

Examining “*Should You Believe in the Trinity*” (A publication of the Watchtower Society)

By Lorri MacGregor

In 1989, Jehovah’s Witnesses received a publication designed to destroy the Christian belief in the Trinity, the belief that the One, True, Almighty God of the Bible has revealed Himself in three Persons, The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. We were anxious to check out this publication with its many quotes supposedly in support of the Watchtower position. This was made extremely difficult since the Watchtower deliberately left off page numbers, authors, publishers, and edition years, etc. However, we have waded through every book quoted that we could find, and so we present our examination of this publication and its web of deceit concerning Almighty God and His true identity.

The *Encyclopedia Americana* is quoted to attempt to convey the impression that “confusion is widespread” regarding the Trinity. Note also that the Watchtower ridicules the concept that fully knowing the nature of God could be “beyond the grasp of human reason.” Here is the Watchtower quote from page 4:

“Beyond the Grasp of Human Reason.”

This confusion is widespread. The *Encyclopedia Americana* notes that the doctrine of the Trinity is considered to be “beyond the grasp of human reason.”

This quote appears complete, with a period after the last word put in by the Watchtower. Is this how the quote really reads in its context? Let’s finish the quote—it really doesn’t end with a period, but with a comma, and goes on to say,

It is held that although the doctrine is beyond the grasp of human reason, it is, like many of the formulations of physical science, not contrary to reason, and may be apprehended (though it may not be comprehended) by the human mind.

So, although we may not completely comprehend the infinite God with our finite minds, we do need to accept His revelation of His nature to us through the pages of the Bible, that is, by Divine revelation. There is no confusion.

The publication *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* also quotes *A Dictionary of Religious Knowledge*, supposedly making Trinitarians appear confused. Of course, the Society left out the author of the quote, the page number, the date, the publisher, etc., so the quote could not be easily traced.

Although many diligently searched, this publication could not be found in major libraries, etc., so we were doubly grateful when the Watchtower provided a photocopy to one of our readers, after an appeal through our Newsletter. Otherwise we probably never would have found this obscure, out-of-print publication from 1875! Here is the Watchtower statement from page 4 of *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*:

Thus, *A Dictionary of Religious Knowledge* says: “Precisely what that doctrine is, or rather precisely how it is to be explained, Trinitarians are not agreed among themselves.”

We found this to be lifted out of context yet again, as just prior to this quote, the article said, “It is certain, however, that from the apostolic times they paid worship to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, addressed to them their prayers, and included them in their doxologies.”

The Dictionary of Religious Knowledge then goes on to say, "The Bible represents God to us as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It represents them as equally entitled to our highest reverence, affection, and allegiance."

Once again, the Trinity was believed by the apostolic fathers and is believed by true Christians down to this day. Shame on the Watchtower Society for trying to mislead its readers by quoting an obscure publication from 1875, out of print and unavailable. Dishonest and misleading! Jehovah's Witnesses should ask "Why?"

Continuing on page 4, as usual the Watchtower "goes for the throat" of the Catholics and lifts fragments of quotes which appear to support their doctrine and discredit the Catholics, from whom they draw the majority of their followers.

We can understand, then, why the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* observes: "There are few teachers of Trinitarian theology in Roman Catholic seminaries who have not been badgered at one time or another by the question, 'But how does one preach the Trinity?'" And if the question is symptomatic of confusion on the part of the students, perhaps it is no less symptomatic of similar confusion on the part of their professors.

Again, no page number was given for the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, but we found it on page 304. The article started on page 295 and strongly supports the Trinity, giving its history. This Catholic article exposed the Arian heresy for the lie that it is, and from which the Jehovah's Witnesses draw their doctrine on Jesus Christ, namely that he's merely an extra god and the Archangel Michael. Space permits us only one brief quote from the lengthy article,

... Tertullian's grasp of the sense in which God is one and the sense in which God is three was impressively clear and systematic... thus came into being the doctrine of relative properties to explain in some measure the non contradictory plurality of Persons in the one unique Godhead. (p. 297)

The struggle the Catholic Church had with the Trinity was to put the concept of the three Persons in the Godhead into easily-understood language for its students. Nothing derogatory to the Trinity itself was even hinted at.

