is quite determined to weave together darkness and heat:

But no light, for the Deep fled away
On all sides, and left an unform'd
Dark vacuity: here Urizen lay
In fierce torments on his glowing bed....

Urizen sets to work to cut himself off from the energy with which he unwillingly got involved:

Till his Brain in a rock, & his Heart
In a fleshy slough formed four rivers
Obscuring the immense Orb of fire
Flowing down into night: till a Form
Was completed, a Human Illusion.
In darkness and deep clouds involved.

Actually Blake's mind was evidently running toward the construction of a more massive poem, an epic form which would be for his day what *Paradise Lost* had been for the seventeenth-century. For such an achievement to be possible the various schemes which he had so far worked out must be extended into a broader pattern. But the short cosmological prophetic books that we have looked at so far indicate the ambiguities which made this difficult. He might try, following Milton, to offer an account of the process by which the world had arrived at its present state, but he could not escape the fact that where Milton could still hold a precarious balance between cosmology and psychology, his own myth must
inevitably find its centre in a critique of the nature of man. He might attack current social injustices; he might reach further and attack the dominance of law which made these injustices possible; but he would always be driven back to account for the condition of man which made it impossible for him to appreciate his own enslavement.

This problem, which is crucial in Blake's extended myth-making, had preoccupied him from his earliest writings. Even in Poetical Sketches he had written, that he was wrapped in mortality and his flesh was a prison and his bones were the bars of death. His sense that this enslaving power was a necessary consequence of current rationalism had brought him (in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell), to the assertion that the creation which appeared to be finite and corrupt was really infinite.

It is found that in a deleted passage of 'Tiriel' Blake had made an early attempt to give an account of the individualities of men along with their latent power to perceive the infinity in all things:

Dost thou not see that men cannot be formed all alike
Some nostrild wide breathing out blood. Some close shut up
In silent deceit, poisons inhaling from the morning rose
With daggers hid beneath their lips & poison in their tongue
Or eyed with little sparks of Hell or with infernal brands
Flinging flames of discontent & plagues of dark despair
Or those whose mouths are graves whose teeth the gates of eternal death.29

Certainly the similar speech at the climax of The Book of Thel makes the implications of infinity far more explicit. Here each sense is described at a point when it is most likely to glimpse the infinity of all things:
Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?
Or the glistning Eye to the poison of a smile!
Why are Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn,
Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?
Or an Eye of gifts & graces, show'ring fruits & coined gold!
Why a Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind?
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?

Again the beauty of Blake's poetic talent finds the mellowing
music in the following lines:

when the five senses whelm'd

In deluge o'er the earth-born man; then turn'd the fluxile eves
Into two stationary orbs, concentrating all things.
The ever-varying spiral ascents to the heavens of heavens
Were bended downward; and the nostrils golden gate shut,
Turn'd outward, barr'd and petrily'd against the infinite.

One other passage, the preface affixed to some copies of
Europe, presents even more explicitly Blake's belief in the potential
sublimity of the senses. The note here, despite the pessimism, is one
of gaiety:

Five windows light the cavern'd Man; thro' one he breathes the air,
Thro' one, hears music of the spheres; thro' one, the eternal vine
Flourishes, that he may receive the grapes; thro' one can look
And see small portions of the eternal world that ever groweth;
Thro' one, himself pass out what time he please, but he will not:
For stolen joys are sweet, & bread eaten in secret pleasant.
So sang a Fairy mocking as he sat on a streak'd Tulip...\textsuperscript{32}

In *The Book of Ahania* there is a cycle, rather than an oscillation between Energy and repression. Thus, though Los and Orc must not be reduced to each other, Blake finds a different expression in his myth for the idea the Energy and the Poetic Genius are closely linked, and that Urizen represents the decline of each. In this respect he is like Orc, and she likes the Shadowy Daughter of Urthona in *America*:

\begin{quote}
He plants himself in all her Nerves  
Just as a Husbandman his mould  
And She becomes his dwelling place  
And Garden fruitful seventy fold\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

*The Book of Ahania* reveals energy in a very unflattering light and the light remains throughout the rest of Blake's works. Again in part *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* happiness to be a satire on institutional Christianity and the contemporary version of Christian morality. Here Blake is preaching a Doctrine of Human totality and denying the right of creed to condemn any true manifestation of life. So it is now, however, coming to be recognized that Blake is not only a known enthusiast but also an epic poet in the great prophetic tradition of Spenser and Milton.

