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**THE NATURE OF THE TENFOLD GOD IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S
THE BOOK OF URIZEN.**

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN ENGLISH AT MASSEY UNIVERSITY.

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1994.

ABSTRACT.

The purpose of this thesis is to elucidate William Blake's theology by examining the nature of his Tenfold God in The Book of Urizen. As this work was the first in an uncompleted series of poems, only half the components that constitute Blake's God appear in it. I therefore investigate the nature of this Tenfold God by examining the aspects of it that manifest themselves in this poem through the characters of Urizen, Los, Enitharmon, Orc, and the remaining unspecified Eternals. It is the roles of these characters and the interrelationships between them that occupy this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Many thanks to Dr. Greg Crossan for his guidance, his support, his humour, and his friendship throughout this project.

Thanks also to Paul and Eileen Herrick for their financial support, their enthusiasm, and the boundless faith they have shown in their daughter.

Finally, thanks to Ed Fahy for encouraging me to look beyond my horizons and seek Eternity.

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INTRODUCTION.

The Book of Urizen is the first fragment of Blake's so-called 'Bible of Hell', a work that was begun with this poem but never completed in this projected form. The concept of writing a contrast to the traditional Holy Bible was referred to by Blake in his early prophetic work The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

I have also the Bible of Hell - which the
world shall have whether they will or no.
(The Marriage of Heaven and Hell 24:291-292)

This poem marked Blake's rejection of Swedenborg's doctrines and was the first example of the emergence of his own theological system, a system that he was to spend the next twenty years developing, firstly in the form of The Bible of Hell and later as The Four Zoas.

Engraved in 1794, The Book of Urizen was the Genesis of Blake's Bible of Hell and contained his own interpretation of the creation of our world and the fall of humanity. It also provided him with an opportunity to place his own theology into a situation where it could be compared with the Christian doctrine of his time. It is interesting to note that Blake was not necessarily challenging the idea that earth was created by an omnipotent force, nor the idea that humanity fell from communion with this force through the actions of their ancestors. His rebellion was based instead upon Christian theories regarding the nature of Jehovah, the origins of the Christian faith, and the concept of 'heaven' as the perfect state of being.

Blake continued his Bible of Hell with The Book of Los, which retold the story of the creation-fall, and The Book of Ahania in 1795. But he then abandoned this first formulation of his theology and The Book of Urizen, along with the other two books of his Bible of Hell, was consolidated over the next fifteen years into the complete account of Blake's theology

that became The Four Zoas.

The Book of Urizen is a collection of twenty-seven plates of illustrations and illustrated text and is thus a composite artistic record of Blake's poetic, painting, and engraving achievements. It is also the beginning of an illustrated Bible of Hell with Blake's own visual interpretation of his divine characters and the world they lived in before humanity was created. The Book of Urizen is divided into nine chapters and each written plate is divided into double columns of text in an attempt to promote further comparison with the form and content of the Christian Bible.

The first plate in this poem, the title plate, shows Urizen writing in his many books. This picture of the archetypal author creating his works on the very first page of the poem, suggests the idea that Urizen may very well be creating this story himself to justify his own form of religion. Plate two further complicates this idea of authorship as it contains Blake's invocation of his muses, the Eternals themselves, and a plea to these muses to tell their story. So now at the very beginning of the poem we are unsure whether it is the work of Urizen, of Blake, or of the Eternals speaking through Blake's pen, and the mystery of The Book of Urizen begins.

My purpose in writing this thesis is to begin a journey into Blake's complex theology by examining the nature of his Tenfold God as it appears in The Book of Urizen. This tenfold divinity is made up of the four masculine Eternals and their four feminine Emanations, plus the power of the combined masculine Eternals and the corresponding feminine power. Yet the picture of Blake's God in The Book of Urizen is limited because only half of this tenfold nature is revealed as we meet all four masculine Eternals in various forms, but only one female Emanation and neither of the two combined powers.

In this study I will examine each of these five aspects of the Tenfold God as they

move from Eternity to the fallen world, and will consider their changing relationships to each other, their actions and reactions as they are forced to leave their version of Heaven, their role in the Tenfold God, and their contribution to the fall of Eternity. I will also attempt to move beyond The Book of Urizen by predicting the roles these five characters would have played in the return to Eternity had Blake's Bible of Hell been completed.

The first chapter of this thesis will examine the character of Urizen as the initiator of the fall, as the creator of the fallen world, as Blake's interpretation of Jehovah, and as the possible author of The Book of Urizen. The second chapter will concentrate on the second masculine Eternal, who was closely bound to Urizen in Eternity. Los will be examined as the creator of the fallen human form, as the initiator of sexual division, and as the Bible of Hell's Adam.

The third chapter will examine the only female Emanation who plays a role in this poem, Enitharmon. Torn from her unity with Los, Enitharmon will be examined as the first separate female in Blake's Eternal world, as Eve of the Bible of Hell, and as the mother of The Book of Urizen's Christ figure. The fourth chapter will look at Orc, the third masculine Eternal, as the first to be born outside Eternity, as the power of salvation, and as a combination of Satan and Christ. The fifth chapter will look at the remaining masculine Eternal, Tharmas, who does not appear individually in the poem yet who does have a role as the fallen spirit of moral judgement.

As The Book of Urizen was but a portion of an uncompleted work, so will the picture of Blake's Tenfold God that emerges from this study reveal only half of its nature; the full characterisation of the God of the Bible of Hell is now lost to us forever.