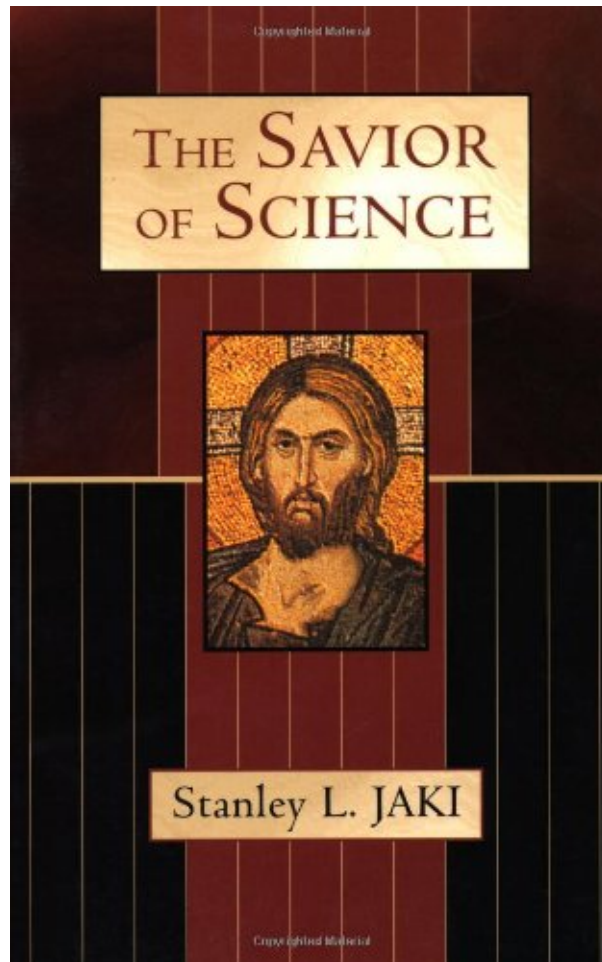
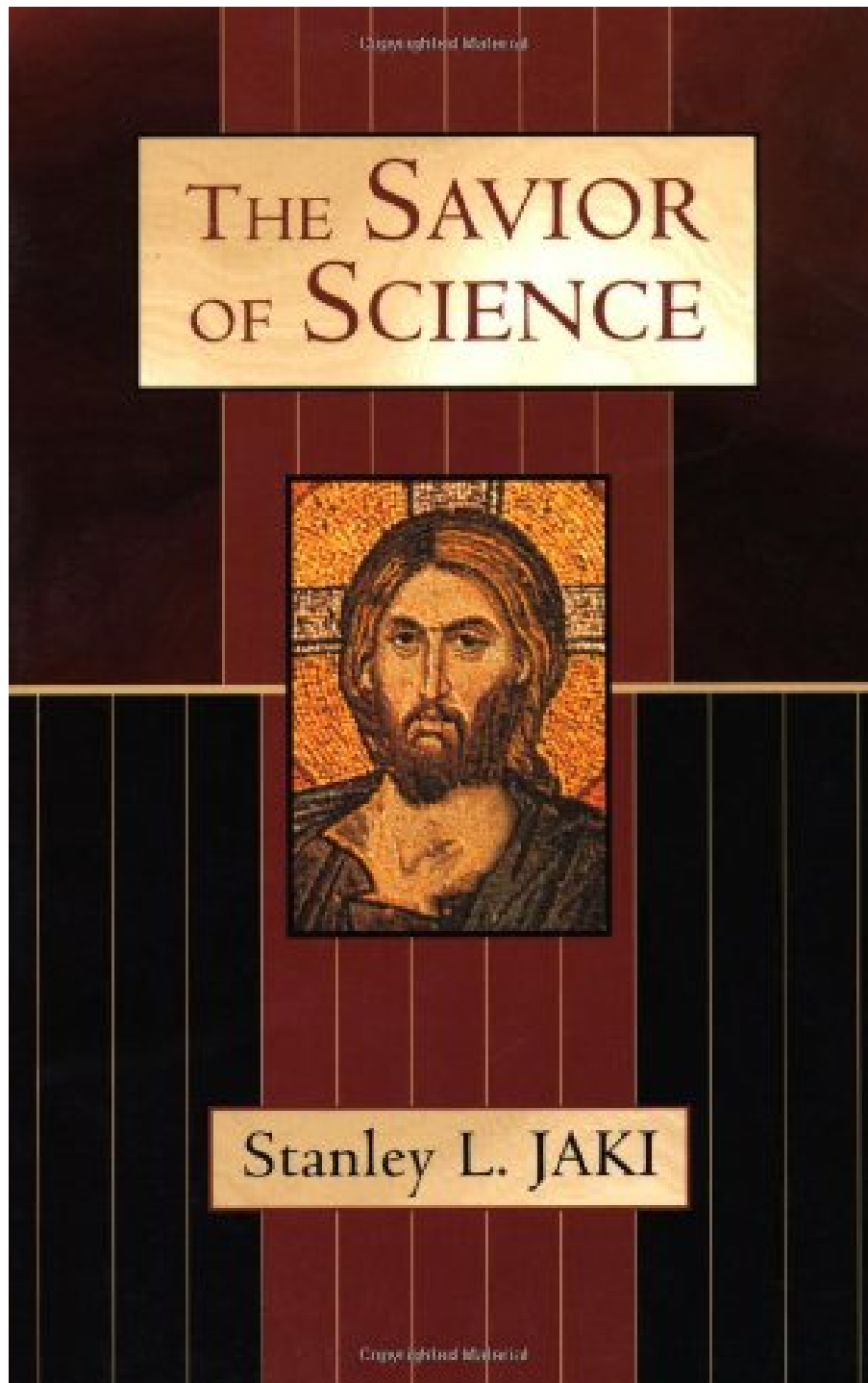


