anticipations of his English forerunners, at least as regards the task of adapting the Christian message to the new world brought to light and into being by science.

I suspect that many of Teilhard's Catholic admirers will be made a little uneasy by this praise. Part at least of Teilhard's fascination has been that he emerged as a sort of Melchizedek, without father or mother; and it is disconcerting to find him admitted as it were to honorary membership of the Athenaeum in the company of Lloyd Morgan and Bishop Barnes. Again, Dr Raven emphasizes certain aspects or tendencies of Teilhard's views (such as the confusion of the natural and the supernatural orders) which his Catholic apologists would probably prefer to play down or balance against Teilhard's explicit disclaimers. With most of Teilhard's critics Dr Raven deals remarkably gently; but Professor Medawar's review in *Mind* has clearly offended him deeply, probably because Professor Medawar refused to take Teilhard's intellectual standing seriously. The present reviewer shares Professor Medawar's opinion of Teilhard as a thinker, though he is prepared to grant with Dr Raven that Teilhard was a 'seer'; although again, before the appearance of the recent *monitum* of the Holy Office, he had reached the conclusion that Teilhard's visions were hardly compatible with Catholic orthodoxy. This is not the place to attempt yet another estimate of Teilhard's significance as thinker or seer; any such estimate would have to take into account books like Dr Raven's, not so much, it must be admitted, for what they substantially say, as for the fact that they have been written at all, in terms of such apocalyptic enthusiasm.

CORNELIUS ERNST, O.P.

PROPHET OF THE NEW AGE. The Life and Thought of Sir George Stapleton, F.R.S., by Robert Waller; Faber and Faber; 36s.

On page four of this book the writer says: 'I believe that to communicate Stapleton's point of view to the nation as a whole would be to advance civilization, to help us to take the essential leap forward that we need at this critical time in our history.' That is bad English and it is a fair specimen of the book. Stapleton also wrote poor English full of similar dead words and phrases and metaphors. Yet he was a great scientist, who changed the practice of farming and changed landscapes; he was a discoverer, an inspiring teacher and organizer, a man of vivid and rich personality, of charm, of audacious vision. This book is about him. It is an important book and in parts excellent. The story of Stapleton's late development, the manner in which his interest in grassland was awakened after his second period at Cambridge, the stirring of his intrepid curiosity about the effects of basic slag on swards, his documented, profound meditation on patches in the Cotswolds and in Welsh Cardiganshire, his experiments leading to the Plant Breeding Station at Aberystwyth - it is all an exciting creative record, well told, of compelling interest. The author writes

best when most detailed. He is however too chary of dates. In biography precise dates are a need and the 'brief chronology' at the end of this book is not good enough. There ought to be a bibliography of Stapleton's published writings. There ought to be a tabulation of the strains and varieties of grasses bred at the Aberystwyth station during his directorship. But the interpretation of Stapleton's work and of its scientific and practical value is well done and the book has the merit of being the work of a scientist in the Stapleton mould.

As a story of the man the book fails. The author preaches, moralizes, even preaches at Stapleton. When in the story Stapleton falls ill or has a nervous breakdown, the author prescribes philosophical remedies. One wonders just how well did he know Stapleton. But, to quote again, 'he communicates Stapleton's point of view' and there is wise, sound conservative statement of social principles in the final sections of the work.

SAUNDERS LEWIS

AN OLD WOMAN'S REFLECTIONS, by Peig Sayers, translated from the Irish by Seamus Ennis and introduced by W. R. Rogers; Oxford University Press, 16s.

It is nearly twenty years since Robin Flower introduced Peig Sayers to English readers in his 'Western Island', with her unforgettable greeting of 'The devil eat you between earth and sky! Get out!' It was to him that she told the tale of how her mother was made to appear to her father by means of tinker's magic before Peig was ever thought of, and to him that she prophesied 'I shall be alone in the end of my life, but it is God's will and the way of the world, and we must not complain'. Now Peig is dead, or as she would say 'on the way of truth', and her stories and reminiscences come, now that the old island life is gone, to make a Blasket trilogy along with 'Twenty Years A-Growing' and 'The Islandman'. One was so very conscious of all the matriarchal figures in the lives of Maurice O'Sullivan and Tomas O'Crohan, that it always seemed highly desirable that one of them should one day speak in the first person, and tell us about the Blasket from her angle. Maurice O'Sullivan saw it all through the eyes of a boy and a youth, and the careless, timeless enjoyment of his early days, and the freshness and simplicity of his speech came through in the most perfect of translations. O'Crohan was a bit of an oddity (perhaps it had something to do with not being weaned until he was four), delighting to bring out the grotesque in every situation, but again, his was a purely narrative gift. Peig, however, was always given to reflection, and particularly so in her old age. As one might expect, the book which has been compiled from her story tellings and conversations has a depth and a wisdom that one could not expect to find in her companion authors of the Blasket.

'I was often standing here studying the works of the creator', she says at the end, 'and tasting his royal sweetness in my heart. Everything he created was a