

Catherine Blake

ENITHARMON

Three Art Works



APOPHASIS

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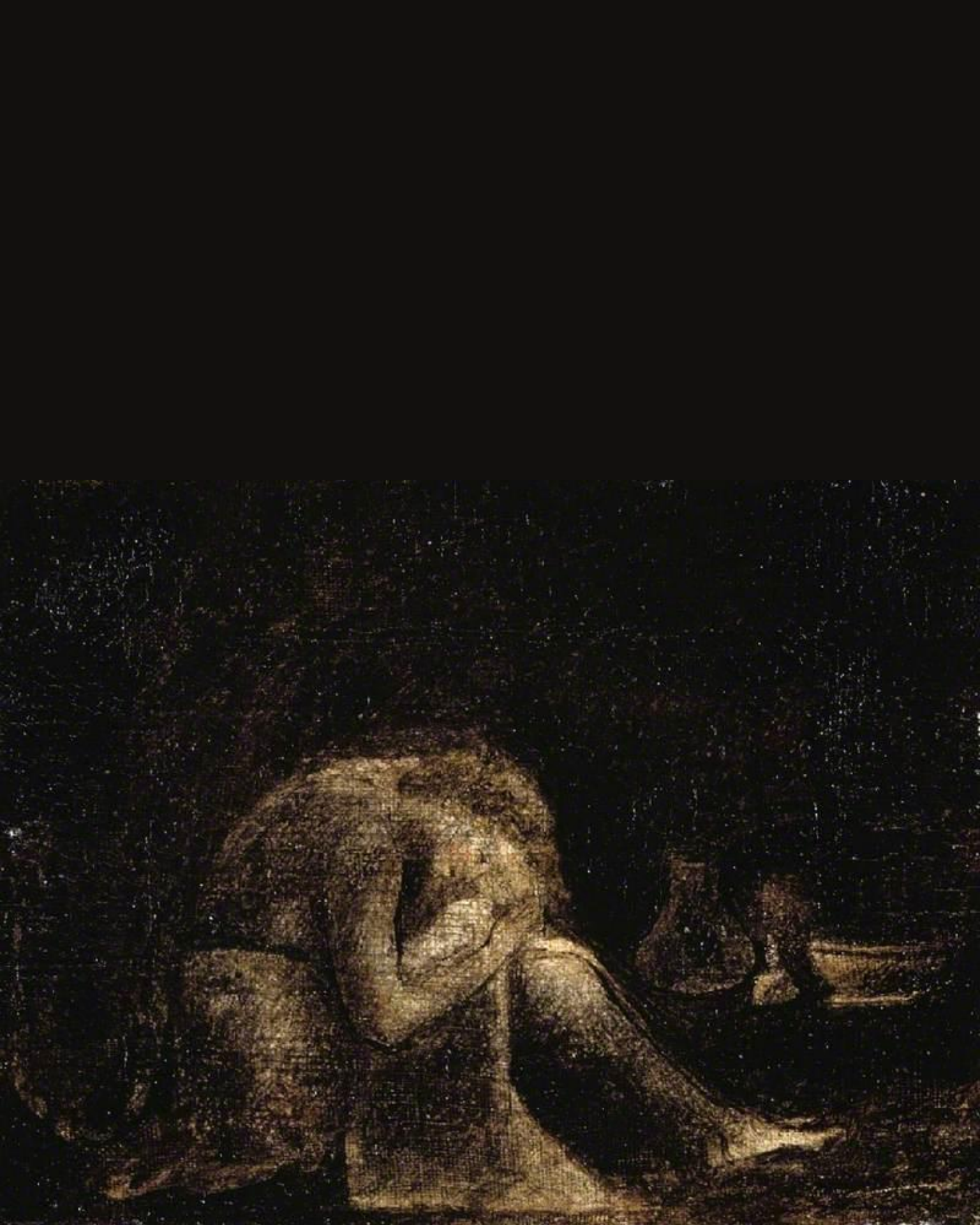
Notes by Glenn Wallis

Cover image: “The Night of Enitharmon’s Joy,”  
William Blake, 1795.

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Catherine often sat before the fireplace sketching images she saw flickering within the flames. This painting, typically given the blunt title “Head” by museum curators, is one such image.

