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THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE: GOD AS ENEMY—

AN IMAGE OF GOD IN THE BOOK OF JOB

AND OTHER BOOKS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

by

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**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the

Brite Divinity School

in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Biblical Interpretation

Fort Worth, TX

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Images of God, positive and negative, create an ongoing tension in the biblical text. This tension is due to the paradoxical character of God as seen in Exod 34:6-7. The cognitive dissonance created by the juxtaposition of positive and negative images of the divine is unsettling for many people. Consequently, these negative images are often overlooked. This project addresses one of the neglected images, the image of God as enemy. It seems peculiar that, despite the regularity of Israel's complaints against the divine and its familiarity with enemy language, the word enemy is not used more frequently in reference to God. This project considers the idea that while enemy language was part of Israel's cultural milieu, the word enemy was seldom used to describe God because the image of God as enemy borders on picturing God as demonic--a precipice that neither Job nor the writers of the Hebrew Bible wanted to cross. Insights in this dissertation are drawn from several approaches to biblical interpretation. This exploration begins with an analysis of theological issues that focus on theodicy informed by a womanist perspective regarding the image of God as enemy in the book of Job and other books of the Hebrew Bible. Literary criticism provides the lens for examining sample texts that express this image of the divine, implicitly and explicitly. The analysis includes consideration of defiance and humor as coping mechanisms that Job utilized in his response to the theodic crisis created by his understanding that God was the source of the reversals in his life.

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