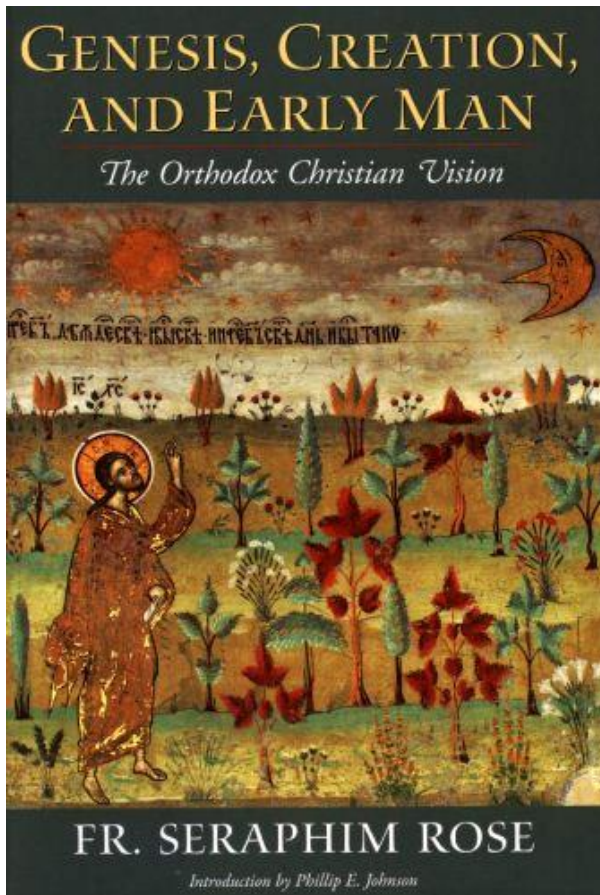


Father Seraphim Rose and geocentrism

fr. Dan Bădulescu



In 2000 had appeared the book "[Genesis, Creation and Early Man - The Orthodox Christian Vision](#)" by Fr. Seraphim Rose at Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California, USA. Its impact was a very exceptional one, we will not dwell here on this issue.

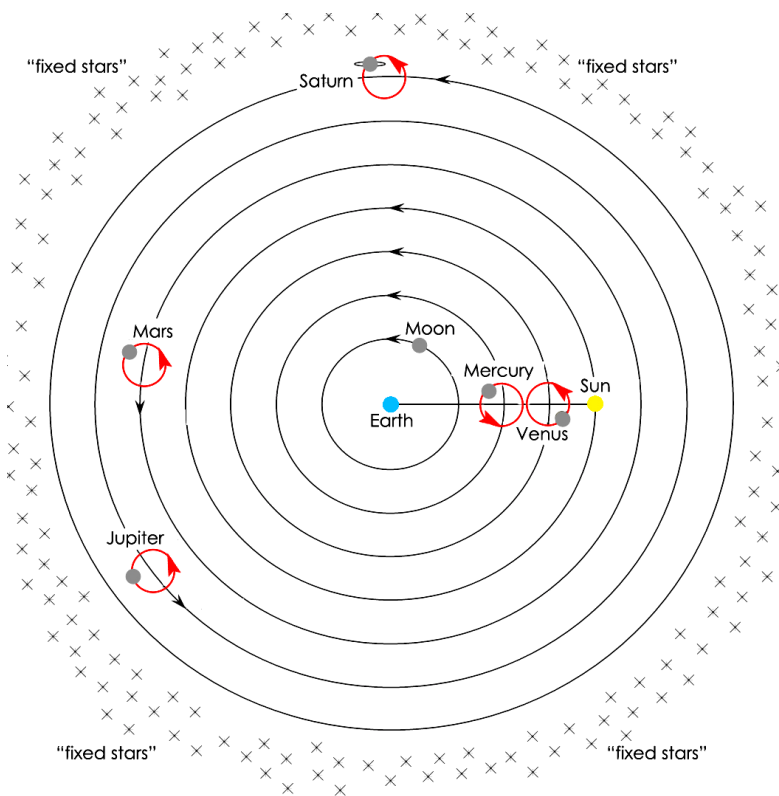
Generally true, every man is initially anchored in a real life context: the place (here America), time (here the second half of the last century), and of course the social, political, cultural and religious place and time. These in "macro", there are "micro" too, family, ethnic origin, personal formation, etc. Both Father Seraphim and the author of these lines are no exception to this rule.

