

Benson shows an all too fundamental failing. There is a flavour of Manichaeism that keeps on asserting itself and which confuses the issue all the more when there is a lack of clarity over the nature of the body and soul, or worse still, over the ultimate and the means to that ultimate. The nature and purpose of Grace is confused, and it would seem that the author assumes that most if not all grace is a *gratia gratis data* when he says: 'All those riches (of God) are not merely for itself (my individual soul); for *it receives nothing for itself*'. (p. 28.) (The parentheses are mine.) There are two errors apparent here, on the nature of grace, and the primary purpose of every soul in this world which is his OWN INDIVIDUAL SALVATION. 'The body at the last day will rise again because it has the body of Christ within it' may be a nice idea, but is it true? (p. 37.) Supernatural grace, that is supernatural life, resides in the soul; and yet we read: 'The indulgence of all the natural life of the body is the destruction of the supernatural life of the body'. (p. 37.) This might be true had the author said that an over-indulgence of the natural life of the body is the death of the supernatural life of the soul, since the body should be in subjection to the soul. Mortification is never an end in itself. A religious rule (which always implies mortification) is a means to an ultimate end—God. Yet Fr Benson says: 'We must understand that our rule is intended to be an inconvenience. It is intended to hinder us.' (p. 49.) It is impossible to allow this negative attitude to pass unchallenged; it is not the true authentic christian tradition at all.

When we come to the old bone of contention—obedience—we find Fr Benson saying outright: 'It is in the surrender of the judgment that the chief point of obedience is found'. (p. 50.) There is so much that is very good in these pages that it is a pity they have been influenced by an undercurrent of basic misconceptions or confusions. Fr Benson's sincerity is writ large on every page and so is his zeal; his personal austerity is advertised—albeit unconsciously—by every instruction. No doubt he never even thought his talks would one day be published, and therefore self-glorification is as foreign to him in these words of his as God is to the devil. Please God, he now sees all he has here written in its true perspective. Much of the advice given in these pages should be taken to heart by all who sincerely seek God in the religious life.

DOMINIC J. SIRE, O.P.

In EIGHT DECISIVE BOOKS OF ANTIQUITY (Sheed and Ward, 1952; 16s.), the late F. R. Hoare very usefully summarises the part played by certain books in laying the foundations of civilisation. The eight books are: *The Laws of Hammurabi*, *The Book of the Dead*, *The Torah*, *The Epics of Homer*, *The Laws of Manu*, *Sayings of Confucius*, *Plato's Republic* and *Aristotle's Politics*.  
D.N.