

## Chapter One

# Round or Flat?

### THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

The question which has puzzled me for as long as I can remember is this: if everyone *sees* that the Earth upon which they live is essentially flat, why then do they become so fanatically convinced that it is *really* round? This blatant inconsistency is so widespread that it seems to me to be a kind of cultural schizophrenia. W. Somerset Maugham, who appreciated the paradox, attempted to deal with it by his famous statement: "I am *aware* that the Earth is round, but I know that it is flat."\*

As far as we know, the dwelling place of the human race is the face of the Earth. The question I want to raise here is whether this Earth is shaped like a globe (as the brainwashed geographers would have us believe), or, on the other hand, is the face of the Earth essentially a flat surface?

Since, as I have just indicated, the face of the Earth is the dwelling place of the human race, and mankind is forever treading upon this face, it is obvious that the question which I have just raised is the most fundamental of all questions of human concern. Indeed, the Earth is the very Ground of our Being. It is our unique *terra firma*—and the more firmer, the less terror. Not only is this physically

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\* The phrase is not directly from Maugham himself but from the narrator of his 1930 novel *Cakes and Ale*. Ferrari has adjusted the tense and emphasis; the original reads: "After all, I was aware that the earth was round, but I *knew* it was flat."

so, but a little reflection will show that it is no less true in the mental order. Our *Weltanschauung* (or world view) is the basis of all our other thinking. Hence, what threatens the former is no less a menace to the latter. Yet philosophers, who pretend to preoccupy themselves with such questions of fundamental human concern, have carefully avoided the most basic of all questions—namely, the shape of the Earth. For a change, in raising this question, I am to be identified as a “down-to-Earth” philosopher.

### PLANOTERRESTRIALISTS AND GLOBULARISTS

We, of the Flat Earth Society (of which I have the honour to be the President), maintain that the Earth is essentially *flat*. For this reason, we Flat Earthers are also known as *Planoterrestrialists*, a label which (I trust) will not frighten my readers, for they will realize that it is simply saying the same thing all over again—we believe, nay, we *know* that *the Earth is flat*.

In the opposite camp are the *Globularists*, or those poor misguided souls who have succumbed to the mental sickness that the whole Earth is shaped like a globe. That is to say, it is globular in shape. Sometimes when the stupidity of these Globularists becomes overwhelmingly apparent, we allow ourselves the indulgence of referring to them simply as “Globs.”

Anyone who has been to school is all too familiar with the Globularists’ model of the Earth. This model consists of a sphere (usually some ten to twelve inches in diameter) mounted upon a base in which is embedded a perfectly straight metal rod which projects upward to sufficient length that it pierces the underside of said sphere and emerges at the other (and top) side of the sphere. The purpose of this contraption is to enable the sphere to be rotated while the base which supports it remains perfectly still. This, of course, is for the vain purpose of imitating the supposed daily rotation of the

supposed spherical Earth. To complete this absurd construction, the surface of the sphere is decorated with caricatures of the various countries which are supposed to cling obstinately to the surface, not merely of the model sphere (which is obviously true) but even to the tremendously immense Globular Earth itself!

All this is bad enough and only too obviously offensive to any one endowed with a minimum of Common Sense (a rare enough commodity these days), but no less to be condemned is the subtle tactic of commonly placing this profane caricature of the Earth on the tops of bookshelves, as if it were the summit of all man's accumulated knowledge.

We shall later have occasion to dwell upon the massive contradictions and confusions foisted upon those poor unfortunates who take all this Globularism seriously. They have committed the ultimate offence against Common Sense, and it is an offence which carries with it its own punishment.

On the other hand, to argue that the world is flat would seem like trying to argue for a lost cause. For some thousand years, it has been the intellectual fashion in the West to believe that the entire Earth is Globular in shape. However, as I shall show later, this vain persuasion is nothing but the result of grandiose deception foisted upon the "western" segment of the human race by those arch-conspirators—the Globular Heretics, together with their sundry dupes and hirelings. They are indeed a brazen crew! Nay, further, they are a dread pestilence which breeds upon the midnight air and shrinks from the light of day.

