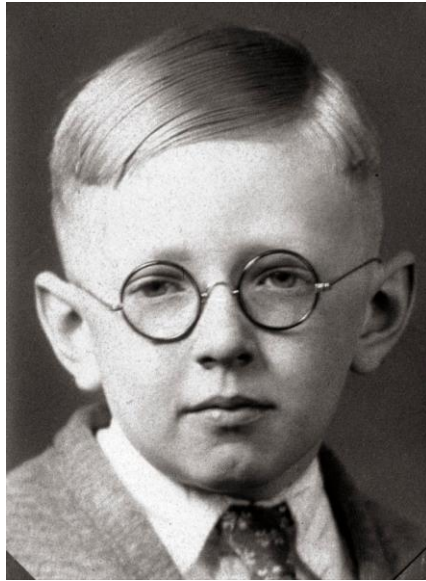


The Earth Is Not a Spinning Ball,  
Charlie Brown!

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**CHARLES M. Schulz** remembered a time when the Earth was flat. Not very fondly—and I’ll explain why in a moment. But in the early decades of his monumental fifty-year run drawing *Peanuts* for the Newspapers, its memory certainly hadn’t escaped him. The flat earth was still ever-present on the conscious backburner of many a-mind when Schulz premiered his strip in 1950. That has been my conclusion, at any rate, and I intend to use Charlie Brown to show it. *Mm-hmm*, the block head. Charlie Brown. Poor Charlie Brown. You know how Lucy tricked him every year into pursuing the ball but then pulled it away at the last possible second? AAUGH! This is like that. He was dupped again. Nearly everyone was. The earth is flat, and Charles M. Schulz played his part as a willing propagandist for NASA’s moon landing deception.

The evangelist **Wilbur Glenn Voliva** and his religious band of rebelrousing flat earthists likely had a part to play in the bad aftertaste. So successful were Voliva’s attacks on the space ball mythos, using the Bible and nationwide radio as his platform, that he even got *spook* **George Orwell** to openly address the possibility in his own newspaper column. But that was another generation. The Zetetics of the last century

were a dying breed, certainly not Schulz's spokespersons. *Whack-jobs* like Voliva and the last remaining Biblical literalists who'd given him a podium had already faded into the oblivion of America's Great Depression. Schulz was a veteran of the War. Under the flag of victory, the entire world's landscape had been changed—including its outlook. His was the "space age." And like so many of his generation, born into households of Christendom—including the baby-boomers whom they raised—Charles

*The Rise and Fall of Man*



The New Yorker, June 6, 1925

M. Schulz would die a secular humanist.

At the turn of the twentieth century the gloves came off. Scientism went to Total War. For men like Voliva and **William Jennings Bryan**, theirs was a last-ditch effort; and for anyone who decided to join them in the trenches by clinging to a literal interpretation of Scripture, the bombardments were nothing short of shock-and-awe. Western philosophy and secular humanism were pulverizing them. The situation was not helped by the fact that Bryan was an obvious Establishment spook. Spokesperson for the *globular* creationists all the same, chosen as part of the Media narrative to beat down and humiliate anyone who dared to oppose Academia's *evolving* narrative in the Scopes Monkey Trial.

Not long after, Voliva and his ministry succumbed to financial bankruptcy and controversy. By the 1950's, Bryan and Voliva were dead, and their last remaining loyal followers, who had dominated dinner-table conversations only two decades earlier, were few enough in number to be forgotten—or too old to be remembered. That was the plan all along.



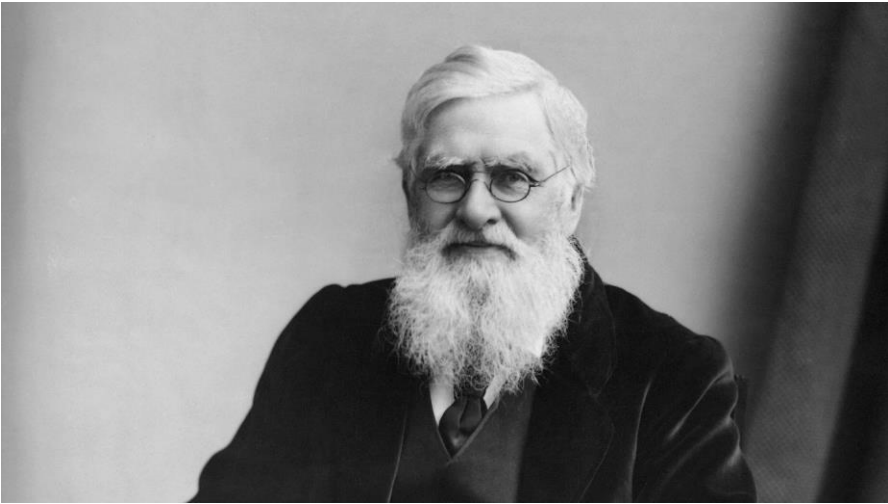
It may be safe to say that the flat earth *Movement*, if such a term should be accredited with geocentricism, officially began nearly a century earlier when, in the summer of 1838, seven years *after* **Charles Darwin** set off with Captain Robert Fitzroy for the Galapagos Islands, when the Englishman **Samuel Rowbotham** waded into the old Bedford Canal. With a telescope positioned 8 inches above its surface, Rowbotham watched a boat mounting a red flag positioned three feet above the water row unhindered from his view until it finally reached Welney Bridge—the approximate and total length of Bedford’s six miles. A globular earth, Rowbotham maintained, should have buried the top of the mast 11 feet below his line of sight. Rowbotham repeated his experiments several times over the years. His observations would be published in 1849 and subsequently expanded into a book, *Earth Not a Globe*, in 1865. But once again, it arrived several years too late. Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* landed on shelves five years earlier.

