

Introduction: Othmar Keel, Iconography, and the Old Testament

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In order to fully appreciate the contributions of Othmar Keel, one must set him and his work in context.¹ Prior to Keel, there were, of course, archaeologists at work throughout the ancient Near East, as well as art historians who specialized in the most ancient periods, and also biblical scholars, a goodly number of whom paid attention to archaeology, at least on general matters if not also on specific artifactual and artistic remains. Indeed, no fewer than two collections were published in the twentieth century that attempted to integrate ancient Near Eastern images (iconography) and the Bible: Hugo Gressmann's *Altorientalische Bilder zum Alten Testament* (ABAT2) and James B. Pritchard's *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (ANEP).² And yet,

1. Part of this introduction was given as a lecture at the University of Zürich in January 2017. I thank Konrad Schmid for inviting me to Zürich and for his gracious hospitality. I was helpfully instructed by the feedback I received there from Schmid as well as from Thomas Staubli and Florian Lippke. I thank Joel M. LeMon, Ryan P. Bonfiglio, Collin Cornell, and above all, Othmar Keel, for comments on an earlier draft.
2. Hugo Gressmann, ed., *Altorientalische Bilder zum Alten Testament* (2nd ed.; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1927); James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (2nd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969 [first ed. = 1954]). The marginalia in Pritchard's own copy of ABAT2 (now in my personal library) reveals just how extensively he relied on it in designing his own. Apart from ABAT2 and ANEP, mention might be made of other, similar volumes that appeared in the same general timeframe: Clifford M. Jones, ed., *Old Testament Illustrations* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); and Benjamin Mazar et al., eds., *Views of the Biblical*

despite their titles and their organization, both of these volumes did not go nearly as far as they might have in “relating” the visual data of the ancient world to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

That all changed, and a new field was inaugurated single-handedly by Othmar Keel in 1972.

The Symbolism of the Biblical World

That was the date of the publication of Keel’s groundbreaking work, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen*, translated into English six years later as *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Psalms*.³ Keel’s dissertation, written under the great textual critic, Dominique Barthélemy, dealt with the psalms and the image of the enemies therein, but the image in question in that work was strictly a *literary* one.⁴ In *SBW*, however, Keel studied ancient Near Eastern *visual* imagery (iconography) and applied it to the Book of Psalms. This was a truly innovative approach that went beyond the more general, “cultural” connections drawn by Gressmann and Pritchard and that of necessity had Keel paying close attention to “symbols” found in the art and in the literature. In my judgment, the breakthrough nature of *SBW* was not due solely to the fact that it was the first of its kind,⁵ but also due to its breathtaking scope: Keel exhibited masterful control of both the biblical psalms and a vast range of iconographic sources. Images from far and wide, from the earliest periods to the latest, are included, categorized, and then discussed with reference to six large subjects within the Psalter:

- conceptions of the cosmos,
- destructive forces,
- the temple,

World (5 vols; Jerusalem: International Publishing Company, 1959–1961). The latter is quite useful but also quite large and unwieldy and so was never as popular as the one-volume works edited by Gressmann and Pritchard. The latter remains in print, after a fashion, in a combined form with ancient Near Eastern texts: James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (foreword by Daniel E. Fleming; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

3. Othmar Keel, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen* (Zürich: Benziger and Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972). English translation: *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. Timothy J. Hallett; New York: Seabury, 1978). Hereafter, citations will be from the English version, abbreviated *SBW*.
4. Published as Othmar Keel, *Feinde und Gottesleugner: Studien zum Image der Widersacher in den Individualpsalmen* (SBM 7; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1969).
5. Cf. *SBW*, 11 for Keel’s own claim to this effect.

- conceptions of God,
- the king, and
- the human before God

each with numerous subcategories. This twofold contribution, the collection of over five hundred and fifty illustrations (not to mention twenty-eight plates in the English edition) and their application to the Book of Psalms, has ensured an enduring place for *SBW* in subsequent scholarship on both the Psalter and on iconography.

It bears repeating that nothing on ancient Near Eastern art and the Bible published prior to *SBW* had come close to Keel's work in truly relating the visual record to the *Old Testament*.⁶ Furthermore, insofar as the six subjects Keel focused on were not limited to the Psalter, *SBW* proved itself to be widely applicable beyond the study of the psalms themselves. Indeed, many researchers to this day continue to use *SBW* as a collection like unto *ANEP*, even if they are not working on the Book of Psalms directly.⁷ It is not surprising, then, but a noteworthy achievement nevertheless, that *SBW* remains in print, with the English translation reprinted most recently in 1997 and the German version reaching a 5th edition in 1996.⁸ Further testimony to *SBW*'s enduring value is found in the fact that it has been translated into Dutch (1984), Spanish (2007), and, most recently, Japanese (2010), almost forty years after its initial publication!