Yet, what could be more obvious than that the Earth is essentially flat (allowances being made for bumps and grinds, of course)? To prove this, one has but to take the trouble to look out the nearest window. Either the Globularists do not believe in what they see when they look out windows, or else they do not believe in the existence of windows.

Not only is the Earth flat, but its essential flatness is immediately evident to anyone endowed with the minimum of Common Sense.

Later on, I shall demonstrate at great length just how inescapable this essential flatness is. For the present, it is a sobering thought that, left to his own resources and uncontaminated by brainwashing, the supposed spherical shape of the Earth is just about the very last notion at which any man of sound Common Sense would arrive. Such a man might imagine golden mountains, flying pigs, and even pink elephants—but that the endless massive Earth beneath his feet is ultimately curled up into one immense globe—ridiculous!

## THE GRASP OF GLOBULARISM

The fact that the Globularist Heresy has become so widespread and so thoughtlessly embedded in the stomach of the modern mind (where it fosters endless disorders) is due to nothing else than the cunning deceptions of the Globularists, on the one hand, and their methods of mass persuasion, on the other. This process of deterioration has been aided and abetted by a mindless civilization, for, if the truth be told, very few people want to think for themselves. They prefer others to do their thinking for them. We of the Flat Earth Society, however, believe in thinking for ourselves.

The grasp of Globularism upon the modern mind has to be seen to be believed. This vice-like grip will later be illustrated in a short Tractate entitled “*Essai sur la crédulité des incrédules*” (pp. 282–84) by Dr. Alden Nowlan, Symposiarch of the Flat Earth Society.\* For

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\* Nowlan's other formal and even royal titles adopted by his co-founders of the Society include “Secretary-Treasurer,” “Prime Minister,” and “Commander-in-Chief” (undated correspondence, Raymond Fraser to Alden Nowlan, MsC 40, box 12, file 6, Alden Nowlan Papers, Special Collections, University of Calgary, AB) as well as “Lord High Chancellor,” “Duke of Wexford,” and “the Prince of Fortara” (undated correspondence, Nowlan to Fraser, MsC 40, box 12, file 6, Nowlan Papers).

the moment, and in regard to the present phenomenon of the widespread grasp of Globularism upon the thoughtless minds of the present age, one could hardly do better than to draw the thoughtful reader's attention to the wise advice of G. K. Chesterton: "A man should always question the strongest convictions of his age, for those convictions are invariably too strong."<sup>\*</sup>

We of the Flat Earth Society *know* that the Earth is flat, as any good person of uncorrupted Common Sense can rapidly perceive. Nothing could be more obvious. It is therefore up to the deceitful Globularists to *prove* that the same is spherical! This, of course, with their obstinate perversity, they have attempted to do. Later on, I shall relish the opportunity of showing the reader just how worthless these so-called proofs are. Proofs indeed! They are better described as mere fraudulent exercises in obstinacy by those who never seem to despair of rationalizing away their already feeble contact with reality.

Theories and speculations do indeed have their roles in human progress. The situation becomes pathological, however, when such theories and speculations are preferred to *facts*. The world of fantasy and that of the bizarre speculations of the Globularists are one and the same.