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# THE SAVIOR OF SCIENCE BY STANLEY L. JAKI PDF

An award-winning philosopher uncovers the Christian foundations of modern science.

Renowned historian and philosopher of science Stanley Jaki boldly illumines one of the best-kept secrets of science history—the vital role theology has historically played in fruitful scientific development.

Beginning with an overview of failed attempts at a sustained science by the ancient cultures of Greece, China, India, and the early Muslim empire, Jaki shows that belief in Christ—a belief absent in all these cultures—secured for science its only viable birth starting in the High Middle Ages. In the second part of the book Jaki argues that Christian monotheism alone provides the intellectual safeguards for a valid cosmological argument, restores the sense of purpose destroyed by theories of evolution, and secures firm ethical guidelines against fearful abuses of scientific know-how.

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41 of 54 people found the following review helpful.

Crotchety and unsatisfying.

By David Marshall

As a Christian historian, I tend to agree with many of Jaki's points. He also owns a certain intellectual brilliance -- I found myself ear-marking many pages, to return and write down juicy quotes. The problem is, Jaki refuses to support his arguments with enough facts. The book often comes across as crotchety, dismissive, and even egotistical. Jaki is brilliant perhaps, but he doesn't give critical readers a chance to be persuaded. Instead, he rambles relentlessly, skipping from Justice Bork to Darwin to Arianism to sollipsism. Not always does he explain his point clearly, and seldom does he back it up with enough solid facts. Part of this follows from attempting two thousand years of history in 230 pages. But like G. K. Chesterton, Jaki also seems to feel an actual aversion to detail, though without Chesterton's humor, good-naturedness, or psychological acuity.

I found Jaki's point about the rise of science weak as an argument, though possibly true. Are wrong worldviews to blame for the stillbirth of science in ancient non-Christian civilizations? That is a provocative thesis, worth exploring. But a few paragraphs of dismissive and elusive discussion (6 for Egypt, 10 for India, 15 for China, 4 for Babylon, 8 for Greece, 5 for Islam) should not be enough to satisfy even fellow believers. Given that science did in fact happen to rise in the West, of course one can find post hoc reasons why this should be so; but to prove that it HAD to be so would take a far more in-depth and detailed argument.