Methodology was not a primary concern of Keel's in *SBW*, nor, indeed, in most of his work since—he has preferred to work more inductively, as it were.⁹ Even so, *SBW* obviously modelled a way of

6. See *ibid.*, 11 for Keel's assessment of prior works.

7. Keel notes that only about 130 of *SBW*'s 550 images are found in *ANEP* (*SBW*, 11).

8. Reprint edition: Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. Timothy J. Hallett; repr. ed.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997); 5th German edition: Othmar Keel, *Die Welt der Altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen* (5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

9. But see Othmar Keel, *Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden: Drei Fallstudien zur Methode der Interpretation altorientalischer Bilder* (OBO 122; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), esp. 267–73 (Appendix: Methoden-schemata); Keel's remarks on "a concentric circle model" in *idem*, *The Song of Songs: A Continental Commentary* (trans. Frederick J. Gaiser; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 27–28; and his essay, "Minima methodica und die Sonnengottheit von Jerusalem," in *Iconography and Biblical Studies: Proceeding of the Iconography Sessions at the Joint EABS/SBL Conference, 22–26 July 2007, Vienna, Austria* (eds. Izaak J. de Hulster and Rüdiger Schmitt; AOAT 361; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2009), 213–24, for some forays into theoretical and methodological reflection. Despite his reluctance to write extensively about method and theory, Keel is well read in both. A personal vignette makes the point: when visiting Othmar in Fribourg, he showed me his home office where he worked daily on his publication of the stamp seals excavated from ancient Israel/Palestine (see further below). He also showed me adjacent rooms where he kept additional books. One such room was full of books devoted to art history and theory. As a gift he handed

studying the Bible in light of ancient Near Eastern iconography—a way that can be analyzed and replicated—though it is also the case that *SBW* comes at the very beginning of a wave of iconographic studies from Keel, and, later, a whole host of students and admirers he inspired. What came after *SBW*, then, as a matter of course and necessity revised some of the practices of this pioneering work. Even so, *SBW* remains foundational for a number of reasons. One of the most important points made by Keel in that volume was simply this: that images have a right to be seen.¹⁰ Images deserve to be studied, therefore, and given their full weight as essential data in the interpretation of ancient Israel and, correlatively, ancient Israelite literature.¹¹ As I will show below, Keel's initial work was focused on the latter (iconography and *biblical literature*) but increasingly shifted to the former (iconography and the *history/religion of ancient Israel*).

Beyond this fundamental observation about how images deserve to be taken seriously, which grounds Keel's entire iconographic project, the following are some of the more salient contributions of *SBW*:

- First, that ancient Near Eastern art is best understood and read as a “thought-image” (*Denkbild*) which is in some distinction, according to Keel, from later Western art—art produced for art's sake—designed for viewing in galleries and the like (*Sehbild*).¹² Already in *SBW*, then, one may trace the beginnings of what will come to fuller fruition in Keel's later work in terms of the tradition history of images;¹³ the way images often function with

me his own personal copy of David Freedberg's *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), commenting on its importance as he did so (he cites it frequently in *Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden*). Keel's copy is dated “Juni 1992” and is underlined and filled with copious marginalia throughout, with the end papers covered with page references and notes as to what he found especially important. On p. xix, the introduction to the book, Keel has written at the top, before Freedberg's text, “visual culture.”

10. This is the title of his important 1992 monograph: *Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden* (see previous note). For the biblical text as an image that can also be gazed at and seen, see Françoise Smyth's introduction to Othmar Keel, *Dieu Répond à Job: Une interprétation de Job 38-41 à la lumière de l'iconographie du Proche-Orient ancien* (trans. Françoise Smyth; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1993), 8–10.
11. Note the epigraph to *Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden* from John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972), 10: “No other kind of relic or text from the past can offer such a direct testimony [as an image] about the world which surrounded other people at other times.” See also, more recently, Christoph Uehlinger, “Neither Eyewitnesses, Nor Windows to the Past, but Valuable Testimony in its Own Right: Remarks on Iconography, Source Criticism and Ancient Data-processing,” in *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel* (ed. H. G. M. Williamson; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 173–228.
12. Keel, *SBW*, 7.
13. This is on display throughout Keel's work, but for a convenient example in English, see Othmar Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible* (JOTSUP 261; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

others in an iconographic “constellation” to make larger tableaux, even arguments via iconographic grammar and syntax; and how cultures operate with symbol-systems that are manifested in various ways, but especially in artistic forms.

- Second, that the visual data can control erroneous preunderstandings of abstract words or texts, which is to say wrong (pre)conceptions of language and text that are derived solely from literary and linguistic realms. To quote Keel’s memorable formulation: “Iconography compels us to see through the eyes of the ancient Near East.”¹⁴ The seeing that takes place through iconography is, furthermore, distinct from the way ancient texts may perform similar functions. At this point, *SBW* anticipates more polemical statements Keel will later level against scholarship that is exclusively textual, even as it simultaneously opens up the problem of the image-text relationship.¹⁵
- Third, that images function not primarily to explain what they portray but to “re-present it.”¹⁶ *SBW* makes this important point especially through recourse to Egyptian art, and indeed the importance of Egypt for Keel and the Fribourg School cannot be overstated.¹⁷
- Fourth, that the study of iconography should *not* be conducted exclusively “from a perspective of objective, historical knowledge” and, therefore, does not exist solely for historical purposes or historiographic pursuits.¹⁸ Researchers should not try “merely to present objective facts, but to make every effort to explore fundamental orders and religious propositions.”¹⁹

14. Keel, *SBW*, 8.

15. See the important trilogy by W. J. T. Mitchell exploring the image-text nexus: *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986); *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994); and *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005). See also Ryan P. Bonfiglio, *Reading Images, Seeing Texts: Towards a Visual Hermeneutics for Biblical Studies* (OBO 280; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 95–103, for a treatment of Mitchell’s work with reference to biblical iconography.

16. Keel, *SBW*, 10 (his italics). Zainab Bahrani has offered similar arguments about the ontology of images in Mesopotamia in her sophisticated work: *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003).