Again *The Marriage* concludes with an exultant ‘Song of Liberty’ in rhythmic prose (perhaps celebrating the proclamation of the French Republic), in which we are told that ‘the son of fire.... Stamps the stony law to dust’, crying ‘Empire is no more’, while the final chorus ends with the great affirmation that stands at the very centre of Blake’s teaching: ‘Every thing that lives is Holy’.\textsuperscript{34}
Again the following lines assure us of Blake's talent infusing the music of poetry with the reference to some concrete poetic emblem:

O thou little virgin of the peaceful valley.
Giving to those that cannot crave, the voiceless, the o'ertired. The same note of cadence and music can be found in the following two extracts:

But Thel is like a faint cloud kindled at the rising sun;
I vanish from my pearly throne, and who shall find my place.

Or in

I fear that I am not like thee;
For I walk through the vales of Har, and smell the sweetest flowers;
But I feed not the little flowers: I hear the warbling birds,
But I feed not the warbling birds, they fly and seek their food.

In another case the note of utter dejection and despair can be noted in the following lines:

But Thel delights in these no more because I fade away,
And all shall say, without a use this shining woman liv'd,
Or did she only live. to be at death the food of worms.

Two final traditions related to Thel are those of the otherworld of evil spirits and the "Graveyard School" of English literature. In part four of the poem, one cannot help noticing how similar the landscape of the place that Thel visits is to an otherworld of evil spirits, or a hell.
The themes treated in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* are taken up and expanded in three works produced in 1793. The *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is a protest against the frustrations caused by conventional rules of sexual morality and an attack on the institution of marriage itself on the ground that sexual relations should be based on emotion and impulse and not bound by rules. So, on the whole one needs to exercise a certain caution, for Blake's notion is rarely detailed enough to allow for fine distinctions; besides, as was realized in the 18th century, many expressions got involved and mixed to give rise to complex emotions. But in certain cases a knowledge of Le Brun can bring an unexpected precision to an interpretation, especially in the more Sublime images of the Prophetic Books and the Colour Prints of the 1790s. In the final plate of *The Song of Los*, where Los rests his hammer after forging the sun, it has been suggested that his expression is one of 'anxious compassion', but the emphatic eyebrows and down-drawn eyelids and corners of the mouth suggest rather Le Brun's characterization of Sadness.

In the *Descriptive Catalogue* of 1809, Blake's fullest discussion of his own art, he insists upon the absolute value of outline in depicting vision with complete clarity, and avoiding the indefinite: "A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosopher supposes, a cloudy vapour, or a nothing: they are organised and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce". Colour is to be subordinated and the 'great and heavy shadows' of the Moderns are to be avoided. A renewed concern with outline had been evident in his work since the *Night Thoughts* watercolours of 1795-97 and the Butts temperas; the Paradise Lost watercolours of 1808, however, take the process a stage further, for their
precision of contour and monumental form seem to refer back to the Neoclassical ideals of the 1780s. The *L' Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* watercolours represent an inspired renewal of the pastoral style of the *Songs of Innocence*, which Blake might have looked back on as products of his own youth before he embarked on the ocean of business.

Like the other four copies of *The Song of Los*, the Morgan version is densely colour-printed; presumably all were issued soon after the date on the title page. The book was not advertised and no original owners are known. The fact that no late copies were made suggests that Blake either became disillusioned with it or re-used the copper plates.

**The Book of Ahania 1795**

6 plates on 6 leaves
Intaglio etchings with colour-printed designs,
approx. \( \frac{5}{16} \times \frac{3}{4} \) (135 x 95)

a  Frontispiece
   Lit: Keynes and Wolf, copy A; Bentley, *Blake Books*, pp. 114·15
   *The Library of Congress, Washington, Rosenwald Collection*

b  3 proof plates: 2 of titlepage and 1 of plate 4
   Lit: Keynes and Wolf: copy Bb; Bentley, *Blake Books*, p. 114·15
   *Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University*

   As in *The Book of Los* (British Museum, London), the intensity of the visual imagery is combined with a text of great complexity and terseness. It may have been intended as a further Book of Urizen: it
tells the story of the Children of Israel led by Moses in the form of Fuzon. Ahania, Urizen's emanation, begins as Pleasure, but under the moral law of Urizen becomes Sin, and her tragic plaint ends the book.