If so initial departure, along the way and up to the "arrival", things can change radically, especially in terms of concepts, faith. It is also the Father Seraphim's case, which raised in discussion the contrast and huge discrepancy between evolutionary science and the scripturist-patristic revelation. And not only discussed, but he had also *convincingly explained*, making a high visibility spiritual work throughout the whole Orthodox world, especially in a context where the great spiritual contemporaries somehow had left this

dispute aside, avoiding a frontal confrontation with the "almighty" materialistic science from the socialist countries where they were living, and even in Greece penetrated by the same scientific materialism. Many of us owe their eyes and mind open in this area (and there would be others but not subject of this article) and we will be forever grateful to him.

Turning now to the subject itself, throughout the book brings up *tangentially* the issue of heliocentrism and geocentrism, the Ptolemaic and Copernican systems, making analogies to evolution and creationism. So, a few weeks before his death (1982), the father took a summer course in which stated the following:

"Therefore, it's like in the time of Copernicus. Then there was the Ptolemaic interpretation of the movement of heavenly bodies, that the sun, planets and stars all go around the earth. The question arose: why don't the planets correspond with stars? Some of the ancients said it is because they are on different spheres. That is, the stars are further away and planets are closer; therefore, the planets appear to go faster. But then why do the planets sometimes go forward, and sometimes backwards? In order to explain how they moved, the Ptolemaic astronomers had to say that they go around each other somehow in a very complex movement of cycles and epicycles as they swing



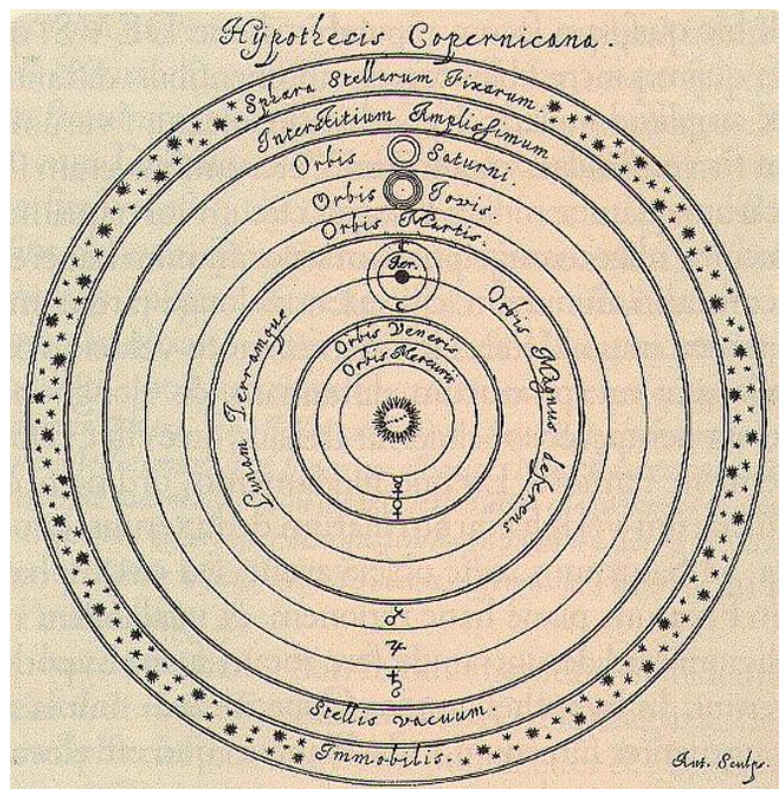
around the earth¹. Some are going backwards, others are performing figure eights. It became so complex to follow the movements of these planets according to this Ptolemaic model that Copernicus got the idea that maybe they are all wrong - maybe the earth and planets were going around the sun. He began making calculations on the basis of this idea, and his theory was much simpler. Finally we came to accept that theory as the true one.

Like the Ptolemaic astronomers, evolutionists who study strata containing fossils often find that they are upside down, in the wrong order, or too close together according to evolutionary ideas.