## PLANOTERRESTRIALISM AND FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

From the preceding comments, it may appear that we of the Flat Earth Society are dyed-in-the-wool dogmatists. Nothing could be further from the truth. Planoterrestrialism (in contrast to Globularism)

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\* The exact quotation is difficult to pin down but is not a Chestertonism. Internet searches for the phrase, and close analogues for it, point directly to Flat Earth postings—for example, the 2011 post to "Chesterton and friends" on blogspot, here: [http://chestertonandfriends.blogspot.ca/2011/07/funny-place-to-find-uncle-gilbert\\_07.html](http://chestertonandfriends.blogspot.ca/2011/07/funny-place-to-find-uncle-gilbert_07.html). Other results include reproductions of statements about the Flat Earth Society by Nowlan and Ferrari.

admits to all kinds of diversity of opinion within the common bond of unshakeable conviction about the flatness of the Earth. We boast of unity in diversity, or as the Good Book puts it: "My father's house has many mansions" (Jn 14:2). Some Members of the Society believe that the Earth is rectangular in shape, others hold that it is circular, while others maintain (with substantial justification, in my opinion) that it is irreverent to speak of the Earth in geometrical terms. A more recent opinion among some in the Society is that the Earth while flat is also boundless, stretching off infinitely in all directions as far as the eye can see, or as far as the Earth cares to be seen.

Of particular interest is the opinion of that renowned literary figure—Farley Mowat (also a Member of the Society)—who has written us that the Earth is not only flat but may also be corrugated. This could answer the objection (so often advanced by the Globularists) of the ship disappearing over the horizon, which in reality would be the first of the corrugations visible from the shore. Mr. Mowat is presently engaged in providing a written justification of his theory. However, he informs us that his work is proceeding slowly, due to the difficulty of writing on corrugated cardboard.

Notwithstanding the admirable spirit of freedom of thought within the bounds of basic Planoterrestrialist doctrine, there are limits to all true liberty. The Society closes its ranks against pretenders and other groups dedicated to the diffusion of confusion. It is all the more important to do this when the aims of such groups pretend to have something in common with the objectives of the Flat Earth Society. I am thinking particularly, here, of a group of triflers who claim that the Earth is neither flat, nor round, but crooked. Mention should also be made of that little book called *Flatland* by E. A. Abbott. While it is an interesting fantasy upon a two-dimensional world populated only by geometrical figures (triangles, squares, &c),

it has but the remotest of connections with the *real* world in which we humans live and move and have our being (cf. Acts 17:28).

## THE DOGMATISM OF THE GLOBULARISTS

Having written of the freedom of thought which flourishes in the Flat Earth Society, I would now like to contrast this liberty with the grim dogmatism of the Globularists. They are dogmatic, because they are pompously certain about that of which they personally have absolutely no certitude at all. “Flat?” (they say pompously). “Everybody knows that the Earth is round.” That, in essence, is their pretentious “proof” for the supposed Globular shape of the Earth. Furthermore, the statement is usually made with an air of impatient finality which makes any further rational discussion an exercise in futility. Yet, I doubt if one in a hundred of such “convinced” persons could even begin to justify his or her overwhelming certitude. Indeed, and in reality, they are the willing victims of the cunning deceptions of the Globularists. In this regard, George Bernard Shaw well expressed the gullibility of the modern age in the following extract:

We are more gullible and superstitious today than we were in the Middle Ages, and an example of modern credulity is the widespread belief that the Earth is round. The average man can advance not a single reason for thinking that the Earth is round. He merely swallows this theory because there is something about it that appeals to the twentieth century mentality.\*

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\* The quotation, which continues to circulate on Flat Earth forums, is cribbed from a paraphrase of Shaw that appeared in a 1946 article by George Orwell. (See the collection of his writings *In Front of Your Nose*, vol. 4, edited by Sonia Orwell and Iain Angus [Godine, 2000], 259.) Only G. B. Shaw and Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin received posthumous enlistment in the Flat Earth Society ranks.

Later on, we will have occasion to see some of the more important reasons why this fantasy appeals to the modern mind. For the present, I would like to point out another aspect of the dogmatism of the Globularists. I am referring to their extreme *intolerance*. Everyone *must* believe, or else ... The alternative is generally that (as several Planoterrestrialists have discovered) one is at first regarded as “odd,” then carefully kept under surveillance for other symptoms of “abnormality.” The inevitable effect of this is an increase of paranoiac behaviour, which is exactly what the relentless Globularists *want* to induce in all dissenters, hoping thereby to render their sanity suspect.