17. Cf., e.g., Izaak J. de Hulster, *Illuminating Images: An Iconographic Method of Old Testament Exegesis with Three Case Studies from Third Isaiah* (Utrecht: n.p., 2007), 43 for a similar judgment. See most recently Thomas Staubli, “Cultural and Religious Impacts of Long-Term Cross-Cultural Migration between Egypt and the Levant,” *JAEI* 12 (December 2016): 50–88, who argues for “an Egyptian-Levantine koine.”

18. Keel, *SBW*, 11.

19. *Ibid.*, 12.

Other readers of *SBW* would add to this list of contributions, no doubt, or offer a revised set, but these are among the most important points in my judgment because they continue to operate in iconographic work up to the present day, thus underscoring once more the field-defining nature of *SBW*. Even so, the fourth item on the list, and *SBW* as a whole, definitely represents what might be called “the early Keel”: at this point Keel’s work is almost a phenomenological approach to the study of iconography and the Bible. To be sure, Keel was well aware of the problems of such an approach; he explicitly mentioned the issue of “double fragmentation,” in which only one part or theme of a psalm that is a larger whole with its own integrity is investigated piecemeal, and where just one bit of a larger artistic tableau is examined apart from its context.²⁰ Keel criticized the problem of artistic fragmentation in an important article published later in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*.²¹ In the much earlier *SBW*, however, Keel is willing to run the risks of the occasionally fragmentary approach that he employs there because, in his view, the advantages to such an approach are “obvious: in a thematic arrangement, one picture or one psalm verse can illustrate another, and a positive overall impression can be obtained.”²² The problem, of course, is if the “positive overall impression” is somehow false, historically inaccurate, or otherwise insecure.

Keel and his students went on to address this problem (among others) in subsequent publications, which I take up in greater detail in the next section. And yet, despite later refinements and advances, *SBW* remains foundational forty-plus years after its initial publication. It inaugurated a field, or, rather, its author did. *SBW* was pioneering and remains a classic work, but its status is entirely the result of Keel himself, whose talents for image-text correlation—or what Panofsky would call “synthetic intuition”²³—are repeatedly and everywhere on display throughout the book. A personal vignette underscores the point: a decade ago Joel M. LeMon and I coauthored a paper for a special volume in Keel’s honor. Our essay argued that the idea of animal praise

20. *Ibid.*

21. Othmar Keel, “Iconography and the Bible,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; ed. David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:358-74. For the problem of literary fragmentation in iconographic study, see Joel M. LeMon, *Yahweh’s Winged Form in the Psalms: Exploring Congruent Iconography and Texts* (OBO 242; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

22. Keel, *SBW*, 12.

23. See Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1972 [orig: 1939]), 3-17, esp. 14-15. De Hulster, *Illuminating Images*, 39, speaks of Keel’s approach to correlating psalm texts and iconography in *SBW* as “associative.”

and music-making, especially as attested in iconography, might lie behind the phrase “everything with breath” (*kōl hannəšāmāh*) in Psalm 150:6.²⁴ Only at the very end of our research did we come (back) again to *SBW* to (re)discover that Keel had anticipated our entire argument with just one figure and one caption (**Fig. 0**)!



Fig. 0. Papyrus of Anhai, 1200–1085 BCE (after Keel, *SBW*, 60 Fig. 63). The caption in *SBW* reads: “Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!” (Ps 150:6).”

The Later Keel: Post-*SBW* Developments

While *SBW* has attained to the status of a classic in the field, it is equally true that Keel quickly abandoned the more phenomenological approach found there in subsequent studies. That was no doubt due to an attempt, conscious or not, to counter the problems that he himself had identified in *SBW*. Whatever the case, it was as if the publication of *SBW* opened the floodgates of Keel’s iconographic mind as a host of monograph-length publications flowed from his pen in immedi-

24. Brent A. Strawn and Joel M. LeMon, “Everything That Has Breath!: Animal Praise in Psalm 150:6 in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Iconography,” in *Bilder als Quellen/Images as Sources: Studies on ancient Near Eastern artefacts and the Bible inspired by the work of Othmar Keel* (eds. S. Bickel, S. Schroer, R. Schurte, and C. Uehlinger; OBO Sonderband; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 451–85 and Pls. XXXIII–XXXIV.

ate succession. These include his treatments of the idea of personified Wisdom playing before God in Proverbs 8 (1974); symbols of victory in the Old Testament (1974); visions of YHWH and seal art (1977); YHWH's answer to Job (1978); the boiling of a kid in its mother's milk (1980); the metaphorical speech of the Song of Songs (1984); and a full-blown commentary on the Song of Songs (1986).²⁵ These studies and still others that could be mentioned²⁶ show Keel focusing on text units that are considerably smaller than the lengthy Book of Psalms—indeed, sometimes on just one single image in a small text unit—which effectively counters the problem of literary fragmentation he faced in the case of the Psalter. *SBW*'s more phenomenological approach, which connected artistic images and themes (“symbolism”) to comparable items within a large and diverse collection (the Psalter) can thus be seen as just the first “stage” in Keel's iconographic thought.²⁷ The succession of monographs that followed hard on the heels of *SBW* can then be considered together as a second stage. In this stage, Keel is moving away from the phenomenology of *SBW* to more fulsome and extended exegetical

