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Incorporating Science News Letter

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COVER: Two days after their scheduled July 15 launches from opposite sides of the earth, a Soviet Soyuz spacecraft with two cosmonauts and a U.S. Apollo spacecraft with three astronauts are to dock in space and remain linked for 44 hours in the first joint manned space mission. Diplomacy and technology have top billing, but five joint experiments and four Apollo-only experiments are to be carried out. See p. 10. (Illustration: NASA)

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JULY 5, 1975

LETTERS

Stopping bad bugs

I must compliment you on the excellent article "Stopping Bad Bugs at the Border" by Joan Arehart-Treichel (SN: 6/14/75, p. 389).

An article like this makes it just that much easier for people to understand why it is so necessary to comply with quarantine regulations and for travelers to part with those mangoes or insects from abroad that they thought they just had to have.

We also appreciated the sidebar, "How scientists aggravate the problem." In order to make the scientific community aware of importation regulations, we recently published a pamphlet, *How to Move Live Pests, Pathogens, and Disease Vectors of Plants*.

It would help us tremendously, if you could inform your readers that this publication is available, free of charge, from:

USDA, APHIS Information
Room 1154 South Building
Washington, D.C. 20250

Mimi Whitefield
Plant Protection and Quarantine Branch
USDA Animal and Plant
Health Inspection Service
Washington, D.C.

Hoyle's cosmology

"Cosmology According to Hoyle" is also cosmology according to the ancient Gnostics. Their cosmology closely resembles that indicated by Hoyle's new theory. It is so similar, in fact, that I am wondering whether or not Hoyle has had contact with the speculations of the Gnostics?

The Gnostics taught that the entire universe, vast as it is, is only a *cell*, separated by a barrier, or series of barriers, from other "worlds and generations." Hans Jonas in his excellent book, "The Gnostic Religion," explains how they conceived of the universe as a "vast prison whose innermost dungeon is the earth Around and above it the cosmic spheres are ranged like concentric enclosing shells."

The early Gnostics would have immediately understood and appreciated Mr. Hoyle's remark that "we may owe many aspects of our present-day world to remote ancestors on the other side of the barrier which has hitherto been thought to represent the origin of the universe." In an ancient Mandeian and Gnostic poem this thought is

stated as, "I went and found Truth/ as the stands at the outer rim of the worlds. . . ."

Donald Skirvin
Indianapolis, Ind.

(But as far as I know Hoyle's cosmology lacks a demiurgos.—Dietrick E. Thomsen)

Human evolution

It seems odd to me that there has recently been little theoretical speculation on the questions of human evolution during the past million years. The much older discoveries of Richard Leakey and others have thrown accepted ideas about human origins into a state of lively confusion. Various announcements reported in your magazine and elsewhere seem startling enough to have done the same for more recent events. Yet they apparently have not.

Jeffrey L. Bada's racemization dating at 50,000 B.P. of a skull of modern type found in California seems strongly at odds with the current premise that modern man developed in the vicinity of the Near East not much earlier than 40,000 B.P.

Recently suggested revisions of African dating schemes could transform Rhodesian man, an archaic form of *Homo sapiens*, from the latest stragglers among fully modern men (about 40,000-30,000 B.P.) into the earliest of pioneers among *Homo erectus* (perhaps 700,000-300,000 B.P.).

Discoveries in Kow Swamp in Australia, on the other hand, have presented us with *Homo erectus* apparently thriving happily no more than 30,000 years ago, at a time when even Neanderthal man is presumed to have given up the struggle against superior sapience.

What does all this mean? Are paradigms crumbling about our ears with no one taking notice? Is this scientifically and psychologically significant area of exploration being left by default to the ancient-astronaut people?

Cory Panshin
Perkasie, Pa.

(You're right. The history of the human race is being rewritten with new dating processes and with exciting discoveries around the world. Archaeologists and anthropologists, however, walk more softly and speak more quietly than do the ancient-astronaut people.—Ed.)

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