



Power and the Spirit of God Toward an Experience-Based Pneumatology

Bernard Cooke

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In this book the distinguished Roman Catholic theologian Bernard Cooke reassesses the long-standing Christian description of divine power. The word "power" evokes the spheres of economic, political, and social life. Cooke suggests, however, that the deepest questions about conflicting powers are theological and concern what Christians have traditionally referred to as "the Holy Spirit" and "salvation." He believes that the twentieth-century reappraisal of the theological view of power may represent the most radical paradigm shift to touch Christianity in eighteen hundred years.

In present-day scholarly discussions of pneumatology (the theology of the Holy Spirit), there is widespread agreement that the traditional description of the Spirit of God as the third person of the trinity is both inadequate and misleading. Much more reflection on the notion of "spirit" as applied to God is needed, says Cooke, and the use of the modern understanding of "person" in reference to God's Spirit must be challenged. Granted that, however, what would replace it? There is no ready answer, and ultimately one is faced with mystery. But greater insight into personal communication and relationships, increased understanding of the function of symbols and rituals, and greater awareness of the sacramentality of creation and especially of believing Christian communities seem to open up new avenues of reflection. Cooke follows these paths in an attempt to frame an experience-based pneumatology, offering a phenomenological description of selected spheres of power-economic, political, social, personal-as arenas to perceive the agency of the Spirit.

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