Also like The Book of Los, The Book of Ahania exists in only one complete copy and a few scattered proofs. As it stands the Rosenwald book is complete, but its frontispiece appears not to have originally belonged to it; and it seems probable that the correct frontispiece for the Rosenwald book is the other known copy of this plate, now in the Keynes Collection (Keynes and Wolf Ba). The problem is not serious, however, for they were clearly printed at about the same time, and are very similar.

Ahania is etched in intaglio (again like The Book of Los), with dense colour printing on the frontispiece, title page and final plate. The frontispiece may or may not have an underlying etched outline.

The following paintings display Blake at his very best in so far as his ability to paint various figures with the mellowing restraint of his artistic ability:

The illustration displays Blake's tremendous ability to paint the feelings and inner spirit of the woman painted above.
The design shows how Blake could mingle the emotions of human sensibility with that of his poetic talent.

The above illustration reveals that Blake was essentially a painter who could transmute his inner feelings into the realm of poetic art.
The above design reflects Blake’s creative ability to translate his imagination into sublime divinity.

Here the human spirit lost in the world of confusing bewilderment expresses itself in a revealing manner.
The above design depicts the mellowing innocence of a child in a significant and artistic restraint.

The above decoration amply demonstrates Blake supreme power in relating the verbal magic with the artistry of painting.
King Sebert, from the wall painting on the Credelia above his Monument.
Circa 1775 pen water-colour and gold. Sheet 39.8 x 26 cm.
Society of antiquaries, London.
Pestilence
Circa 1780-1784, Pen and water-colour, 18.5 x 27.5 cm.
Collection of Robert N. Essick, Altadena, California.

The witch of Endor raising the spirit of Samuel, 1783
Pen and water-colour, 28.3 x 42.3 cm.
New York Public Library.
Oberon, Titania and Puck with Fairies Dancing
Circa 1788,
Pencil & water-colour, 47.5 x 62.5 cm
Tate Gallery, London.

Age Teaching Young
Circa 1785-1790
Pen and water-colour 10.8 x 8 cm. Tate Gallery, London
Indeed we are very happy  
Circa 1790  
Pen and water-colour, Sheet 14 x 6.7 cm, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Rossenberg Collection)

“Non Anglised Angeli”  
Circa 1793  
Pen and water-colour, 18.3 x 27.4 cm., Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
The Good and Evil Angels
Circa 1793-1794
Pen and water-colour, 29.2 x 44.5 cm., Cecil Heggins Museum, Bedford.
Frontispiece to America, a prophecy
1793
Relief etching, 24.1 x 17.1 cm., Private Collection, England.
Blake's pictures often have a moral purpose, which he conveys by a variety of symbolic devices. Here he depicts a battle between good and evil by showing two figures fighting for the body of a child. The angels have human forms, but are clearly imaginary, not real; they symbolize good and evil through the opposed qualities of beauty and ugliness, darkness and light.

The Good Angel, on the right, is young and gentle, and his face is very beautiful. He stands at the edge of the purifying waters of the ocean, protecting the little child - a common symbol of innocence. In contrast, the Evil Angel is ugly and terrifying. His face is old and his eyes are blind, suggesting ignorance. His right foot is chained to the barren ground.

The background echoes the same moral conflict. The sun is rising on the horizon, bathing the Good Angel in life-giving light. The Evil Angel, however, is surrounded by flames, which symbolize the destructive fire of hell. These flames shed no light, for above and below the fire everything is dark. Evil has cast its shadow across the earth.
THE MAKING OF A MASTERPIECE

The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve

In one of his finest paintings, Blake shows the murderer Cain running in horror from the scene of his crime, while his father and mother look on in anguish. The exact scene is not described in the Bible - Genesis tells us only that God saw what Cain had done and condemned him to the life of an outcast. Blake was struck by the story’s emotional force and had made sketches and a water colour version 20 years earlier. The final painting (1826) is on a mahogany panel covered with layers of priming, on which he has drawn in ink. This shows through the surface paintwork of delicate tempera - water colour mixed with diluted glue.