Still trying to find a quote calling the Trinity "confusing" and failing, the Watchtower takes a legitimate quote but lifts it out of its context and introduces it with their own slanted words, making the quote appear to agree with them. The deceptive example below is repeated over and over in this publication.

"Not a God of Confusion."

How could such a confusing doctrine originate? The *Catholic Encyclopedia* claims, "A dogma so mysterious presupposes a Divine revelation." (Page 4)

The actual sentence quoted is correct. Another way to word it might be: "It is obvious that a doctrine (or belief) so mysterious requires a Divine revelation." If we read on in the same article in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, we find under "II. Proof of Doctrine from Scripture,"

The phrase "in the name" [Greek inserted here] affirms the Godhead of the Persons and their unity of nature.

It is incredible that the phrase "in the name" should be here employed were not all the Persons mentioned equally Divine. Moreover the use of the singular, "name," and not the plural, shows that these Three Persons are that One Omnipotent God in whom the Apostles believed.

Besides these passages there are many others in the Gospels which refer to one or other of the Three Persons in particular and clearly express the separate personality and Divinity of each.

The true context is revealed by the entire quote, which is why the Watchtower did not use it!

This misleading, dishonest booklet, *Should you Believe in the Trinity?*, also uses dots and gaps in quotes to try to support their view. The quote below is an example of the use of “...” by the Watchtower to omit those phrases which make the quote complete and understandable, and at the same time mislead the reader into thinking that the person quoted agrees with the Watchtower. This quote continues on right after the ones shown above, without so much as a paragraph separating it. And as usual, this quote is not finished.

Catholic scholars Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler state in their *Theological Dictionary*: “The Trinity is a mystery... in the strict sense..., which could not be known without revelation, and even after revelation cannot become wholly intelligible.”

Let’s just clear up this attempt at deception by finishing the quote:

Its import is as follows. (1) The one God exists in three “Persons” (Subsistences) which are the one divine Nature (the one divine essence, the divine substance) and therefore are equally eternal and almighty.

The article by Rahner and Vorgrimler states the doctrine of the Trinity, and does not speak of it as error, as the Watchtower publication would like to imply. A good encyclopedia or dictionary should state the facts as they are, and not voice an opinion. We also must be careful not to reject something just because we don’t understand our infinite God with our finite minds. We must accept the revelation of God’s nature as the Bible presents it, and not necessarily as our logical minds would like to conveniently classify the eternal God so we can “know it all.”

Jehovah’s Witnesses love to point out the word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible, and we agree, it is not. We would also point out to the Jehovah’s Witnesses that the word “Theocracy” is not found in the Bible, but is constantly found in their publications and in their speech. “But,” they protest, “it is merely a good word describing the Bible concept of government by God.” To which we reply, “Exactly.” And the word “Trinity” is a good word describing the Bible concept of the Only True God manifesting Himself in three Persons, and therefore the three are the One, True Almighty God. It is certainly permissible to use words not in the Bible to describe Biblical concepts.

Moving on to page 5 of *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, we find that the Watchtower constantly mocks Christianity for their statement which calls the triune God concept a “mystery.” Here is a typical attack.

However, contending that since the Trinity is such a confusing mystery, it must have come from divine revelation creates another major problem. Why? Because divine revelation itself does not allow for such a view of God: “God is not a God of confusion.” (1 Corinthians 14:33, Revised Standard Version)

Again, the Watchtower chooses fragments of scriptures and ignores parts of the Bible that correct them. From their own, “Kingdom Interlinear Translation” we note Colossians 2:2. Note the word “mystery” in connection with God’s nature. We quote the English words found under the Greek text:

“comprehension, into accurate knowledge of the mystery of the God, of Christ, in whom are all the treasures of the wisdom and of knowledge hidden away (ones).” (KIT)

So, even their own Kingdom Interlinear Translation shows there is a “mystery” concerning God. They choose not to acknowledge this fact, even though it is shown in their own bibles.

Next time we will explore more deceptions concerning the Trinity by the Watchtower Society of Jehovah’s Witnesses.