

**THE DOOM OF THE
MAJORITY
OF MANKIND**

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The Doom of the Majority of Mankind by Samuel J. Barrows

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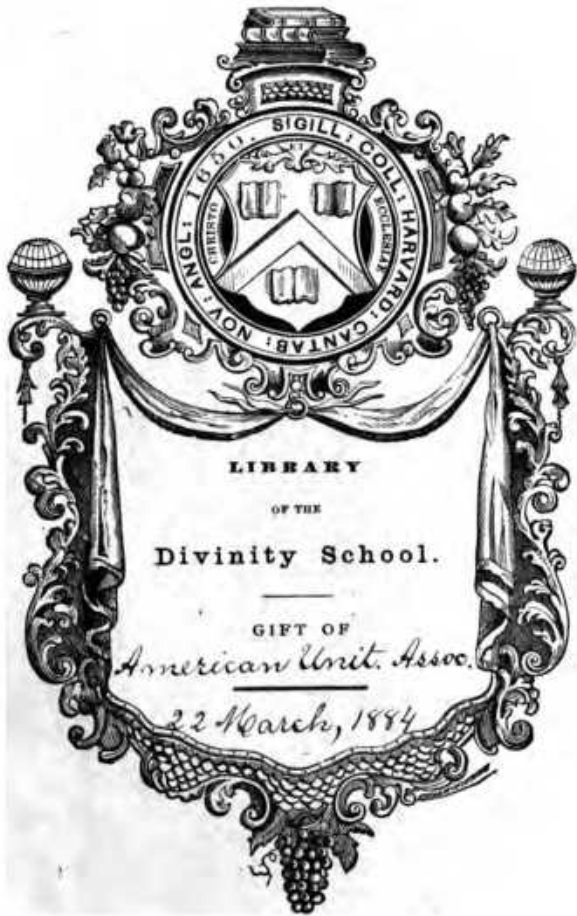
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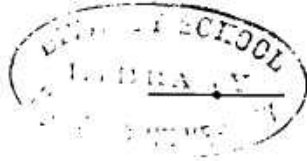
OF THE

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BY

June

SAMUEL J. BARROWS.



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PREFACE.

THE great discussions in theology, both in England and America, during the last few years, have turned mainly upon two points. The first of these is the relation of humanity to the Future Life. In England the discussion on this subject was powerfully stimulated by Canon Farrar's book, "Eternal Hope." In America the debate, rekindled by this book, received a new direction and an independent impulse from the so-called Andover Controversy; one result of which was that an Orthodox clergyman, called to a professorship by the Trustees of that institution, was denied confirmation by the Board of Visitors, because of his charitable speculations on this subject. Candidates for ordination were afterwards excluded from Orthodox pulpits for the same reason. A conspicuous feature in this discussion has related to the destiny of those — involving the great majority of the race — who have no opportunity in this life to accept or even to become acquainted with the Orthodox theory of salvation. With this question before it, the American Board, at its last annual missionary meeting at Portland, refused to concede that the heathen might have a probation after death, and reaffirmed the motive for missionary work to be the necessity of saving them from an endless hell.

The second great subject of theological discussion has been the scientific criticism of the Bible. The influence of Dutch and German criticism has penetrated to the very centre of Calvinistic strongholds.

These two theological questions are much more closely related than they seem to be at first. The Orthodox estimate of the Bible as an infallible book has had much to do in determining what view shall be taken of the future destiny of the race. It was a deep conviction of the close relationship of these two questions which led Rev. George E. Ellis, D.D., of Boston, to affirm in a public address, that before Orthodoxy could revise its creeds, it must revise its estimate of the Bible. In the prolonged discussion which this paper awakened, an incidental statement of Dr. Ellis, that certain Scripture texts "are alleged as certifying that the vast majority of the human race are to be victims of endless woe," was challenged by an Orthodox clergyman, Rev. J. L. Withrow, D.D., of Park Street Church, Boston, who characterized it as an absolute and abominable misrepresentation of Orthodoxy. As editor of the "Christian Register," the writer replied at length in the columns of that paper, aiming to fix upon Orthodoxy the responsibility of teaching this doctrine of the doom of the majority of mankind.

This debate, and the questions that grew out of it, have furnished the material for this book. In the first three chapters the evidence presented in the original article has been largely augmented, especially with reference to modern authorities. In the fourth chapter important admissions and criticisms of Evangelical writers are presented concerning the moral difficulties

of this doctrine. Attempted mitigations, and features which are still unrelieved by these palliations, are considered in succeeding chapters; while in a final chapter attention is invited to what seems to us a more promising and, indeed, the only adequate solution.

Two things have become evident in this discussion. First, that Orthodoxy is not wholly ready to revise its belief; and secondly, that its beliefs are constantly suffering revision without its consent. The tenacity, painfully apparent, with which Orthodox bodies hold to ancient standards and traditional interpretations of Scripture, has not prevented the action of other solvents. The old creeds cannot be exposed to the atmosphere of to-day without disintegration. The progress of science, philosophy, and ethics has rendered progress in theology imperative. It has also become evident to an increasing minority of Christians that Orthodoxy must revise its teachings. But no revision will satisfy the demands of an enlightened liberal thought and sentiment, which does not reconsider and restate the relations of God to human destiny, and reaffirm, with clarion voice, the great truth that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him," and that "as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are the sons of God."

No apology is needed for any warmth and earnestness in dealing with a dogma so distressing to the feelings, so alien to the moral sense, as the Doom of the Majority of Mankind; but earnestness and warmth are not inconsistent, we trust, with kindly feeling and fairness of statement. In exposing the

errors of Orthodoxy, we are not ungrateful for its truths.

No better proof of the timeliness of this volume can be given than that Orthodoxy is earnestly seeking for a solution of the problems of which it treats. That solution may not be reached in the present discussion, but its attainment is only postponed. Fundamental questions in ethics or religion are not decided finally until they are decided rightly. They may be evaded or deferred; but they will reappear, and knock at the door of the reason and the conscience till by their importunity they command a hearing. The disposition of Evangelical Christians to grapple anew with these old questions is a grateful sign.

There is a liberal spirit working through all the sects to-day. No sect has any monopoly of it, and none can escape its influence. It is not merely pulling down, but it is building "with a sure and ample base," upon broader and deeper foundations. We hail with joy every conquest that it makes. Let the liberal elements in every branch of the Christian Church join hands for the consummation of this constructive work. What are differences in polity, ritual, and denominational traditions, compared with the work of purifying Christianity from its corruptions, developing its best ideals, and making it truly representative of universal religion?

Boston, May, 1883.