Pencil sketch
This drawing is a study for Blake’s water-colour, shown on the opposite page. The main elements of Cain’s pose are rendered with broad strokes of the pencil.

The Story of Cain and Abel

But Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said, There have I reared me a man from the fruit of mine body.
And the Lord said, Adam, where is thy son Abel? And he said, I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?
And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.
And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth unto receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand.

And when thou art gathered unto thy people, I will requite thee sevenfold for the blood of Abel, whom thou didst slay in the field.

Right: A 19th century engravist’s illustration emphasises the melancholy of Cain’s death. Like Blake, the artist chose a spade for the murder weapon. For Cain was a tiller of the ground.
The setting sun
Blake applied powdered gold as well as paint to the mahogany panel. Here it suggests the fiery glow of the sun. The technique may have been suggested to Blake by medieval manuscripts.

A water-colour version
Blake painted this water-colour in about 1805. Although the composition is almost identical to the later tempera version, the colour schemes are noticeably different.

Adam's anguish
The head of Adam is drawn in much less detail than that of his murderous son, but powerfully conveys the father's much-horror and confusion.

‘I am under the direction of messengers from heaven.’
William Blake.
Blake's output as a painter, engraver and draughtsman was enormous. He often worked on projects over a number of years, gradually bringing them to fruition, and he frequently returned to favourite subjects. Sometimes he would colour a print that he had engraved many years earlier, as with *The Ancient of Days*.

*The Ancient of Days* 1794
$3/4\times 6/4$ Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

Blake used this design as an illustration to his poem *Europe*, and it proved one of his most popular prints—he handcoloured this particular impression for a customer 30 years later. The image was inspired by a vision which he declared hovered over his head at the top of the staircase.
The Bible was Blake's most frequent source of inspiration, and he recreated its awesome stories—God Judging Adam, Nebuchadnezzar, Cain and Abel—with an intensity few artists have matched. Just as impressive are the products of his own imagination, such as Newton and Glad Day. No other artist has created such a rich personal mythology, or made spiritual beings seem so real.

As a poet, Blake was drawn to other writers who had handled lofty themes in a heroic manner. Towards the end of his life he began illustrating the work of the great Italian poet, Dante, whose imagination matched his own in fervour.

God Judging Adam 1795
17" x 21" Tate Gallery, London

This print was known for many years as Elijah in the Fiery Chariot, but a faint pencil inscription discovered in 1965 revealed its true subject. Blake may have adapted an earlier design on the subject of Elijah, transforming the prophet's fiery chariot into God's blazing throne.
The inspiration for this work is uncertain. Blake may have had in mind a passage in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet in which ‘vorced day starred with ice on the melting mountain tops’. But the print is also known as The Dance of Albion, a symbolic figure embodying the personality of England.
William Blake

Dante's Divine Comedy.
The Simonine Pope 1826-7
201/5" × 165/7" Tate Gallery, London

In Dante's great poem Blake found flights of fancy to match his own astonishing imagination. Dante portrayed Pope Nicholas III as being suspended head downwards in a fiery well as his punishment for simony—the sin of selling pious goods in the church.
The above design finds an ecstatic revelation of Blake's pictorial art.
The Body of Abel
Found by Adam and Eve c. 1826
12\(\frac{1}{8}\) x 12\(\frac{1}{2}\)
Tate Gallery, London

Blake shows Cain kneeling, as the body of the
brother he has just murdered is discovered by
his parents Adam and Eve. He has approached
the grave in which he had intended burying
the corpse. The dramatic potential of this
subject obviously appealed to Blake, for rather
than making other pictures of the subject, he
also created a short play in 1822, which was
titled The Ghost of Abel.
The symbols of this scene follow that of Dante's poem, in which the griffin and Beatrice - wearing the crown - represented Christ and the Church. The three women are Hope, Clarity and Faith, and the heads flanking Beatrice are those of the Four Evangelists. Blake shows Dante on the right, in red.
Dante's Divine Comedy:
The Inscription over Hell Gate II.24-7
20⅞" x 14⅛" Tate Gallery, London

This scene shows Dante, in red, guided by the Roman poet Virgil, in blue, about to pass through the gates of Hell. The inscription is one of the most famous lines in Dante's poem, which Blake has translated literally. "Leave every hope you who enter."