



The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel

Cornelis Bennema

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Cornelis Bennema elucidates the soteriological function of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel, and analyzes the interrelationship between John's pneumatology and soteriology along the trajectory of wisdom. As a possible conceptual background for aspects of Johannine pneumatology, he selects the Jewish wisdom tradition and suggests that sapient Judaism understood 'salvation' as an intensification of that work of the Spirit that is already immanent to a person, namely, the mediation of life and wisdom. The development of an overall model of Johannine soteriology, which holds together both the relational and cognitive aspects of salvation, assists in identifying the specific activities in which the Spirit is involved. The author argues that the soteriological function of the Spirit is twofold. First, the Spirit creates a saving relationship between the believer and the Father and Son, by mediating to people the saving wisdom present in Jesus' life-giving teaching. The Spirit thus enables the believer to come to an adequate understanding and belief-response. Second, the Spirit sustains this saving relationship through further mediation of wisdom that enables the believer to demonstrate discipleship as an ongoing belief-response. Hence, the Spirit accomplishes his soteriological role precisely in his function as a life-giving cognitive agent, i.e., through the mediation of saving wisdom the Spirit provides cognitive perception, understanding, and so life. This concept of the Spirit is the most important continuity between the models of salvation in sapient Judaism and in the Fourth Gospel.

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