I have been writing above of the hard-core Globularists. Fortunately, such types are few and far between. Most people cling to the grandiose error of Globularism more out of social conformity than out of personal conviction, as has been noted in the above extract from G. B. S. Nevertheless, this pervasiveness of Globularism in our society has become so universal and deeply ingrained as to be an important ingredient of being “normal,” whatever that is. That is so much the case that many ordinary people, who know no better, regard us Planoterrestrialists as fools, nuts, or cranks. Indeed, not long ago a Member of our Executive was committed to an asylum.<sup>1</sup> Among the incriminating evidence was the fact that he let his hair grow long, preferred to live in a teepee, and believed the Earth was flat. Fortunately, a psychiatrist of undisputable professional standing was later called in and was able to certify that the victim was as “normal” as the average man on the street.

## THE PRETENSIONS OF THE GLOBULARISTS

Finally, the Globularists have their own reasons for being so dogmatic, intolerant, and vociferous—noising their absurd fantasies abroad and trying to browbeat all and sundry into accepting them. Truth to tell, the Globularists are far from being the authoritative



expression of worldwide opinion that they would have us believe. Globularism is one of the great myths of the so-called civilized countries. This overrated adjective means nothing more than the fact that most of the inhabitants of such countries live in densely populated big cities—a state of affairs which is becoming increasingly undesirable.

Not all the countries of the world are steeped in the deadly error of Globularism. It has recently come to our attention (to cite but one example of many) that the inhabitants of Tranzania are convinced that the world is flat. Furthermore, they believe that it is inhabited mostly by Tranzanians.

The principle reasons why Globularism has enjoyed such uncritical popularity in the “civilized” countries are the population densities of the cities (which have always favoured the spread of pestilence) and also because saying that the Earth is round is one of the conventional signs of being “educated.” It is, in this context, a boast of the pseudo-sophisticated (and unfortunately not rare) specimen of humanity—of those minds which have been debauched by learning, as Berkeley (I think) expresses it.\* They have thrown overboard the precious gift of Common Sense, because they have been educated beyond their own intelligences.

But enough of the heresy of Globularism among the people on the face of the Earth today. What of the trillions upon trillions who have walked this same Earth before us? How can those of my readers who believe in democracy say that the voices of those untold trillions count for nothing? Are they to be discounted simply because it was undeniably evident to them that the Earth was flat?

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\* See *The Works of George Berkeley: Volume 1*, ed. G. N. Wright (printed for T. Tegg, 1843), 134. William James later took up the phrase.

## THE GROWTH OF GLOBULARISM

Even after Globularism infiltrated the West (by an unfortunate series of events which I shall describe later), that pestilent heresy began by infecting the minds of an almost insignificant minority. It began by being one of the esoteric secrets of the astronomers. This state of affairs continued for nigh on a thousand years. Since the astronomers spent most of their nights stargazing, and most of their days sleeping, it is not surprising that they were out of touch with the real world around them.

Later too, such voyages as those of Columbus\* and Magellan in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries supposedly proved that the Earth was a sphere. This is yet more Globularist propaganda, as will be explained later in this little volume by our Symposiarch, Dr. Alden Nowlan, in his Tractate “The Age of Exploration: A Globularist Hoax” (pp. 279–81). The fact is, that long after Columbus and all that, the essential flatness of the Earth was an undeniable fact admitted by the vast majority of mankind. In William Prescott’s *Conquest of Peru* there is the description of a trek through the jungle by Rodrigo de Orgñoes and his men.† As the original description has it: “they

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\* On this point, see Christine Garwood’s *Flat Earth: History of an Infamous Idea* (Pan MacMillan, 2008), which summarizes the use of falsified Columbus narratives as educational tools, despite the infamous voyage having nothing to do with Globularity but, rather, the opening of new trade routes on behalf of the Spanish Royals.

