

recited in Turkey on ceremonial occasions, and it has a more or less liturgical status. There are nine sections in it, the more important being the invocation to Allah, the account of Muhammed's birth with attendant miracles, and the description of the *Miradj* or Heavenly Journey. This translation is too weak in its handling of English verse to make it a satisfying work on its own account, but the introduction is very good and informative. Among the material provided is a long description of the poem's recital in the eighteenth century; and the traditional tune (very 'non-European') is transcribed in ordinary notation. Altogether an interesting little book.

W.S.

MY LEADER IN LIFE. By George Burns, S.J. (Burns Oates; 2s. 6d.)

Father Burns has done a fine piece of work: a book for boys and girls from the age of reason till their death, though it provides first of all for that most critical of all ages, the 'school leaving' age. It is not exactly a prayer book, though it does contain some prayers, all practical, simple and straightforward; it is not exactly a book of instruction, though it has plenty of good advice to give; it is not exactly a book of meditations, though it certainly provides much food for thought. It combines the qualities of all three with something more besides, for Father Burns has achieved that balance of dignity and informality so essential and at the same time so elusive in talking to young people. He has produced a book which any boy, and no doubt girl too, would be proud to possess, a pocket companion to the Catholic Faith.

The foundations of doctrine are explained simply and attractively and then shown in their applications: important emphasis is laid on the practice of a good Catholic life as well as knowledge, and the important part prayer must play in this practice. The reader will want to re-read and ponder, particularly the section on Our Lady: devotion to Our Lady is shown as something real and beautiful and the ingenuous spirit forestalls any spurious charge of sentimentality. Burns Oates must be congratulated on a most attractive format—a not unimportant item when producing a book for boys and girls.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

OUR GREATEST TREASURE. By John Kearney, C.S.Sp., with a memoir of the author by Edward Leen, C.S.Sp. (Burns Oates; 8s. 6d.)

Readers of Father Kearney's earlier works will welcome this posthumous publication for the brief biography of the author which helps towards a deeper understanding of his writings.

The body of the book is written in the downright foursquare style of his earlier works which, though it may deter the more fastidious,

clothes ideas of great value. The 'greatest treasure' is the gift of Faith, and Father Kearney discusses first of all the meaning of this gift to a Catholic, and his explanation of our obligations is redolent of a profound personal gratitude to God; while his obvious pride in being a Catholic never leads him to assume either an intolerant or a superior attitude to non-Catholics. The danger of mixed marriages, of modern snares such as the cinema, radio and press is trenchantly condemned. The chapter on the instruction of children and family influence in fostering the gift of Faith is outstanding, consisting for the most part of quotations from Papal declarations on the responsibilities of parents in this matter. It says all there is to be said on the subject, but which, unhappily, is not said often enough. We might well take a leaf out of Hitler's book and present a copy of some such symposium of Catholic teaching on the family to all newly married couples.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE BISHOP'S CONFESSION. By Hugh Shearman. (Faber; 8s. 6d.)

There is much to be said for the gentle deceit of a novelist who 'edits' an autobiography. The conventions of fiction—for they are not dead—should be eminently dispensable; in their place the emphasis may fall entirely on the tension within a man, on that immanent agony of memory and motive which may never reach out to the full responsibility of action, but which is yet most wholly human and which the novelist may most properly seek to unfold.

Mr. Shearman's book is a memoir found among the papers of the late Right Revd. Percival MacPeake, D.D., Lord Bishop of the United Diocese of Bangor, Dungannon and Strabane. Childhood in the prosperous home of a Belfast linen-merchant, Trinity, Dublin, curacies in their accustomed order, a comfortable rectory and finally the bishopric of the Protestant Church of Ireland—the story, one supposes, is not so strange. But the successful career is only the ironical backcloth to a tragedy which is none the less profound for its hiddenness. The torment of a child awakening, in his small but vivid world, to the paradox of things does not die away, but expands as the years pass, so that faith itself fails, and there is left 'free choice . . . a process that will never be done while there is life and movement. It has no rules, and its course can never be inevitably defined. It runs with the movement of life. It is true, living religion.'

Mr. Shearman is not concerned to point a moral, and the real greatness of his novel lies in its subtle and convincing portrait of a sincere man's attempt to reconcile the war of the mind with an external calm and propriety of career. And yet the bishop is not a hypocrite. He recognises the problem, and takes the advice of the