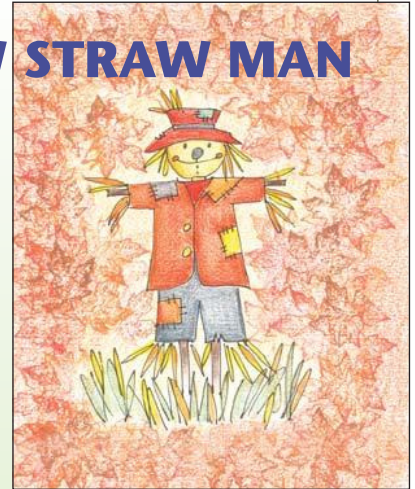


SCIENCE & YOU

VISIBLE CREATION SHOWING US THE INVISIBLE GOD

THE NEW STRAW MAN

I recently saw a sarcastic bumper sticker which read, “What’s next, gravity?” The reference is to the opposition by Christians to public school indoctrination of students with the religious beliefs of evolution. The inference is that “you Christians are dumb because you reject the absolute truth of evolution and if we tolerate this then perhaps your next attack will be on the validity of gravity.” This very common debating technique is called knocking down the “straw man.” The opposing position is first described as challenging what everyone knows is true, showing it is in fact true, and then highlighting how silly it is to believe what the opponent is said to believe. I am not aware of any Christians who challenge the reality of gravity, so this line is generally limited to sarcastic bumper stickers.



The more popular straw man actually used against Christians today is that “you Christians believe that the world is flat.” Most Christians are surprised to be told that they believe this. What follows is a reference to the “Flat Earth Society” and the verse in Isaiah 11:12 referring to the “*four corners of the earth.*” This is meant to show how scientifically unsophisticated and backward Christians are, and how they would rather believe the Bible than what is observably true.

Well, how do we know the world is round? Can you give at least one way we know from observation that it is? Here are two ways. During an eclipse of the moon, the shadow of the earth falling on the moon is curved. This can only be true if the earth is a sphere.

Secondly, when seeing a tall ship approach from the horizon, what is seen first is the very top of the ship and not the outline of the entire ship. This could only be true if the ship at the horizon were coming over the surface of a curved sphere. So the earth is a sphere despite the figurative language used in Isaiah 11:12 and the belief of a very few people to the contrary.

There is no conflict here between the Bible and observable truth. In fact, in Isaiah 40:22, the prophet speaks of the “*circle of the earth*” and, as the earth rotates to produce our daily cycle, the circle of the horizon never changes. This could only be true of a sphere.

The use of debate rhetoric against Christians is reminiscent of the political arena where intellectual honesty often falls by the wayside in favor of name calling and deliberate distortion of facts. What is needed is thoughtful discussion on the question of origins. Phillip Johnson, in his book *Darwin on Trial*, asserts that the question of how life originated is still open for debate in the 21st century despite the dogmatic intolerance of the adherents to evolution. Isaiah was correct again when, on behalf of the Lord, he said, “*Come now, and let us reason together*” (Isa. 1:18).

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Johnson, Phillip. *Darwin on Trial*. InterVarsity Press. Downers Grove, IL, 1993.