25. Othmar Keel, *Die Weisheit spielt vor Gott: Ein ikonographischer Beitrag zur Deutung des mešahāqāt in Spr. 8,30f.* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974); idem, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament: Ikonographische Studien zu Jos 8,18-26, Ex 17,8-13, 2 Kön 13,14-19 und 1 Kön 22,11* (OBO 5; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1974); idem, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst: Eine neue Deutung der Majestätschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4* (SBS 84/85; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977); idem, *Jahwes Entgegnung an Job: Eine Deutung von Ijob 38-41 vor dem Hintergrund der zeitgenössischen Bildkunst* (FRLANT 121; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978); idem, *Das Böcklein in der Milch seiner Mutter und Verwandtes: im Lichte eines altorientalischen Bildmotiv* (OBO 33; Freiburg Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1980); idem, *Deine Blicke sind Tauben: Zur Metaphorik des Hohen Liedes* (SBS 114/115; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984); and *Das Hohelied* (ZBK 18; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1986 [2nd ed. = 1992]; ET = Keel, *Song of Songs*).

26. See the selected bibliography of Keel's work in the present volume and note also the extensive review of Keel's published works in de Hulster, *Illuminating Images*, 21–125.

27. My categorization of Keel's work into four “stages” here might be compared to and contrasted with other treatments offered by Izaak J. de Hulster and Christoph Uehlinger. De Hulster, *Illuminating Images*, 21–125 follows Keel's works in chronological order, grouping them as follows: (1) publications prior to *SBW*, (2) *SBW*, (3) works published between *SBW* and Keel's Song of Songs commentary, (4) the Song of Songs commentary, (5) *Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden*, (6) other publications that appeared between *SBW* and *Das Recht*, (7) the appearance of *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole* (see note 32 below) and publications after 1992. Christoph Uehlinger, “Das Buch und die Bilder: 25 Jahre ikonographischer Forschung am Biblischer Institute der Universität Freiburg Schweiz—Dank an Othmar Keel,” in *Images as media: Sources for the cultural history of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean (1st millennium BCE)* (ed. Christoph Uehlinger; OBO 175; Fribourg: University Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 399–408, also mentions four stages, but identifies them differently: (1) the starting point with *SBW*, (2) motif correlations, (3) documentation/publication, and (4) interdisciplinarity and networking. My use of “stage,” initially with scare quotation marks, is meant to signal that these are conceptual steps in Keel's method/practice. As will be seen below, Keel's ability to work in more than one mode across his career shows that these “stages” should not be understood as linear, non-overlapping, or chronologically discrete moments.

probes with the help of iconography. Not to be missed in this second stage is Keel's increased attention to minor art, particularly seals.

Joel M. LeMon has offered a typology for iconographic approaches to the study of the Hebrew Bible which may be profitably deployed in assessing Keel's work. LeMon delineates three kinds of iconographic approaches:

- The *iconographic-artistic* approach, which focuses on the meaning and significance of ancient Near Eastern art as such;
- The *iconographic-historical* approach, which uses images in the reconstruction of ancient history and/or religion; and
- The *iconographic-biblical* approach, which utilizes iconography to inform the reading of biblical texts.²⁸

There can, of course, be overlap between these three, especially in the actual practice of any one particular scholar across the course of a career. Keel himself is just such an example, as will be seen below. Nevertheless, using LeMon's typology, the "early, first-stage Keel" of *SBW* clearly belongs to the last type. The "second-stage Keel," too, seems particularly concerned with the relationship between texts from the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern iconography and thus can safely be categorized as *iconographic-biblical* in nature.

A third stage of Keel's thought may be identified. Despite the criticism Keel leveled in *SBW* against the "one-sided," overly-historicizing approaches found in collections like *ANEP*,²⁹ Keel's subsequent publications become ever more precise historically. This historicizing tendency in Keel's post-*SBW* work makes *SBW* appear even more phenomenological, perhaps, than might otherwise be the case. Be that as it may, the move toward more detailed and accurate historical correlations between the art and text(s) in question becomes a major trend, not only in Keel's work, but also among that of the students he inspired (not to mention admirers beyond Switzerland) that have been called, in the aggregate, "the Fribourg School."³⁰ So, alongside Keel's writings, mention should be made of Thomas Staubli's dissertation on nomads

28. See Joel M. LeMon, "Iconographical Approaches: The Iconic Structure of Psalm 17," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen* (eds. Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards; SBLRBS 56; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 143–68; and idem, *Yahweh's Winged Form*, 9–16.

29. Cf. Keel, *SBW*, 11, cited in part above (see at note 18 above).

30. For a discussion of the term and its history of use, see de Hulster, *Illuminating Images*, 21–25. Cf. also Uehlinger, "Das Buch und die Bilder," 406.

and Silvia Schroer's dissertation on representational art in the Old Testament—both, perhaps, iconographic-biblical in LeMon's typology, but with more attention to matters of history and chronology than SBW—alongside Urs Winter's dissertation on goddesses, which devotes the majority of its pages to the female deities without extensive reference to the Bible proper.³¹

The move toward historical precision, perhaps what might even be called iconography for its own sake with less overt or extended concern with the Bible proper or primarily, can be traced in several works and in more than one way, but a milestone in “the later Keel,” and a resolute example of the *iconographic-historical* approach, is his book, coauthored with Christoph Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole: Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen*, first published in 1992, translated into English as *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* in 1998, into French as *Dieux, Déesses et figures divines: Les sources iconographiques de l'histoire de la religion d'Israël* in 2001, and which is now in a 7th German edition (2012).³² In this volume Keel and Uehlinger attempt a history of ancient Israelite religion with minimal recourse to texts. Since Keel and Uehlinger do refer to the Hebrew Bible a good bit and to epigraphic remains as well, their strongly anti-text rhetoric in the book is at least slightly overstated.³³ Even so, they nevertheless make an important point against so much scholarship that has

