

Astronauts Find Science, Religion Allied

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A veteran of the longest manned voyage in space, astronaut William Pogue, says he wanted a more challenging assignment. So he has turned to Christian evangelism.

He is the latest of several astronauts who have taken up work of a religious nature in the wake of their space experience.

IT RESTORED a proper balance to his outlook on life, he says. Pogue, of Houston, Texas, resigned from the space program and joined the staff of *High Flight*, an evangelistic organization founded in 1972 by another former astronaut, James B. Irwin.

Irwin, who has since been on the speaking circuit attesting to faith, says his visit to the moon constituted a "spiritual awakening" for him.

Others have told of similar reactions.

Martin Caidin, science-fiction novelist and acquainted with many of the astronauts, told the American Baptist magazine:

THERE HAS been a tremendous change, very quietly, in the attitude and the lives of the men who have gone to the moon, where they can see the planet the way God must have seen it.

Noting that it is "strange that only when man left his world could he see it for the first time" Caidin adds, "Most of the men who came back had a spiritual experience."

A recent hint of how it happens came from Wernher von Braun, father of the U.S. rocket and space program, who says the "evidences of a Creator are so overwhelming."

VON BRAUN, who headed U.S. space-rocket development until 1972 when he joined Fairchild Industries in Maryland, said in an interview for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission:

“I just can’t envision this whole universe coming into being without a Divine Will. I cannot envision the creation without a Creator.”

Terming science and religion “sisters in the effort to comprehend the truths of reality, he said religion searches for the “intent of the Creator,” while science searches for the “laws of creation.”

HE NOTED that space-flight requires tremendous precision in calculating celestial movements, forces and timing, but he added that the exacting physical laws already had been built into nature, from which science merely learns.

“The laws are there,” he said. “The laws must have been laid down by somebody.”

Pogue, a native of Okemah, Oklahoma, who was one of three crewmen on Skylab 3 which set a record of 84 days in space in 1973, says the mission made him more firmly convinced of spiritual reality.

“There’s more to life than the body and intellect – it’s the soul,” he says. “There’s that kernel that most of us miss.”

IRWIN, OF Colorado Springs, Colorado, says of his 1971 moon trip that such an experience “has to make a man truly appreciate the creation of God, the infinite precision with which God controls the universe.”

But a deeper impression, he says, “was that I could feel God’s presence.”

Former astronaut, Frank Borman, who was on the first orbit of the moon in 1968, and who now is an aviation executive, has said he saw “evidence that God lives.”
