

## Columbuses of Space

Not since Christopher Columbus's first voyage to the "new world" have men embarked upon a journey comparable to that begun by Apollo 8 yesterday. The many manned orbital flights of the past decade, for all their hazard and glamour, were of a different, lower order of importance and difficulty. Even to speak of astronauts Borman, Lovell and Anders as being on a trip to the moon is to underestimate the full significance of their venture.

In the most literal sense, these three brave men are the Columbuses of space, the first of the human species to break the complete dominion of earth's gravity and to embark upon the exploration of the solar system. They are blazing a trail that innumerable men will follow in the millennia ahead, a path that others will extend to the farthest planets and then ultimately to the stars beyond the sun.

The Apollo 8 is an American space ship and its crew members are American citizens, but few things could be as inappropriate as any effort to turn this feat into an orgy of national pride and conceit. It is as much an accident of history that the United States enjoys priority at this stage of man's break-out into the universe as it was that a Russian, Yuri Gagarin, pioneered orbital flight. The real credit belongs to men of many countries and many centuries: Euclid and Archimedes, Newton and Kepler and Copernicus, Tsiolkovsky and Oberth and Goddard—the list could be continued indefinitely. It is an achievement of the human species and all men can take pride in this first step away from the planet that produced our kind.

It is a hostile and enormous realm that Apollo 8 has entered. The quarter-million-mile journey to the moon is only the first small step to the planets and the stars. To send fragile human beings into this literally unearthly environment—the most inhospitable and dangerous imaginable—will always be expensive and perilous, while the tasks men will want to accomplish there are infinite.

Space contains more than enough opportunity for fruitful application of the energies that all mankind can devote to its exploration, development and eventual settlement. There is no need here for wasteful rivalry deriving from earthbound nationalistic and political ambitions. In the face of the most breathtaking challenge humanity has ever faced, the only rational response is cooperation to make space an arena of unity and international brotherhood.

Man's hopes and prayers ride with the pre-Christmas voyagers. After them must come ships bearing the United Nations flag, each carrying men of different citizenship, language, political and religious convictions and color.