A matter of models

Fr. Seraphim: Scientists have what are called *models*. Yesterday we discussed the Ptolemaic model – that the earth is the center of the universe, and all the stars and planets go around the earth. Since, according to what one can observe, the planets move around the earth at different speeds than the stars, the Ptolemaic astronomers had to have theories about how they went back and forth and formed figure eights, etc. Like right now you can see that, for the last six months or so, Saturn and Jupiter have been in the sky together. If you were observing, you could see that the first one went forward, then they both went backward, then Saturn became fainter and Jupiter became brighter. According to the Copernican model, you can explain that this is because they are in different phases in their orbits as they go around the sun. From our point of view they seem to get closer, when actually they are simply going around the sun. Another example is Venus. Right now Venus has become once more an evening star low on the horizon. A few months ago, it was a morning star – it was there already in the morning before the sun rose.

The Ptolemaic model was found to be lacking because it did not explain the facts as well as the Copernican model². Copernicus said that if we interpret the earth and the



¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpSy0Lkm3zM>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyQ8Tb85HrU>

other planets as going around the sun, then all these motions make sense; that is, they are mathematically very simple to explain. Eventually that was accepted. Now, by calculating according to the Copernican model, we can send rocket ships quite close to Saturn and not miss; in fact, it is astonishingly accurate. So obviously it seems to be true that all the planets do indeed go around the sun, even though, according to our observations, the sun goes around the earth.

... Just like that we were saying about the Copernican model versus the Ptolemaic model, they present the creationist model versus the evolutionist model, and then they ask the question: which model better explains the facts? The book *Scientific Creationism* gives you a whole series of facts, then gives you the explanation according to the creationist model and according to the evolutionist model. They think that the creationist model makes more sense..."³

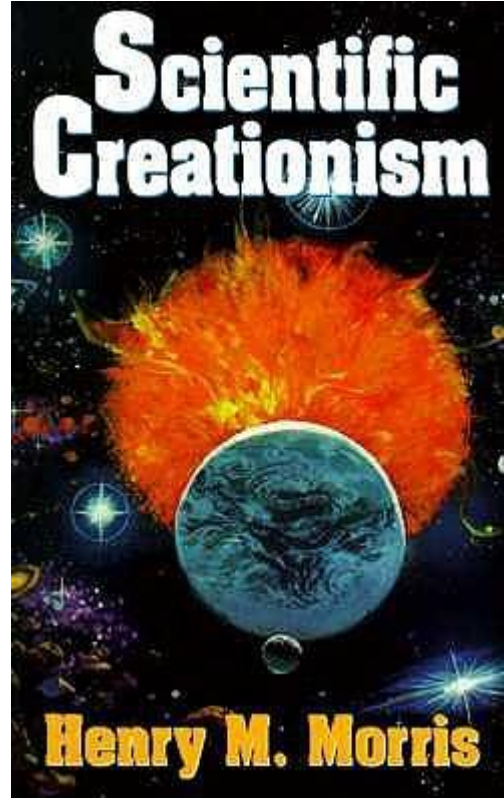
"The Ptolemaic (geocentric) universe is a scientific theory but it was replaced by the Copernican (heliocentric) [theory] because the latter is able to explain the movements and the phases of the inner planets more simply. The Theory of Evolution holds that all living things are descended from a common ancestor as a result of the accumulation of change through geological time. It is not concerned with the origin of life, or with the origin of the universe. In common with all scientific theories, it is based on evidence and has explanatory power. But in common with all scientific theories, it is tentative. This means that it can be modified in the light of new knowledge or even superseded by a better theory."⁴

Based on these quotes might conclude that Father Seraphim accepted the idea of the superiority of the Copernican model - heliocentric - versus the Ptolemaic - geocentric one, and this not only mathematically, but also as an astronomical reality.

Like we said, the subject of extensive debate and brilliant by Father Seraphim was evolutionism-creationism, and the two cosmological models were reached by analogy. The equivalence was this: evolutionism (of any kind, Darwinian, neo-Darwinian, theist) = Ptolemaic geocentrism; creationism (scientific, biblical, patristic) = Copernican heliocentrism. The first system, cumbersome and even against reality, the second simple, elegant and real.

In the apologetic manner and intention, we understand and receive the father's message, noting that, at that time he did not reach full consensus of Scripture and the Fathers of the true cosmology. Why did we say "not full enough"? Because, earlier is presented in the same book as follows:

"The idea that life on earth from the beginning was dependent on the sun, and even that the earth itself comes from the sun—is a recent idea that is nothing but the sheerest guess; it even has no direct connection with the truth or falsity of the so-called evolution of life on earth. Because men in recent centuries have been looking for a "new and "natural" explanation of the world's origin, having rejected the explanation that comes from Divine revelation, it has seemed a matter or course that the sun—so much larger and astronomically more significant than the earth, and the center of the earth's orbit—should precede the earth, rather than the other way around.