Sadly, that seems to be it. Unless, of course, we include the works by her husband, William. For Catherine shares, or should share, much of the credit for those works. She, too, had the visions. She, too, engraved the plates. She, too, colored the prints.

When William despaired of losing the vision, she provided the method:

— What do we do, Kate, when the visions forsake us?

— We kneel down and pray, Mr. Blake.

What is accomplished in prayer, you ask? The only thing that matters.

IMAGINATION

is kindled, lit, detonated, exploded.

The Memory is a State always, & the  
Reason is a State Created to be  
Annihilated, & a new Ratio Created.

The Imagination is not a State: it is the  
Human Existence itself.



my dear and too careful and over-joyous woman . . . my wife is like a flame of many colours of precious jewels.

Is how William describes Catherine.

Alexander Gilchrist, the earliest biographer of the Blakes, relied heavily on people who had known them. What does this virtual eyewitness write?

The poet and his wife did everything in making the books.

Such as:

Became a Space & an Allegory around the Winding Worm.  
 They named it Canaan & built for it a tender Moon.  
 Los smil'd with joy thinking on Enitharmon & he brought  
 Reuben from his ewe-eyed wand'rings & led him into it.  
 Planting the Seeds of the Twelve Tribes & Moses & David  
 And gave a Time & Reputation to the Space Six Thousand Years.  
 He call'd it Divine Analogy for in Beulah the Feminine  
 & mannaizors Create Space, the Masculine Create Time & plant  
 The Seeds of beauty in the Space: listening to their lamentation  
 Los walks upon his ancient Mountains in the deadly darkness  
 Among his Forces directing his laborious Myriads watchful  
 Looking to the East: & his voice is heard over the whole Earth  
 As he watches the Furnaces by night, & directs the labourers  
 And thus Los replies upon his Watch: the Valleys listen silent:  
 The Stars stand still to hear: Jerusalem & Vala cease to mourn:  
 His voice is heard from Albion: the Alps & Appennines  
 Listen: Hermon & Lebanon bow their crowned heads  
 Babel & Shinar look toward the Western Gate, they sit down  
 Silent at his voice: they view the red Globe of Fire in Los's hand  
 As he walks from Furnace to Furnace directing the Labourers  
 And thus is the Song of Los, the Song that he sings on his  
 Watch

O lovely mild Jerusalem! O Shiloh of Mount Ephraim!  
 I see thy Gates of precious stones: thy Walls of gold & silver  
 Thou art the soft reflected Image of the Sleeping Man  
 Who stretch'd on Albion's rocks: Reposes amidst his twenty-eight  
 Cities: where Beulah lovely terminates in the hills & valleys of Albion  
 Cities not yet embodied in Time and Space: plant ye  
 The Seeds O Sisters in the bosom of Time & Spaces womb  
 To spring up for Jerusalem: lovely Shadow of Sleeping Albion  
 Why wilt thou rend thyself apart & build an earthly Kingdom  
 To reign in pride & to oppress & to mix the Cup of Delusion  
 O thou that dwellest with Babylon: Come forth O lovely-one



