

I find John Brien's arguments generally erroneous and totally unconvincing. Looking at the synopsis he begins with two bald statements without offering any evidence. In fact the evidence is to the contrary – we only need to look at the prologue to John's gospel. Indeed the situation is rather the reverse, Gnostic Docetism which denied the humanity of Christ was one of the earliest heresies. It was not the second and third century church leaders who formulated the ideas of the divinity of Christ, but rather the writers of the NT. Item (x) fails to take into account that John says that creation was an act of the Father through Christ.

He says that if Christ was acting in his human nature his words would be to be disregarded, but Christ makes it clear that he was speaking the words given to him by the Father (John 8:28; 12:49).

He says that merely lumping together Father, Son and Spirit “has no theological significance” (page 20) – how can this be so when we are told to baptise in the name (not names) of Father Son and Spirit (Matthew 28:19) – this is clearly an act of great theological significance.

Rather than continue to attack what he says, I prefer to make the overwhelming case for:

- (i) Although he is one God is three and although he is three God is one;
- (ii) the divinity of Christ;
- (iii) the fact that the Holy Spirit is both a personality and divine

Although he is one God is three and although he is three God is one

When Jesus was asked what the most important command was, he speaks of God being one (Mark 12:28-30). In the West we usually think in terms of one God – you believe in *a* God or you don't believe in *a* God. In Jesus' day most people apart from the Jews believed in a plurality of gods. The Bible affirms the uniqueness of God (Isaiah 45:5-6). Even the demons get it right (James 2:19).

Therefore God being Trinity cannot contradict his being one. This is a mystery – but can we really expect to completely understand an infinite, omnipotent and omniscient God? Would we want to worship a God we could completely understand?

In the OT God speaks of himself in the plural (Genesis 1:26 (“Let *us* make man..”), Genesis 11:7 (“Come let *us* go down ..”), Isaiah 6:8 (“Who will go for *us*”). When God creates it's through his Spirit (Genesis 1:2). The Spirit clearly has a personality in his own right apart from God and Christ (2 Samuel 23:2; 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; 1 Chronicles 12:18; 1 Chronicles 28:12; Nehemiah 9:20, 30; Psalms 51:11; Psalms 106:33; Isaiah 63:10). In Psalm 45:4-7 we see God being anointed by God – this can only make sense if God is plural. In Genesis 18:1-2 Abraham sees God manifest himself as *three* persons, which is surely significant.

In the NT John 1:1 makes it clear that Jesus is God (see divinity of Christ below) and that God is plural.

We're told that to be Christians we must be baptised into the name (not names in the plural) of Father, Son and Spirit (Matthew 28:19). This makes no sense unless these three are all God – parts of the trinity. The use of the word 'name' in the singular speaks loudly of the

unity of the three elements of the trinity. The persons of the Trinity all act together in harmony (Mark 1:9-11).

This all makes sense if there is a plurality to God – if he’s not one person but three.

The Trinity is not how God is to us but how God is in himself. Father Son and Spirit are not roles but eternal identities. God is community. How could God be love if he had nothing to love? C S Lewis said the phrase God is love can have no meaning unless God is at least two persons. Indeed God’s other qualities like righteousness and justice also arguably require a relationship.

God’s invitation to us in eternal life is to join him in the fellowship of the Trinity, although we must return to where we began and affirm that although he is three God is one.

The Divinity of Christ

Really we need look no further than the beginning of John’s Gospel where the prologue makes this absolutely clear. Verse 1 states that the Word was God (not that God was the Word), whilst verses 14 and 15 make it absolutely clear that this ‘Word’ is Jesus Christ.

Indeed to deny Jesus as God’s son is to completely reject God (1 John 2:23).

Jesus forgave sins (Mark 2:5) which was God’s right alone and indeed Christ if to judge the whole world (John 5:22). Could anyone less than God judge the whole world?

John 16:15 tells us that everything which belongs to God belongs to Christ, what clearer indication could there be of Christ’s divinity?

John 14:9 makes it clear that Jesus is God, as does Philippians 2:6; Colossians 2:9; and Romans 9:5. Psalm 110:1 is also significant – Jesus said that this was about him.

The Divinity and Personality of the Holy Spirit

The fact that the Holy Spirit is a person is made clear by John 16:13; and Galatians 4:6. As we’ve already seen we’re to be baptised in the name of the Spirit (Matthew 28:19), which would make no sense if the Spirit were not divine.. We’re told that the Spirit will testify (John 15:26) – “... *he* will testify ...”. The Spirit is said to be a counsellor (John 14:16-17).