31. Thomas Staubli, *Das Image der Nomaden: im Alten Israel und in der Ikonographie seiner sesshaften Nachbarn* (OBO 107; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991); Silvia Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder: Nachrichten von darstellender Kunst im Alten Testament* (OBO 74; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987); Urs Winter, *Frau und Göttin: Exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im Alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt* (2nd ed.; OBO 53; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987 [1st ed. = 1983]). A treatment of these works as well as other publications from various members of the Fribourg School may be found in de Hulster, *Illuminating Images*, 125–31. See further, *ibid.*, 131–55, for iconographical work beyond Fribourg proper, some of which was conducted in close connection with Keel.

32. Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole: Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* (QD 134; Freiburg: Herder, 1992), 7th ed. = Freiburg: BIBEL + ORIENT Museum and Fribourg: Academic Press, 2012; *idem*, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); *idem*, *Dieux, Déesses et figures divines: Les sources iconographiques de l'histoire de la religion d'Israël* (trans. Jean Prignaud; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2001). Hereafter, citations will be from the English version, abbreviated GGG. For reception of GGG, see Florian Lippke, “GGG im forschungsgeschichtlichen Kontext: Ein Nachwort zum Wiederabdruck 2010,” in Keel and Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter, und Gottessymbole* (7th ed.), 565–92.

33. One example: “Since the biblical texts remain the same, and the inscriptional source material is not growing at the same rate as the scholarly essays and books that evaluate such evidence, the discussion has at times been reduced to a repetition of long-held opinions that do not seem to rise about the level of the term paper or beyond a wholesale recopying of the theses of others” (GGG, xi).

been myopically (!), overly, and exclusively preoccupied with textual remains. As they state: “Anyone who systematically ignores the pictorial evidence that a culture has produced can hardly expect to recreate even a minimally adequate description of the culture itself. Such a person will certainly not be able to describe the nature of the religious symbols by which such a culture oriented itself.”³⁴ So, again, the iconographic data deserve to be seen, and the fascinating story these largely untapped sources tell must be assessed and taken into consideration in any treatment of the religious history of ancient Israel/Palestine.³⁵

Given the nature of the archaeological remains that have survived from ancient Israel/Palestine, *GGG* drew heavily on the minor arts, especially stamp seals, in making its arguments. Keel’s interest in seals was manifested in pre-*GGG* publications (see above), but pronounced attention to the minor arts, especially the seals recovered from Israel/Palestine, represents a fourth stage in Keel’s thought. *GGG* is not yet reflective of that fourth stage, but a further word about this important book, as groundbreaking and pioneering as was *SBW*, is helpful to trace the stages in “the later Keel.”

So, as was the case with *SBW*, *GGG* also needed revision and supplementation after its initial publication in 1992. That work is something that the authors have done in successive editions of the German original³⁶ and that Uehlinger did in an important solo-authored essay on anthropomorphic cult statuary.³⁷ In that essay, Uehlinger breaks with some of the earlier conclusions of *GGG* on the matter of divine images (which suggested a decline in anthropomorphic representation of the gods in later periods of Israelite religious history), and does so precisely at the point of *media*: according to him, a slightly distorted picture has been produced by paying too much attention to the seals only, at the expense of other types of artistic remains. In Uehlinger’s opinion, anthropomorphic cult statuary represents a crucial example of the latter—one that nuances the conclusions of *GGG* at this point and on this point.

Keel published a formal response a few years later; among other

34. *Ibid.*, xi.

35. Cf. *ibid.*, ix: “This book is not a synthesis of the history of Syro-Palestinian religions, including the religion of Israel, but an attempt to give visual sources their due as a necessary element in any such undertaking.”

36. Especially the 4th German edition (1998), which included an extensive addendum. See “Nachtrag zur 4. Auflage,” in Keel and Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter, und Gottessymbole* (7th ed.), 476–506.

37. Christoph Uehlinger, “Anthropomorphic Cult Statuary in Iron Age Palestine and the Search for Yahweh’s Cult Images,” in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. Karel van der Toorn; CBET 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 97–155.

things, he remains convinced, *contra* Uehlinger, that there was likely no anthropomorphic cult statue of YHWH in the Jerusalem temple.³⁸ While I am inclined to agree with Keel, Uehlinger's essay remains important because, *inter alia*, it serves to underscore in its own way how important seals have been for "the later Keel" and the Fribourg School as a whole. The reasons for this focus on seals are several and include details about Fouad S. Matouk's scarab and amulet collection that came into the possession of the Biblical Institute at the University of Fribourg, the establishment of a museum there, further acquisitions of antiquities for the collection, and so on and so forth.³⁹ As some of that history goes back to the early 1980s, if not still earlier, one must emphasize that Keel's interest in seals is not entirely novel, restricted only to the latest stages in his thought.⁴⁰ Some seals are included already in *SBW*, after all, and I noted the increased attention to seals in the second stage that followed *SBW*. But seal art—especially seal art from ancient Israel/Palestine itself—takes on increased importance in the third stage of Keel's work (exemplified above all in *GGG*), and this tendency comes to fullest fruition in the fourth stage described in greater detail below.

