

**OUR UNITARIAN  
FAITH, EXPLAINED  
TO YOUNG PEOPLE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649446704

Our Unitarian Faith, Explained to Young People by J. T. Marriott

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OUR UNITARIAN FAITH.

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EXPLAINED TO

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BY

J. T. MARRIOTT.

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt diligently teach them to thy children.”

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LONDON:  
SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION,  
ESSEX HALL, ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.  
1890.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

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Nobody among us would claim the right to speak for the Unitarian body at large. In the following pages I speak for myself. But I have no doubt that such thoughts as are here set forth do in substance prevail amongst members of our household of faith. I gladly avail myself of the opportunity which is afforded me by the Sunday School Association, of publishing these "addresses" on Unitarian Doctrine, because I strongly hold the opinion that it is due from us to our young people to help them to form some definite views concerning the religion which is dear to ourselves. This little book follows the lines, and freely reproduces passages, of a previous one, "Our Unitarian Faith for Young People," now out of print. I have preserved the same direct and oral form of address, in the hope that my presentation of a difficult subject may thus be made more interesting to young readers.

J. T. MARRIOTT.

Manchester, October, 1880.

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# Our Unitarian Faith.

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## CHAPTER I

### *IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY TAUGHT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?*

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."—*Eph. iv. 6.*

THE question I want to put to you, my young friends, in the present address, is this—Is the doctrine of the Trinity taught in the New Testament? And if I give you *my* answer to that question it is not that I want you merely to take my word for it; I should like you to look for yourselves and give your *own* answer. We will presently open our books and see what is there written in passages which are generally supposed to refer to the Trinity. But before we open the New Testament, perhaps some of you want to know what "the Trinity" means. The word is not at all an easy one to understand, so I will try to explain it to you. The first part of it, "Tri," means three; the second is shortened from unity, and means *one*. The whole word, fully drawn out, would be Tri-unity, and would signify three-in-one. Now, the majority of Christian

people suppose (they do not seriously think about it, but believe just what has always been told them in church or chapel), that they must apply this notion of three-in-one to the Divine Being whom they worship. They suppose that God has somehow three parts in his nature, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They suppose that some good is to be derived from their regarding God in this manner as a Trinity. The hymns they sing often set forth the idea in the closing verse; they use the formula—"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," in the service of baptism; and they bring into all their ceremonies some mention of God's threeness, if I may use the expression, as if the belief in that were of very great importance. We, on the other hand, belong to a community in which that doctrine is not believed. We worship in a Unitarian church, that is, in a church where God is thought of as one Being, one Person, one Life, and in no sense three. And I am going to try and show you, in this and in my next address, why we believe that God is one. I begin by asking if you can find the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament, because, as you know, it is to the New Testament that Christian people first look for guidance as to what they ought to believe. Churchmen, Wesleyans, Baptists, all Christendom indeed, will tell you that they get their belief from the New Testament. That is their text-book. Very well, then; we want to see if the New Testament really does teach the Trinity. We are about to honestly deal with the question, if in these writings there is anything to warrant the belief that God has a threefold nature, as people seem to think; or if such a belief is not rather an error which has in some way

crept into the Christian faith in later times. My own reading of the New Testament leads me to say that it is what might be called a Unitarian collection of writings from beginning to end; that it contains no Trinitarian statement whatever; that the God of the Gospels is simply the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. But I must not beg the question. Let us look and see.

The first point to which I must call your attention is that the word "Trinity" is not in the New Testament. If you search from the beginning of *Matthew* to the end of *Revelation* you will not find any word that in the original Greek corresponds, even ever so remotely, to our word Trinity. Of course all scholars know this perfectly well, but it is worth while thus to point it out to you, if only for the purpose of setting you thinking. Still, our Trinitarian friend will perhaps argue, the *idea* may be there, the teaching may be there, without the word. Certainly, that is a fair contention; so we will turn now, if you please, to any passage that may seem, according to our Trinitarian friend, to teach the divine threeness, along with the divine oneness. Those of you who have got the authorised version of the New Testament with you kindly open it at *I John* v. 7. You will there read: "For there are three that bear record in heaven,—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." Now, we all feel at once that this passage is very striking, very explicit, and very much to the point. What have we to say of it? I ask you to observe, in the first place, that it is the only passage in the New Testament that contains any direct reference to three heavenly objects. I will examine it with you in a moment; but before doing so I should like just to say how strange it seems that a doctrine