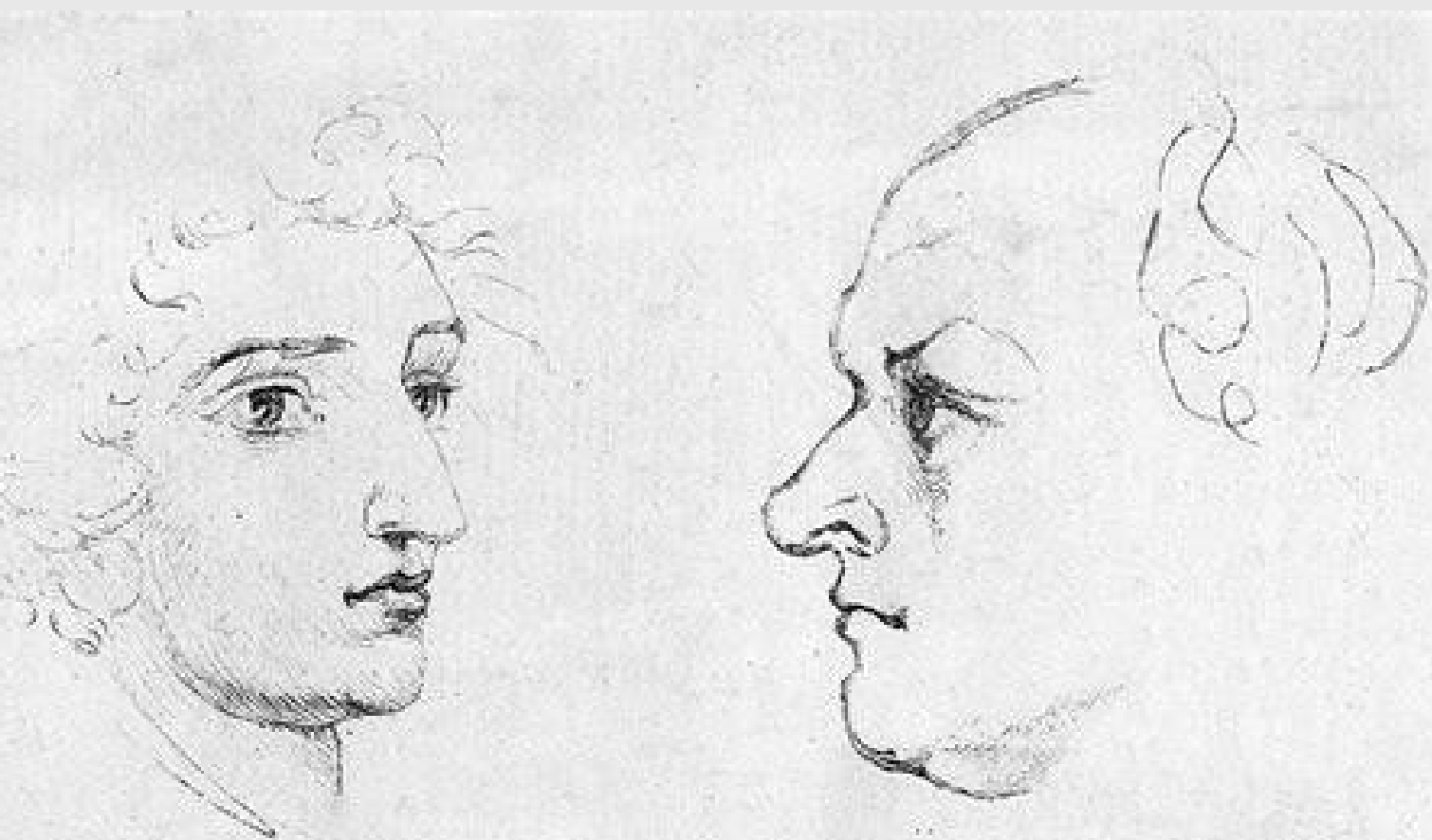
How could Catherine Boucher (1762-1831), the meek daughter from a piss poor family, possibly? How could a simple-minded, illiterate woman who, on August 18, 1782, signed her marriage certificate

X

possibly?

The Shadow of the Great Man's Delight? How, possibly?

Walking in my Cottage Garden, sudden I beheld  
The Virgin Ololon ...  
... pity thou my Shadow of Delight  
Enter my Cottage, comfort her,  
for she is sick with fatigue.



CATHERINE & WILLIAM BLAKE.

*From two pencil sketches by Blake, in the Wash. Note-book belonging to M. Rossetti.  
Drawn by Paul. J. St. Loe.*

## Enitharmon.

William based this omnipresent figure of his epics on Catherine.

According to F. Foster Damon, the name is a portmanteau of *zenith* and *harmony*. Why not?

An Emanation of Los, the eternal prophet, and his wife. Although she is no mere shade of the divine. Los? Hear, *loss*. Los is the imagination, assalted on all sides.

Enitharmon (Catherine) is the mother of Orc, Lover of Wild Rebellion, and transgressor of God's Law.

Enitharmon also represents female domination, sexual restraint, and the frustrations of the daily relationship, all of which weaken the artistic imagination.

Hmmm. TMI, William, TMI.