I was even less satisfied when I noticed that, while he got some things right (about ancient theism, for instance), he made a few errors about one civilization I know fairly well, China. I think Jaki overstates the influence of Confucianism and Taoism on public Maoism; of all the books Mao sold as a young man, only one came from traditional China; all the rest were Marxist and foreign. Jaki is just ignorant when he asks, quoting Bertrand Russell, "if . . . this youthful vigor in the Chinese mind was in fact very old, why was it 'often very difficult to interest even the most reforming Chinese in afforestation?' And if the answer was that . . . reforesting vast tracts of bare hillsides was 'not a subject for ethical enthusiasm,' how could Confucius . . . be presented as a model of modern, reform-minded Chinese?" In fact Confucius' greatest disciple, Mencius, wrote passionately about protecting the environment, including forests. (Taoists also described the stripping of the environment as a sin.) If modern Chinese have not followed their example (and they haven't, until recently), neither did many other early industrial societies. Jaki's attempt to reduce this question to theology is either simplistic (if I understand him) or vague (because I am not sure that I do.) Marx and others reduced civilizational causation to material forces, and that is wrong; but we should not respond with an equally simplistic argument reducing everything to spirituality.

Jaki's take on modern science is also titillating as an appetizer, but unsatisfying as a full meal. His discussion of Buridan, a name I did not know, is interesting, when he finally comes to it. But his grumpy discussions of Descartes, Darwin, Einstein, etc, seem longer on invective (and on airy and sometimes insightful assertions) than on convincing evidence.

All in all, I doubt anybody who did not already agree with Dr. Jaki would be persuaded by this book. It is probably worthwhile to read, if you hold Jaki's many insights in your hand without grasping. But if we're going to persuade the world of the life-giving value of the Gospel, I think we need to speak more generously, and in more detail. Stephen Barr's *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith*, and Peacey and Thaxton's *The Soul of Science*, fill in some of the missing detail, though admittedly with less flair. On the larger cultural argument, see also the works of Vishal Mangalwadi, and (also very brief) chapter 7 of my *Jesus and the Religions of Man*, entitled "How has Jesus changed the world?"

14 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Science, Religion, and Careful Thought

By James E. Egolf

Father Stanley Jaki, OSB, (1924-2009) was a well known physicist and astronomer during the 20th. and 21st. centuries. He taught and lectured in European and U.S. universities. He also demonstrated knowledge of history, philosophy, theology, etc. In his book titled *THE SAVORIOR OF SCIENCE*, Father Jaki demonstrated that popular notions of science and religion were myths based on lack of historical knowledge, popular misconceptions, scientific confusion, and greed which muted intelligent debate re religion, science, and philosophy.

Father Jaki showed insight re the comments of scientists who claimed no moral guidance re their work. Father Jaki contrasted this superficial attitude with the science that led to machine guns, poison gas, more destructive artillery, and mass carnage during W.W. I. This was followed by concentration camp brutality, flying fortresses, the obliteration of cities, and the atomic bomb. The atomic bomb was followed by thermonuclear weapons. In other words, those members of the scientific community had to be aware that what they did could not only improve living standards but also destroy every man, woman, and child on the planet. This view was not idle talk but possible tragic reality. Father Jaki reminded readers of what can occur when religious convictions are muted, and material greed is honored in place of compassion, kindness, careful thought, and wisdom. In other words, where can our "progress" lead us?

Father then gave a brief history of non-European peoples and why they did not have the advances of Western

Civilization. Father Jaki was honest enough to credit non-Europeans for their achievements and that such achievements embellished Western Civilization. However, as much as the Ancient Egyptians achieved re architecture and irrigation, their obsession with animal worship and death halted their concept of transcendence. Father Jaki credited the Ancient Hindus with creating the decimal system and other advances. However, Jaki argued that the Hindu and Buddhist view of a cyclical cosmos stunted their civilizations, and one can think of the Caste System. Father Jaki credited the Moslems with the development of Arabic numbers, geometry, algebra, and medicine. Yet, some Moslems could not delve into a clear concept of cause-and-effect because of a "conservative" rigorous interpretation of the KORAN. Again, Father Jaki was honest enough to also explain that, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity had some common characteristics.

Father Jaki then focused on the Catholic Faith, the Cosmos, time. He explained that the Ancient Hebrews has a grand view of the Cosmos, but these people understood that God was the Creator of the Cosmos and not the Cosmos. In other words, the Cosmos is a wonder but not God. Father Jaki showed his familiarity with the Old Testament and New Testament and cited several passages re God, the Cosmos, and man as created in God's image. According to Father Jaki, God is the First Cause. Father Jaki was no pantheist and showed that pantheism as an abandonment of good vs. evil and moral responsibility. God is not a refill but is a priori to everything that exists. He mention Cardinal John Newman (1801-1890) who wrote in Newman's book THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY that the only thought greater than the universe is the Creator of the universe.

