

# SCIENCE

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## ASTRONOMY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE STREAM OF HUMAN THOUGHT<sup>1</sup>

By President D. W. MOREHOUSE

DRAKE UNIVERSITY

Contemplated as one grand whole, Astronomy is the most beautiful monument of the human mind, the noblest record of its intelligence.—Laplace.

THE development of human thought frequently has been compared with the formation of a great river. No single source can be named as the origin. Numerous streams from wholly different sources flowing in diametrically opposite directions converge to give it being. Not infrequently it is difficult to determine which is the main stream and which is the tributary.

The changes in its course can not be detected from up-stream. It turns back upon itself at the most unexpected moment and winds in and out among barriers which for the moment seem absolutely insurmountable. As it widens, it becomes shallow and its

banks less distinct until new accretions cut deep gorges in the rocks of ignorance. Spring floods, too, have their analogy in the stream of thought. Samuel Butler's warning in Erewhon, "Woe to him who tampers with the banks while the flood is flowing," has been exemplified too frequently in astronomy.

## COSMOLOGY

As the various races emerge from their primitive concepts of cosmology, we find some far in advance of others. For example, the Hebrews and the Greeks have been held up to us from time immemorial as the greatest peoples of their time. The Hebrews excelled in their conception of the things of the spirit, and the Greeks in art, science and philosophy. The Hebrews, having little interest in science, disentangled religion from pseudo-science and crude materialism. The Greeks, with their transcendent genius, founded

<sup>1</sup> Address of the retiring vice-president and chairman of Section D—Astronomy, American Association for the Advancement of Science, New Orleans, December, 1931.

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