Henry Crabb Robinson, who beheld her presence in 1825, described her appearance: “a good expression in her countenance, and, with a dark eye, remains of beauty in her youth.” Dark hair, too, in her youth. Tall, too. Taller than William, I have always imagined, anyway. Maybe something like this (with a touch of Imagination)



With less Imagination



“Catherine Blake, Seated by the Fire,”  
by William Blake



Catherine Blake, by William Blake

*Wm Blake*

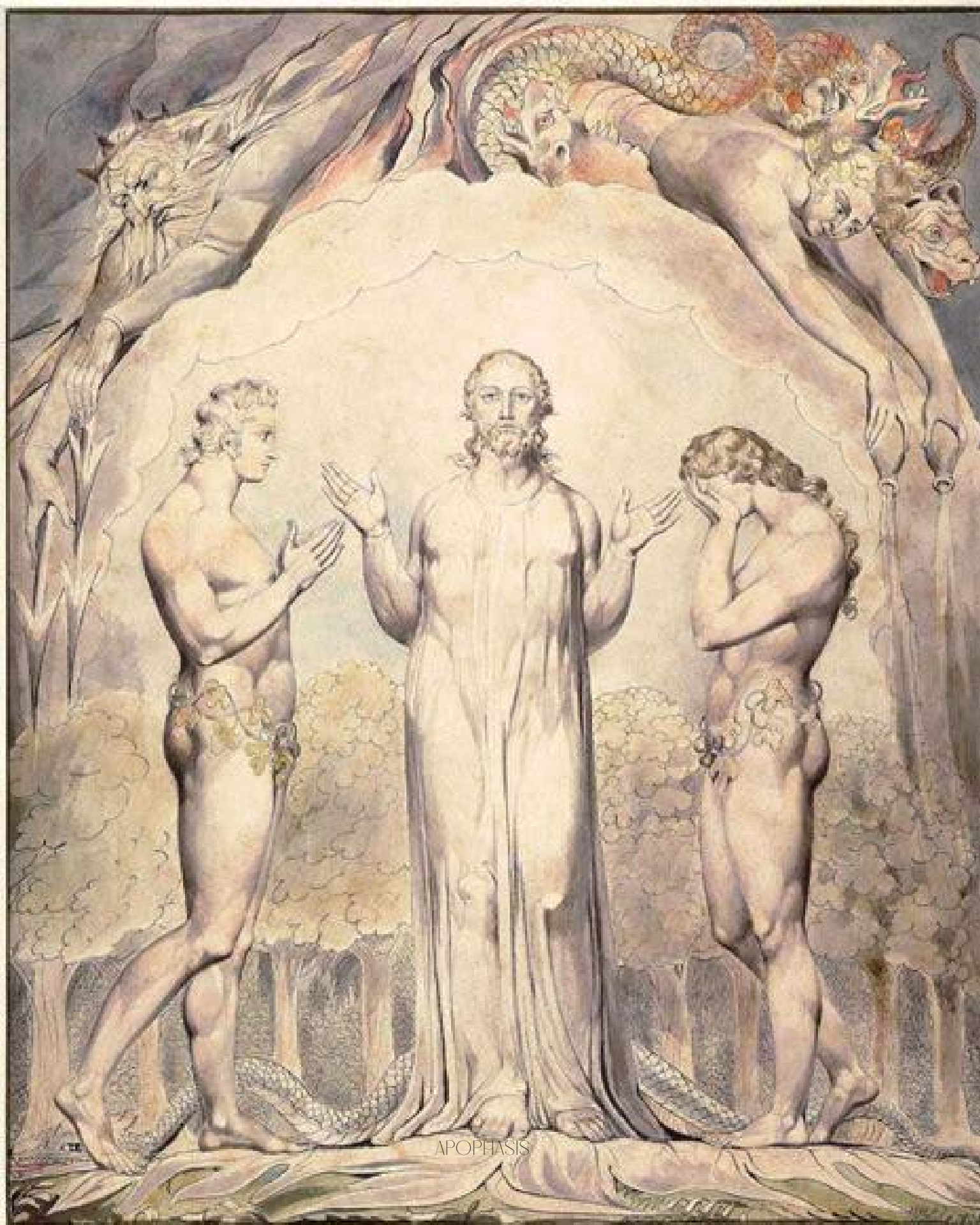
**Mr. & Mrs. Blake, 3 Fountain Court, London**



Someone knocks on the door.

Do come in.

It is only Adam & Eve.



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