It is not difficult to see why this should be the case. Quite apart from various details surrounding the collections at Fribourg and the museum there, the seals are an absolutely essential methodological key in the work of Keel and the Fribourg School, especially as these move into more historically-precise (*iconographic-historical*) modes. There is very little monumental art from ancient Israel/Palestine, after all, especially when compared with Egypt and Mesopotamia. A focus on minor art then is, first and foremost, *pragmatic*: it is mostly what has survived in this particular area of the Levant. But a focus on minor art is also *useful* because minor art is mobile. Minor art can function,

38. See Othmar Keel, "Warum im Jerusalemer Tempel kein anthropomorphes Kultbild gestanden haben dürfte," in *Homo Pictor* (eds. Gottfried Boehm and Stephan E. Hauser; Colloquium Rauricum 7; München and Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2001), 244–82.

39. See de Hulster, *Illuminating Images*, 27–30. See also Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Altorientalische Miniaturkunst: Die ältesten visuellen Massenkommunikationsmittel: Ein Blick in die Sammlungen des Biblischen Instituts der Universität Freiburg Schweiz* (2d ed.; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Hildi Keel-Leu, *Vorderasiatische Stempelsiegel: die Sammlung des Biblischen Instituts der Universität Freiburg Schweiz* (OBO 110; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg, Schweiz and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991); Hildi Keel-Leu and Beatrice Teissier, *Die vorderasiatischen Rollsiegel der Sammlungen "Bibel + Orient" der Universität Freiburg Schweiz / The ancient Near Eastern cylinder seals of the collections "Bible + Orient" of the University of Fribourg* (OBO 200; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

40. Thanks to Thomas Staubli for discussions on this point. See also de Hulster, *Illuminating Images*, 27–30, who notes Keel began a private collection of archaeological study objects as a student already in the mid-1960s.

therefore, to borrow from the title of another volume by Keel and Uehlinger, as a tool of mass communication.⁴¹ Minor art, in the practice of Keel and the Fribourg School, is thus viewed as the primary means by which religious ideas were disseminated in antiquity across distant miles and long stretches of years. The kind of chronological and geographical transmission that is made possible by the mobility of the minor art, in turn, underscores yet once more the importance—indeed necessity—of studying iconography when researching ancient religion and history, not to mention ancient religious history. And so it is that the Fribourg monograph series, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* (OBO) saw the publication of an important trilogy on seals and this very point: *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals* (1993), *Images as media: Sources for the cultural history of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean (1st millennium BCE)* (2000), and *Crafts and Images in Contact: Studies on Eastern Mediterranean art of the first millennium BCE* (2005).⁴² What one finds in this trilogy, and more generally at this point in Keel's thought and the work of the Fribourg School, is not only increased historical precision, therefore, but increased historical precision *specifically with reference to minor art*. Keel's earlier, more thematic use of minor art—not only in *SBW*, which includes much more than seals, but even in something like the book on visions of YHWH and seal art (*Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst*)—becomes, in this later stage, far more historical, far more precise, and far more focused on minor art above and beyond all other datasets. Whenever possible, the attempt is made to identify workshops and “significant series” of seals.

It is clear that *GGG* and the OBO seal trilogy represent significant methodological advances over *SBW*. But of course Keel himself was part of this progress. He coauthored *GGG*, after all, and the *Images as media* volume emerged from a symposium in his honor.⁴³ In addition to a four-volume treatment on the stamp seals from Israel/Palestine that mostly predates the OBO trilogy just mentioned,⁴⁴ Keel coauthored

41. Keel and Uehlinger, *Altorientalische Miniaturkunst: Die ältesten visuellen Massenkommunikationsmittel*.

42. Benjamin Sass and Christoph Uehlinger, eds., *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals: Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Fribourg on April 17–20, 1991* (OBO 125; Fribourg: University Press Fribourg, Switzerland and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); Christoph Uehlinger, ed., *Images as media: Sources for the cultural history of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean (1st millennium BCE)* (OBO 175; Fribourg: University Press Fribourg, Switzerland and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Claudia E. Suter and Christoph Uehlinger, eds., *Crafts and Images in Contact: Studies on Eastern Mediterranean art of the first millennium BCE* (OBO 210; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

43. See Uehlinger, ed., *Images as media*, vii.

44. Othmar Keel and Silvia Schroer, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel* (OBO 67; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1985); Othmar Keel, Hildi Keel-Leu, and Silvia Schroer, *Stu-*

the first volume of Silvia Schroer's *Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient*, which is subtitled "a religious history in images,"⁴⁵ and which has been called a "summa iconographica."⁴⁶ But as the fullest example of the fourth stage in Keel's thought, there can be no doubt that his crowning achievement is the massive *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel*. The first, introductory volume of the *Corpus* appeared in 1995. Including that volume, and a jointly-authored volume with Jürg Egger on the seals from Jordan, the *Corpus* has published six, large, folio-sized volumes to date, which altogether catalogue 6,527 objects.⁴⁷

The *Corpus* is Keel's *magnum opus*, or, better, his *Lebenswerk*. With it, we have travelled a long path from *SBW* in 1972—through at least four identifiable "stages." To be sure, there is overlap and interplay among these stages. Keel has continued to publish "big picture" synthetic work, some of which is attentive to *biblical* material, alongside his increased devotion to what might be seen as *iconographic-historic*, even *iconographic-artistic* study of the seal corpus itself. The present book on Jerusalem is proof of such synthetic study (see further below). Even so, the movement from "the early Keel" to "the later Keel" is worth pondering. As I have noted elsewhere: "The development from [*SBW*] to *GGG* to the *Corpus* could be seen as retrogressive in some way. Should

dien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel II (OBO 88; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1989); Othmar Keel, Menakhem Shuval, and Christoph Uehlinger, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel III: Die Frühe Eisenzeit: Ein Workshop* (OBO 100; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1990); and Othmar Keel, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel IV* (OBO 135; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1994).

