

This Strange and Sacred Scripture: Wrestling with the Old Testament and Its Oddities

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The Old Testament can seem strange and disturbing to contemporary readers. What should Christians make of Genesis 1-3, seemingly at odds with modern scientific accounts? Why does the Old Testament contain so much violence? How should Christians handle texts that give women a second-class status? Does the Old Testament contradict itself? Why are so many Psalms filled with anger and sorrow? What should we make of texts that portray God as filled with wrath?

Combining pastoral insight, biblical scholarship, and a healthy dose of humility, gifted teacher and communicator Matthew Schlimm explores perennial theological questions raised by the Old Testament. He provides strategies for reading and appropriating these sacred texts, showing how the Old Testament can shape the lives of Christians today and helping them appreciate the Old Testament as a friend in faith.
The Old Testament as a Friend in Faith

"Many of us have waited a long time for this book, a compelling engagement of the toughest questions about the Testament that both attracts and repels us. In plain language, without taking theological shortcuts, Schlimm shows why Christianity needs the Old Testament in order to address the complexities and real difficulties of life. His concrete guidance for how to read this strange literature and his suggestions for further study are invaluable."

--Ellen Davis, Duke Divinity School

"Schlimm adroitly considers many of the thorny issues that puzzle modern people of faith; he is a gifted guide in showing readers that the Old Testament's alien qualities do not render it useless for Christian faith. To the contrary, he reveals how often the Bible's strangeness leads us into deeper understanding of God and of ourselves."

--Jacqueline Lapsley, Princeton Theological Seminary

"The Old Testament has raised numerous questions for readers through the centuries. And it continues to do so! Matthew Schlimm explores many of these issues, especially those regarding creation, law, gender, images for God, and violence. With matters of biblical authority always in view, he works through these texts carefully and thoughtfully--and with clarity! With pastoral sensitivity, Schlimm provides an excellent case for understanding the Old Testament as our friend and not our enemy."

--Terence Fretheim, Luther Seminary

"Seminary and university Old Testament professors: make sure you have your students read this text. To the reader puzzled by much of what you encounter in the Old Testament: immerse yourself deeply in this book, and you will find much food for thought from an author who has addressed intelligently and provocatively the questions that linger in your mind. Matthew Schlimm: well done, thou good and faithful servant."

--Victor P. Hamilton, Asbury University
"Some of my friends say strange things and hold strange views, but because they are my friends I can't just dismiss what they say. Having friends who think differently from me helps expand my thinking and rescue me from the limitations of my current perspective. I give my friends the benefit of the doubt when they say things that are outrageous. Matthew Schlimm invites us to do the same with the Old

Testament, helps us to listen to many of its notoriously outrageous statements, and also shares with us worthwhile insights from other people who are friends with the Old Testament (and from yet other people who would not see themselves as its friends)."

-- John Goldingay, Fuller Theological Seminary

"At a time when many critique and marginalize the Old Testament, Schlimm argues that we need to appreciate it as a friend--a friend who is at once odd, insightful, complicated, controversial, and realistic. He is not willing to give up on the Old Testament or its God. This Strange and Sacred Scripture creatively engages the difficulties that trouble interpreters.

While some may disagree with the author at points, this book's tone and presentation invite readers to join the conversation about and with this unique friend we call the Bible."

-- M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas), Denver Seminary

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