

CHOCHMAH
 – DIVINE WISDOM OR GOD –
 THE WISDOM?

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Claudiu Cristian Damian, *Hochma – Înțelepciunea
 în Scrierile Sapiențiale ale Vechiului Testament*

[Chochmah – Wisdom in the Sapiential Books of the Old Testament]
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If we reflect on our condition, we will realise that man is not the only one to have evolved over the years; his reference points, ideals, perspectives and everything that could give meaning to his life have also changed. Consequently, we can say that there is a strong connection between the history of mankind and the evolution of concepts.

The present work is clear proof of this reality. Claudiu Cristian Damian's research focuses on the evolution of the concept of wisdom – Chochmah – first in the Ancient literature of the Middle East and then in the biblical space, at the confluence of Jewish and Greek thinking.

To analyse the role of wisdom in the thinking of various peoples, the author resorts to a series of literary works more or less known, but extremely enlightening. Writings such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Code of Hammurabi, Apkallu, Adapa, the Instructions of Shuruppak, The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, Theodicy, and The Wisdom of Amenemope are only a few of the works belonging to the vast Ancient sapiential literature this book highlights. The author thoroughly explains their connection with the inspired writings of the Old Testament and shows how they possibly influenced the collective mentality of the various cultures with which Jews interacted over the years. Damian's whole endeavour demonstrates a fundamental perspective of Christianity, best rendered by Saint Justin Martyr and Philosopher: The Divine Logos "sowed" in all civilisations elements which allow people to understand, to a small or great extent, part of God's will (*The Second Apology in Favour of Christians*). It is precisely this perspective that makes the present work more than a historical study or a linguistic and conceptual analysis.

Moreover, the study of these works is not necessarily a purpose of the present book, but rather a foundation of its most important part. As I was saying, the present work is not dedicated to the general concept of wisdom, but to its peculiarity in the Jewish space, namely to the idea of chochmah. Thus, resorting to Ancient Eastern literature only facilitates the understanding of this idea in Jewish thinking, as it was influenced by other cultures.

Although wisdom was an important subject in the books of the Old Testament, the author decides to focus only on the passages which best render its fundamental features for the understanding of the chosen people: divine origin and personification. These couple of elements differentiate the Jewish chochmah from any other Eastern conception. Consequently, Damian's research tackles especially the passages in Proverbs 1:20-33; 8; 9:1-18; the Wisdom of Solomon 7:8 and the Wisdom of Sirach 24. Besides the two aforementioned characteristics, the feature which makes these texts unique in the Eastern sapiential landscape is the fact that wisdom is perceived as a relational means between man and God. Thus, the author shows the true value of the concept of chochmah.

In the end, Claudiu Cristian Damian's book constitutes an element of novelty for biblical research. Normally, the personified wisdom from the aforementioned passages is considered a typological image of the Divine Logos, the One Saint Paul himself calls the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24). Nonetheless, the author nuances this typological understanding. According to him, these texts from the Old Testament indeed prepared the ground for the proclamation of God's Embodiment. However, he believes their content is not enough to fully render the greatness of God getting closer to man. That is why this book encourages us to reflect on the fact that the Chochmah from the Holy Scripture refers to God, but does not identify with Him. This relation is similar to that between Saint John the Baptist and Christ, as described by Saint John the Evangelist: "He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light" (Jn 1:8).

Knowing all this, we can say that Damian's book is the result of a work that is very necessary for Romanian biblical research. As we have seen, the issue tackled by the book is bold, the perspectives are vast (being historical, literary, and hermeneutical research, among others) and the ideas conveyed can be actual subjects that a mind with a true penchant for wisdom can reflect upon.