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Letters

Once in a red moon

The article summarizing the attempt of Humphreys and Waddington to date the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth (SN: 1/21/84, p. 40) is interesting, but the conclusion rests on tenuous evidence.

Humphreys and Waddington interpret Acts 2:20 as referring to an event associated with the crucifixion. As I am sure they know, this passage is a quotation of the prophet Joel (Joel 3:1-5). The introduction to the quotation in Acts (Acts 2:16) makes it clear that Peter's speech is applying the prophecy *not* to the crucifixion, but to the situation at hand, that is, the Pentecost experience of the disciples. In the subsequent part of Peter's speech where reference *is* made to the crucifixion (Acts 2:22-24, 32-33), there is no allusion to the supposed lunar phenomenon and the focus of interest is clearly on the Pentecost experience. It is thus quite dubious that the reference to the blood-red moon is intended as an allusion to some physical phenomenon occurring on the evening of the crucifixion. Since

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Cover: More than a score of golden lion tamarines born and raised in zoos may soon be released into the wild by a joint U.S.-Brazilian research team. Fewer of these lion-faced monkeys are born in the wild than in captivity, according to National Zoo estimates. (Photo courtesy of R. Mittermeier)



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this interpretation constitutes the entire basis on which Humphreys and Waddington choose April 3, A.D. 33 as the date of the crucifixion, their conclusion is extremely tenuous.

Moreover, the Synoptic Gospel accounts of the crucifixion mention a "darkness" covering the earth (Mark 15:33; Matthew 27:45; Luke 23:44), which might be interpreted as a solar eclipse. But they do not report any lunar phenomenon. Even this possible report of a solar eclipse cannot be taken as a definite reference to an observable phenomenon. "Darkness" was a symbol of the powers of evil and thus might be functioning here as a literary-theological device.

Humphreys and Waddington may have narrowed the possible dates of the crucifixion to two. But in my judgment it cannot be said that they have established which of the two is correct.

(Rev.) Thomas E. Hosinski, C.S.C.
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A solar eclipse can happen only at the time of new moon. Passover occurs at full moon, which

is when lunar eclipses do happen. The darkening of the sun on the afternoon of the crucifixion is attributed by Humphreys and Waddington and others to a Khamsin dust storm.

—D.E. Thomsen.

Fusion notes

I would like to clarify a few points in Dietrick Thomsen's article on my conjectures concerning fusion economics ("Economy of Fusion," SN: 1/7/84, p. 10).

I do not support a crash program to develop fusion power. However, I believe the U.S. fusion budget should be increased sufficiently to achieve and maintain a 5 to 10 year technological lead, and so that low cost approaches to fusion can be explored in parallel with the demonstration of scientific feasibility and the development of an expanded fusion engineering program.

In "fusion... has a... holy cause," "holy" is an exceedingly poor choice of words. "Noble" and "crucial" are the ideas that I want to express.

The first fusion reactor could not begin oper-

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