45. Silvia Schroer and Othmar Keel, *Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient: Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern, Band 1: Vom ausgehenden Mesolithikum bis zur Frühbronzezeit* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2005); Silvia Schroer, *Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient: Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern, Band 2: Die Mittelbronzezeit* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2008); eadem, *Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient: Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern, Band 3: Die Spätbronzezeit* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2011). The fourth volume, on the Iron Age, is expected in 2017.
46. Izak Cornelius, "Review of Schroer and Keel, *IPIAO 1*," in *JNSL* 32/2 (2006): 129–31 (129).
47. Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit: Einleitung* (OBO.SA 10; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995); idem, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit: Katalog Band I: Von Tell Abu Farağ bis 'Atlit* (OBO.SA 13; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); idem, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit: Katalog Band II: Von Bahan bis Tel Eton* (OBO.SA 29; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); idem, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit: Katalog Band III: Von Tell el-Far' a Nord bis Tell el-Fir* (OBO.SA 31; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); idem, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit: Katalog Band IV: Von Tel Gamma bis Chirbet Husche* (OBO.SA 33; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013); and Jürg Egger and Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Siegel-Amulette aus Jordanien: Von Neolithikum bis zur Perserzeit* (OBO.SA 25; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

not the foundations (i.e., the *Corpus*) be laid first before moving on to the big syntheses?”⁴⁸ Or, to say it differently, scholars typically begin their careers with detailed, even minute analyses before they attempt grand visions of the whole. What one finds in Keel, though—echoed here and there elsewhere in the Fribourg School—is almost the *reverse* movement: from the large synthetic work of *SBW* (and *GGG*) to the foundational cataloguing work of the *Corpus*. And yet, in light of the stages that I’ve traced above, this movement is not retrogressive at all but entirely understandable and quite in line with the development of Keel’s thought and the practices of the Fribourg School writ large. Moreover, as Keel once remarked to me, the proper ordering of methodological steps is a perennial problem in the acquisition of knowledge: what should come first—the evidence itself or the questions, theories, and hypotheses about that evidence? In numerous ways the early Keel set the iconographic agenda for a generation, and for himself, and the publications that followed, from his own pen and from those he taught and inspired, have brought more data to bear so as to test and prove various theories, or to refine and revise them altogether, or to raise entirely new questions previously unimagined. Both parts—the data and ideas about the same—are necessary, of course, and what is perhaps most amazing about Keel’s mind and his published oeuvre is that he excels in *both*. The four stages I have identified in Keel’s work demonstrate that he recognized already at an early point in his career the massive importance of the minor arts and the kind of cataloging work that comes to full fruition only in his much later *Corpus*. It is also clear that Keel’s work in the last, fourth stage is even better than it might have otherwise been at some earlier time given his command of the whole field. Foundational presentations of important datasets, that is, are often written by scholars just beginning their careers, who are thus relatively new to their subjects, and/or by those with less wide-ranging, capacious, and synthetic minds. But Keel’s *Corpus* is decidedly otherwise: executed by the most mature of scholars, a true master of his craft in total command of the field. Indeed, in this specific case, the cataloguer in question is the very pioneer and leader of a field that he propagated himself!

48. Brent A. Strawn, “[Review of] Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit: Katalog Band IV: Von Tel Gamma bis Chirbet Husche*,” RBL 08/2013 (online at https://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/9243_10197.pdf).

The Present Volume

Keel retired from the University of Fribourg in 2002. Since then he has continued a very active research and writing schedule, not only via the massive *Corpus* project, but in the completion of an equally monumental, two-volume history of Jerusalem: *Die Geschichte Jerusalems und der Entstehung der Monotheismus*, which appeared in 2007.⁴⁹ Coming in at over 1,300 pages with more than 700 illustrations, *Die Geschichte* is a remarkably comprehensive history of the city from the Middle Bronze Age IIB period to Pompey.⁵⁰ As noted in the editorial preface, the present volume is an English translation of a German epitomization of this larger, two-volume work.⁵¹ The two-volume work is still essential, especially in matters of documentation, engagement with previous scholarship, fuller argumentation, and so forth, but the present volume is a useful distillation of the larger original. In his review of *Die Geschichte*, Ernst Axel Knauf identified no less than three books within that work: (1) a handbook for educated pilgrims to the Holy Land, (2) a history of Jerusalem from 1700–63 BCE, and (3) an argument about the development of monotheism.⁵² It is the latter two items that are on display here, especially the last mentioned, though in a greatly condensed and streamlined form. This type of presentation is obviously user-friendly; readers who are interested in learning more or who wish to see Keel's argument laid out in greater detail and in interaction with prior scholarship will want to refer to *Die Geschichte*. To be sure, even the lengthy arguments of *Die Geschichte*, let alone the abbreviated treatment found here, will not convince all readers. I myself do not agree with all of Keel's positions on, for example, YHWH's solarization; nor do I share his strong and long-standing distaste for premodern reading strategies like allegory and typology.⁵³ But, to return to LeMon's typology, and to the stages of Keel's thought that I have outlined here, what should not be missed is that even in the latest, fourth stage of Keel's work, in which the cataloging work of the *Corpus* looms so large,

49. Othmar Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems und der Entstehung der Monotheismus* (2 vols.; OLB IV/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

50. See Max Küchler, *Jerusalem: Ein Handbuch und Studienreiseführer zur heiligen Stadt* (OLB IV/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007 [2nd ed. = 2013]) for a companion volume by Keel's New Testament colleague at Fribourg.