Father Jaki then wrote about Revelation and Reason. Obviously, Jaki knew that Aristarchus (310-250 BC), Kepler (1571-1630), and even Galileo (1564-1642) could not be as accurate as modern astronomers given their lack of good telescopes which were centuries in the future. Father Jaki severely criticized Kant (1724-1804) when Kant stated that the universe was not real but only a metaphysical concept. One of the problems Kant and later "philosophers" is that they thought they had "the final answer" which excluded transcendence and hope. Albert Einstein (1879-1955) was able to admit that there are universal laws. When Father LeMaitre (1894-1966), S.J., did mathematical work re an expanding universe, Einstein was gracious enough to give Father LeMaitre credit in spite of superficial religious differences.

During much of the 20th. and early 21st. centuries, many popularizers of science tried to substitute wild imaginations for careful scientific thought. The vain attempt to find life outside of our planet have been fruitless, and the idea of sending a space vehicle which will reach something in about 10,000 years is fruitless. Jaki commented on what Purcell called the stuff of cereal boxes and comic books. Yet, men are immune from the complexity of life on earth from insects to the complex systems of men and women. To quote Rabelais (c. 1483-c.1559) "Science without conscience is but the soul's decadence." This quote well defines the concerns Father Jaki presented in this book.

Obviously Father Jaki had to confront the concept of creation science and Darwinism. Those in both camps were severely criticized by Father Jaki. Jaki criticized the advocates of creation science because of their attempts to measure God or reduce God to their own pettiness. Father Jaki criticized William Jennings Bryan (1865-1925) during the Scopes' trial in 1925. Bryan wasted his oratorical ability in trying to state a time table for the Creation and that the creation scientists try to reduce God to a fashion designer. Father Jaki also condemned the Darwinists because of their claims of absolute truth in spite of new discoveries. The Darwinists lost all of their sense of wonder and awe which makes for a dull view.

The final section of the book dealt with men and their immortal souls which should be well beyond any government no matter how gradiose the political leaders may claim to be. Men are not political puppets to enshrine some political system which caters to a materialist greedy world that has no moral purpose or direction.

Father Jaki demonstrated considerable knowledge of physics, astronomy, biology, and other scientific disciplines. He also showed a good grasp of historical knowledge. One reviewer said Father Jaki could not think. Actually, Father Jaki could think as proven by his contributions to physics. Another reviewer argued that Father Jaki was too irritable. This may be true, but such irritability can draw readers' attention. Basically Father Jaki argued that knowledge can lead to thought and thought can lead to more knowledge. Father Jaki wrote that knowledge should have purpose and wisdom as ultimate goals.

James E. Egolf

November 1, 2011

16 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

Illuminating book

By Mayra Lingvay

I just love this book. I have a Masters in Electrical Engineering and would have really profited from this book back in college. This has helped me appreciate the significance of Newton's 3 Laws at a gut level and to make sense out of the mindset of the ancient pagan cultures.

Now I understand that for true science to emerge, or as Fr Jaki puts it, to be born, it was necessary that mainstream culture of the time be convinced of the eternal nature of God, the finite nature of the universe and that the only begotten of God is Jesus Christ (not the universe). The Christian world view with its reliance on the omnipotence of God and its understanding of the order in which He created everything OUT OF NOTHING had to be ingrained in people's minds before science would be able to formulate the Laws of Motion and the theory of Relativity. The ancient's understanding of reality as never ending repeating cycles in rigid determinism, the treadmill world view, could only yield contradictions such as we see in Aristotle's "On the Heavens" in which among other errors, he formulates that an object of twice the weight falls at twice the speed.

This has led me on a quest to impart to my five young children this same understanding of Christ as the Saviour of Science that Jaki has given me. I'm taking advantage that I homeschool them, and am focusing on history this year. I have written a lesson for my children and others in my homeschool group on Ancient Greece which is built around Fr Jaki's illuminating work, The Savior of Science. I plan to continue teaching from Fr Jaki's same perspective the ancient culture of Egypt and the Hebrews as well.

This book is definitely worth buying and studying. I believe anyone with the desire to learn will profit greatly from Fr Jaki's fascinating and inspired insights. I am TRULLY grateful.

See all 9 customer reviews...



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