The year was 1870, and Zetetic supporter **John Hampden**, a Protestant rector’s son and recent Oxford drop out, began publishing various tracts demanding that the Church of England be reformed “on strict Protestant lines” in order that Genesis might be defended with literal accuracy. Hampden’s initial influence, **William Carpenter**, had been convinced that the earth was flat through one of Rowbotham’s speeches. Carpenter’s book, *Theoretical Astronomy Examined and Exposed*, had hoped to injure the growing scientific establishment rather than receive the intellectual snubbing that it did. Hampden therefore had an idea. He offered a wager which hoped to repeat Rowbotham’s experiment, proving that the earth was indeed flat. The January 12<sup>th</sup> issue of *Scientific Opinion*, a weekly journal, records Hampden’s qualm.

“What is to be said of the pretended philosophy of the 19th century, when not one educated man in ten thousand knows the shape of the earth on which he dwells? Why, it must be a huge sham! The undersigned is willing to deposit from £50 to £500, on reciprocal terms, and defies

all the philosophers, divines and scientific professors in the United Kingdom to prove the rotundity and revolution of the world from Scripture, from reason, or from fact. He will acknowledge that he has forfeited his deposit, if his opponent can exhibit, to the satisfaction of any intelligent referee, a convex railway, river, canal, or lake.”

—JOHN HAMPDEN



Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913)

**Alfred Russel Wallace** read the ad. Wallace was best known for independently conceiving the theory of evolution through natural selection, even jointly publishing his own work alongside contemporary Charles Darwin, which in turn prompted Darwin to ultimately send *On the Origin of Species* to the ink printer. At any rate, the bait was dangled, and Wallace tugged on the line—but not before first consulting his friend, **Sir Charles Lyell**, inventor of the geological column, asking whether he thought the challenge should be broached.

Lyell replied: “Certainly. It may stop these foolish people to have it plainly shown them.”

Wallace accepted the wager.

Rather than simply positioning a mobile target three feet above the surface, as Hampden had intended, Wallace set a line of sight 13 feet high in order to reduce the effects of atmospheric refraction and then added a pole halfway down the six-mile canal in order that a “hump” could be detected on the curvature of the earth. Hampden initially refused the demonstration. Wallace however succeeded. He detected a hump. Evolution was spared. After the Darwinist was awarded the bet by their mediator, editor of *The Field* sports magazine, Hampden subsequently distributed a pamphlet alleging foul play. Wallace *had cheated*, he said. And to prove that point, Hampden took him to court.

Though the court ultimately ruled that the wager had been invalid to begin with, the flat earthist was imprisoned for libel and furthermore threatening to kill a Darwinian. Speaking of which, for his injudicious involvement in a bet to “decide the most fundamental and established of scientific facts,” Wallace was criticized by Darwin’s contemporaries to no end. Until his dying days, the Bedford Level, Wallace maintained, was the foremost regret of his life.

He later wrote:

“The next matter was a much more serious one, and cost me fifteen years of continued worry, litigation, and persecution, with the final loss of several hundred pounds. And it was all brought upon me by my own ignorance and my own fault—ignorance of the fact so well shown by the late Professor de Morgan—that ‘*paradoxers*,’ as he termed them, can never be convinced, and my fault in wishing to get money by any kind of wager. It constitutes, therefore, the most regrettable incident in my life.”

Decades before Wallace’s involvement and even afterward, the Bedford Canal became a rallying cry of Biblical literalism, particularly in England. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century closed, **Lady Elizabeth Anne Blount** carried on Rowbotham’s work in founding the Universal Zetetic Society. Her wealth and social status allowed access to England’s prominent citizens, and *The Earth (Not a Globe) Review*, which not only matched Scripture with scientific observation, further advocated vegetarianism and anti-vivisectionist views. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1904, Lady Blount revisited