51. Othmar Keel, *Jerusalem und der eine Gott: Eine Religionsgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011; 2nd ed. = 2014).

52. See Ernst Axel Knauf, *RBL 05/2008* (online at: https://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/6377_6859.pdf; accessed 8/1/2016) and the editor's foreword above.

53. Beyond the comments found in the afterword to the present volume, see, for example, Keel, *Song of Songs*, esp. 5–11.

Keel is still producing synthetic work that is as wide-ranging and dexterous as his early *SBW*. If his work on Jerusalem is *iconographic-historical*—which it most certainly is—it is also not without a good dose of the *iconographic-biblical*.⁵⁴ This shows, once more, that the “stages” in question are not entirely discrete in Keel’s actual practice, even as it further underscores Keel’s remarkable capacity to work in more than one mode throughout a long and influential career.

The Future of Keel and Iconography

A happy serendipity associated with the publication of this brief volume on Jerusalem in English is the fact that Keel has just finished work on the *Corpus* volume that includes all the seals from Jerusalem. He is now working on a major museum exhibit that will be held in Fribourg and after that plans on publishing his own personal collection of over 700 scarabs. And of course the work on the *Corpus* will go on, especially as Keel has continued to enlist others to assist in that work. What Keel initiated in 1972, therefore, continues across the globe, with iconographers hard at work not only in the homeland of Switzerland, but also in Germany, France, North America, Israel, and elsewhere. Indeed, in the forty-five years since *SBW*’s appearance, enough has been published in the field of iconography that several dissertations have been produced in an attempt to clarify iconographic methodology.⁵⁵ Several edited collections on iconography have appeared, not only within OBO series but even outside it; an introductory textbook of sorts has been published;⁵⁶ and a forthcoming issue in the thematically-oriented journal, *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*, will be devoted to iconography and the Hebrew Bible. Iconography is thus a robust (sub)field, with the essays contained in the last two mentioned works,

54. Note that *Die Geschichte* contains a seventeen-page long, triple-columned index of Scripture references.

55. I consider my own dissertation one such attempt, though it is mostly implicit in this regard. Keel was on my dissertation committee and, happily, present at the defense. That work was revised and published as Brent A. Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (OBO 212; Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005). Joel M. LeMon’s dissertation turned monograph, *Yahweh’s Winged Form*, is more explicit about methodological matters. Izaak J. de Hulster’s *illuminating Images*, revised and published without the extensive literature review as idem, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah* (FAT II/36; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), is still more thorough and detailed. In my judgment, Ryan P. Bonfiglio’s 2014 Emory dissertation, which has appeared as idem, *Reading Images, Seeing Texts* (see note 15 above) represents the state of the art and is by far the most sophisticated and articulate attempt to set biblical iconography on a firm theoretical basis.

56. Izaak J. de Hulster, Brent A. Strawn, and Ryan P. Bonfiglio, eds., *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: An Introduction to Its Method and Practice* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015). For iconography theory, see Bonfiglio, *Reading Images, Seeing Texts*.

in particular, demonstrating a healthy diversity among iconographers and showcasing the various ways iconography can be correlated with standard exegetical approaches like tradition history, redaction history, comparative method, and the like. It is clear, then, that much of what has been practiced in the past and that is currently practiced in the present will continue into the future—all, again, thanks to Othmar Keel.

I could add further to what I've said in this introduction, which has been as much a celebration of Keel's work as it has been a review of it. But I have already said enough to establish the extraordinary contributions Keel has made to the study of ancient Near Eastern iconography, the archaeology of Israel/Palestine, ancient Israelite religion, and the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁷ These achievements are widely known in scholarly circles but were recognized in a remarkable way when Keel was awarded the Marcel Benoist Prize in 2005, the most prestigious prize given by the Swiss government for outstanding scientific achievement. At the time, Keel was only the third or fourth scholar of the humanities to win that esteemed award, which is referred to in some circles as "the Swiss Nobel Prize."

In conclusion, then, I content myself with one final remark—this one quite personal, as it arises from my own encounters with Keel and his work, my deep admiration for him and his many writings, and my learning at his feet in contexts near and far. I simply wish to revisit and revise Keel's famous statement in *SBW*, that *iconography compels us to see through the eyes of the ancient Near East*. That remains quite true—now, no less than in 1972—and we know that this is so in large part due to Othmar Keel. It is that latter fact that leads me to revise his earlier statement by observing that *Othmar Keel has compelled us to see through the eyes of iconography*. It is Keel's own remarkable set of eyes that began that work years ago. Ever since, he has, quite literally, been opening the rest of our eyes to the worlds he has seen, and, as a result, we will never see things the same way again.

57. See further the list of selected works included at the end of this volume.