† Once again, Ferrari plays fast with citations. Prescott’s original reads, referring to de Orgñoes: “He had penetrated to the distance of a hundred leagues, to the limits, probably, of the conquests of the Incas on the river Maule. The Spaniards had fortunately stopped short of the land of Arauco, where the blood of their countrymen was soon after to be poured out like water ...” Prescott’s footnote states that, according to Ovide’s *About the Natural History of the Indies*, the explorers had arrived “very near ... to the end of the world.”

penetrated to the limits of the conquests of the Incas on the river Maule ... and very near ... to the end of the world (*cerca del fin del mundo*).”<sup>2</sup> Consequently, when Pope Pius II supposedly declared in 1481 that most people were agreed that the Earth was round, he may have been speaking for his small coterie of sycophants, but he was certainly not voicing the basic conviction of the vast majority of mankind—that staunch stronghold of Common Sense.

On the important subject of Globularism in the Renaissance and the so-called Enlightenment, I shall have more to say in a subsequent section. For the present, the point I am driving home still holds good—during both these periods, Globularism remained essentially the esoteric doctrine of a very small but highly articulate group of “intellectuals.”

## GLOBALISM AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

A dramatic change for the worse, however, occurred principally in the nineteenth century with the Industrial Revolution. In the first place, this involved the massive uprooting of the peasantry from the soil of Mother Earth and the herding of millions of these unfortunate beings into unsanitary and crowded cities. With city-dwellers alienated from Nature and immersed in a man-made milieu, the stage was set for brainwashing and enforced conformity on a scale without precedent in the whole recorded history of mankind. Mass education was going to teach the masses how to think all right, but it was also going to teach them all to think the same way.

At this very recent stage in history, Globularism won a decisive (although, hopefully only temporary) victory. The Globularists had made sufficient inroads into the world of the intellectual minority to bring about radical changes on a massive scale, when this same intellectual elite got down to the business of designing curricula for the mushrooming schools of the newly emerging “civilized” world. Predictably

enough, the principal of these radical changes was in the field of geography, where quite suddenly and in flagrant contradiction to untold preceding centuries of Common Sense, the world was suddenly presented as being spherical in shape! The deception was complete with newly manufactured “models” of the Earth—those hideous globes.

In an age which boasted of “scientific objectivity,” without even raising the possibility of other world views, millions upon millions of innocent young children were brainwashed and seriously seduced into embracing the vice of Globularism, lock, stock, and barrel. I shall have more to say about this pedagogical slaughter of the innocents. What is important to note here is that, though this crime occurred on a massive scale, in terms even of recorded human history it took place only yesterday, as it were.

### **GLOBULARISM—A MERE SPLINTER GROUP**

So far, I have been sketching the unfortunate history of Globularism—and I do mean sketching. Stand back and survey the canvas. What do we see? Notwithstanding the monomania with which it is forced upon the innocents in our educational systems, Globularism is otherwise so small and insignificant a perversion as to be barely visible upon the great panorama of human history! As a mass movement, it has suddenly mushroomed during the last hundred years in the hothouse conditions of our so-called educational institutions. Yet, how insignificant are the few millions in today’s world who have all unthinkingly swallowed this malignant error! Compare them in numbers with the trillions upon trillions of their predecessors who would have laughed them to scorn.

Finally, indeed, when we look at the vast human Tree of Tradition, it can be most truly said that the Globularists are but a mere splinter group, which have split themselves off from that Tree. Their fate is foreordained—they will surely shrivel up and die.

Let us then conclude this chapter with one of the appropriate and well-worn sayings of the Flat Earth Society:

The Earth is flat  
Anyone can see that!

### AUTHOR'S NOTES

- 1 Donald Cameron, "Tim Crawford Meets the Mind Police," *Saturday Night*, November 1972, 15–19.
- 2 William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Peru &c.*, rev. ed. (London: Bickers, 1878), 269. See also n. 2.