Keel and Schroer's "Creation; Biblical theologies in the context of the ancient Near East" (Book Review)

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This volume is recommended for graduate or post-graduate studies due to the in-depth subject matter, the technical language and the knowledge of Hebrew required for a full appreciation of the included essays.

**Reviewer**
Lisa Cutforth-Anderson, Alberta Bible College


Authors Keel and Schroer originally published *Schöpfung: biblische Theologien im Kontext altorientalischer Religionen* in 2002 with a second edition in 2008 in the German language. Peter T. Daniels produced this English translation titled *Creation; Biblical theologies in the context of the ancient Near East* in 2015. Except for correcting a few minor errors and adding a selection of more recent items to the bibliography this work is faithful to the 2008 second edition.

*Creation* cites a number of texts that describe the creation story in various ancient Near East cultures and looks at how these relate to the creation story in the Bible. The first chapter summarizes the creation traditions of several Christian schools of theology as traditions progressed through the twentieth century. The second chapter challenges theologians to look at creation in the light of archaeological findings in the light of faith. The authors discuss numerous connections of local environment to the Hebrew account of creation in chapter 3: sea and rivers, mountains, rocks and stones, farmland, plant and animal world, and the skies. The acts of creation’s manifold blessings are analyzed in chapter 4.

Chapter 5 is a theology-rich look at the four ancient Near Eastern approaches to the origin of the world as the authors describe commonalities between the accounts. The world as the manifestation of divine activity is discussed with chapter 6 with the authors making a distinction between the goal of creation and the object of creation. The destruction of creation and the introduction of evil into the world as the result of human failure are examined in chapter 7. The *Book of Job* is central to chapter 8’s discussion of God’s battle with chaos brought to creation. The purpose for the specific animals mentioned in *Job* chapters 30 and 38 is contrasted with the different animals mentioned in chapter 39 and reflect the role of ancient Near Eastern rulers’ role as protector of their people from dangerous and damaging animals. Chapter 9 compares the nature philosophers of Ionia (Thales of Miletus, Anaximander of
Miletus and Heraclitus of Ephesus) view of creation-centered gods with the biblical account. Chapter 10 describes Jewish wisdom with the creation references in Job 28 and Proverbs 1-9 and the eroticism of the Song of Solomon.

Throughout the book are fine line drawing illustrations of items in the collections of the Department of Biblical Studies in University of Freiburg in Germany. An Epilogue provides a selection of twelve nonbiblical texts from Enki and Ninmah to the Lugal myth. It is understandable but unfortunate that this English translation includes a very extensive 27 page bibliography of almost entirely of German language sources. Hopefully the reader would be successful locating an English language version through the Internet. The book concludes with author and Scripture indexes.

The authors through extensive use of ancient Near East artifacts and theology connect with biblical creation accounts. This scholarship work is one that theologians and graduate students would find insightful and engaging.

**Reviewer**
Paul B. Drake, Pacific Islands University


John Granger Cook, professor of religion and philosophy at LaGrange College, offers in *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World* a comprehensive study of crucifixion as a form of capital punishment in the ancient world. Analyzing the various methodologies of crucifixion, Cook draws heavily from ancient, Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic text of historical accounts. Through the course of six chapters, an introduction, and conclusion the reader is introduced to crucifixion through its terminology, legal and historical implications. Much attention is given to linguistics in this work in an effort to categorically define crucifixion as “execution by suspension” the primary method examined in this volume. In addition, extensive accounts of the practice are provided with significant consideration to Roman crucifixion and its relation to the New Testament. Greater understanding is afforded the reader of the social and physical importance surrounding the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion of Christ.

The author provides well-researched scholarly content that includes numerous footnotes and sizable supplementary appendices. Additionally, each chapter is afforded its own conclusion summarizing the text, a helpful feature for researchers. Bearing note is the inclusion of a brief section of sketched and photographic images of crucifixion which are graphic in nature and may be unsuitable to some readers.