

to be an absolute and valid proof of this most important feature of modern theoretical Astronomy, viz., the globular shape of the Earth.

Is it too much to ask, that all these so-called proofs should be submitted to the critical examination of the day, and, that our teachers and text-books should be more guarded in what they put forth as Knowledge and Truth? In the absence of absolute proof for the spherical shape of the Earth, *the hypothetical character of this fundamental feature of the Copernican System, and, indeed, the hypothetical character of the whole Copernican System of Astronomy*, cannot be too strongly emphasised. That this is not an unreasonable demand upon the teaching of the present day, is, we believe, supported by the general statement of the Preface addressed *To the Reader*, in Copernicus' own book. The reader is there forewarned against accepting the new Copernican hypothesis as *truth*; and the Preface concludes with this remarkable pronouncement,—

"Neither let anyone, so far as hypotheses are concerned, expect anything certain from astronomy, since that science can afford nothing of the kind; lest, in case he should adopt for truth things feigned for another purpose, he should leave this study more foolish than he came."¹⁰

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¹⁰ "Neque quisquam, quod ad hypotheses attinet, quicquam certi ab astronomia expectet, cum ipsa nihil tale præstare queat, no, si in alium usum conficta pro veris arripiat, stultior ab hac disciplina discedat quam accesserit."

N. Copernicus, *De Revolutionibus Orbium Cælestium*, Libri VI (Editio Princeps), Nuremberg, 1543, Preface, *De Hypothesibus hujus Operis*. The authorship of this preface is now generally attributed to Andreas Osiander to whom was entrusted the publication of *De Revolutionibus*.