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Divine Monarchy, Divine Society: Trinitarian thought and socio-political change



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Abstract

The idea of a social doctrine of the Trinity, that ‘the trinity is our social programme’, has become commonplace in much of Christian thought today. This research puts twentieth century Trinitarian thought into perspective by taking a long historical view. Throughout Christian history, the assumption has been made that the inherent nature of God, and particularly the inter-personal relationships modelled by the persons of the Trinity, necessitates or validates particular social, political and ecclesiastical structures. In this brief paper the main historical focus is on England in the long seventeenth century, used here as a case study since it provides the natural laboratory of a context in which both Trinitarian thought and traditional understandings of the state were undergoing considerable upheaval. The use of the doctrine of the Trinity to justify monarchy is discussed, and then the ways in which this was modified during the revolutionary period is considered.