³ Idem, pp. 458-466.

⁴ Op. quoted, p. 377.

But Divine revelation, as interpreted by the Holy Fathers, tells us the contrary: that the earth comes first, both in time and in significance; and the sun comes second. If our minds were not so chained to the intellectual fashions of the times, if we were not so fearful of being thought "behind the times," we would not have such difficulty in opening our minds to this alternative explanation of the world's beginnings.

In the Scriptural-Patristic view the earth, as the home of man, the pinnacle of God's creation, *is the center of the universe*. Everything else - no matter what the scientific explanation of its present state and movement, or the physical immensity of it in comparison to the earth - is secondary, and was made for the sake of the earth, that is, for man. Our God is of such power and majesty that we need not doubt that in a single momentary exercise of His creative might He brought into being this whole earth - large to us, but only a speck in the whole universe - and that in another moment of His power He made the whole immensity of the stars of heaven. He could do vastly more than that if He willed; in the inspired text of Genesis He has left us the barest outline of what He did do, and this account is not required to accord with our human speculations and guesses.⁵

At first glance it would seem that meet a case of *inconsistency* and even *incoherence* within the same work and the same author. That is:

"... Finally we came to accept that theory (Copernican) as *the true one*."

"...The Ptolemaic model was found to be lacking because it did not explain the facts as well as the Copernican model⁶. Copernicus said that if we interpret the earth and the other planets as going around the sun, then all these motions make sense; that is, they are mathematically very simple to explain. Eventually that was accepted. Now, by calculating according to the Copernican model, we can send rocket ships quite close to Saturn and not miss; in fact, it is astonishingly accurate. So obviously it seems to be true that all the planets do indeed go around the sun, even though, according to our observations, the sun goes around the earth."

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How can this be?

The answer we have in the very nature of the human soul, and in the lines of the Editor ([Fr Damascene Christensen](#)) that prefaces the book. Namely, he says this:

"However, he was genuinely surprised when his fellow "traditionalist" Orthodox, who like him were opposed to ecumenism, also came out in favor of evolutionism, and roundly censured A. Y. because of his article! "Frankly," Fr. Seraphim wrote, "we are astonished that people who are so keen on ecclesiastical matters, ecumenism, etc., should seem never to have given much thought to such an important thing as evolution; apparently it is because it seems to be outside the Church sphere."⁷

⁵ Idem. pp. 126-127.

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyQ8Tb85HrU>

⁷ Idem. p. 25.

We do not intend, God forbid! to force any analogy, but here's this psychological mechanism met on numerous occasions in recent disputes especially on the Internet in recent years, related to scriptural-patristic cosmology: Christian traditionalists, anti-ecumenical, anti-evolutionists, but rejecting virulently any shadow of possibility that the Scripture and the Tradition (Fathers) to teach a cosmos centered *physical (astronomical)* on ... earth, i.e. geocentrist/statist.

In his day, Father Seraphim was never engaged at all in any controversy of helio(a) centrist-geocentrism type, so that we are holding just the above lines.

In our opinion, we can they possibly say with caution:

- *Inconsistency*? Yes, Father varies – one can take more pages, fit the context, and so on - between the principle of observance of the Fathers' mind and consensus with them, on the one hand, and consensus with "human science of this century", in this case cosmology.

- *Incoherence*? No way! Father, even if he oscillate and become entangled in the strictly cosmological details seeks spiritually speaking *coherently* the scriptural and patristic thread, and this was clearly seen in the wonderful fruits that we have observed at least 10 years now in our country⁸. Because, let's be honest: everyone who opened his eyes and stopped babbling around with billions of years, days/era, etc., etc. (Theistic evolutionism), is indebted for this to Father Seraphim!

And in conclusion: was Father Seraphim a Geocentrist or not? And if not, what would this mean for us? But for him? Does our belief in religious cosmology stands or falls on him? Not at all, but on the consensus of Scripture and of the Fathers, confirmed by observations.

But the spiritual and missionary value of Father will suffer it because of these errors? What do you think pulls harder on the scales at weigh? Our answer we think you glimpse abundantly!

⁸ Romania.