The Savior of Science

Stanley L. Jaki, Eerdmans 2000
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The essential contribution given by the Christian culture to the development of science and the failure of the scientific and philosophic currents which opposed the principles of the Christian faith: these are the main preoccupations of this work by Stanley L. Jaki, Distinguished Professor at Seton Hall University. It is a new edition of the previous book issued in 1988 including the contents of the lectures at the Third Annual Wethersfield Institute Conference in 1987, followed by the text of a lecture given in November of the same year at Columbia University. Scientific progress has been analysed referring to the meaning of Christ's teaching; therefore the general topics make this work suitable for all those students who have deep knowledge of both the Christian theology and the general lines of the history of science.

By the end of the nineteenth century a distinctive feature of the cultural milieu was a total faith in the scientific research which seemed to prove the idea of Christ as a common empirical fact; in that context Darwinism seemed to be the apotheosis of learning and it was able to influence different fields of investigation. For instance, some famous historians of science, such as Alexander Koyré and others, supported the idea of a mutational change between Medieval and modern scientific thought. A brief look at those cultures which preceded the Western world, however, clearly shows that only during the Christian Middle Ages was the true scientific mind achieved. Namely, Buridan's theory of impetus anticipated Newtonian physics and denied the division of celestial and terrestrial matter; he thus established the grounds for modern cosmology. Also, the Heliocentric Theory had its own foundations in the Christian culture; indeed, Copernicus trusted in the rational order of the world and his vision was founded on the belief that the human reason was something created by God. Then in Kepler's viewpoint the *a priori* trend of mind dictating the structure of the universe was joined with the acknowledgement of divine superiority and Galilei equated the human mathematical knowledge of nature with thate belonging to God. The description of cosmological theories goes on up to contemporary science. During the nineteenth century a condition of 'intellectual schizophrenia' led astronomers to arrange the universe by deductive logic starting from *a priori* principles to catch phenomena. Then, in the 20th century some famous researchers rejected God; this was the case with Einstein who, involuntarily recalling Kantian philosophy, stated that it was not natural to go beyond the universe. Another conceptual absurdity lies in the consequences of the Copenhagen interpretation of Quantum Mechanics, leading to a negative solipsism and the idea of a world ruled by chaos, which is a logical contradiction. If human beings conceive a world different from God's, the certainty of faith remains closed in human subjectivity. Furthermore, if human beings consider Christ as *Logos* or Son, every doubt in the universal reality and rationality is a doubt in God Himself. Solipsism finds its own roots in Kantian thought but the most important representative of this trend is Darwinism; it played an important role in the modern epistemological debate even if its contradictions made it a very difficult theory to be accepted. Nowadays some Darwinists hold an evolutionary idea excluding God and leaving mankind with blind matter. They are unacquainted with the arrival of Christ as the only fact which allowed mankind to grasp the

union of mind and matter; as a consequence, the Absolute Creator is the only strength able to raise man from the condition of purposelessness promoted by Darwinist theory.

Contemporary science also had negative effects because of the greater attention paid by scientists on practical than moral results; that is a consequence of the original sin which brought about inertial moral impotence, growing more and more for the triumph of technology. The reason for that situation is the dictatorship of scientists who wish to play God, not willing to acknowledge any authority beyond their aim. The grounds of this outlook are ethical and cultural relativism, bringing human beings towards a condition of anarchy, dominated by the inventors of trends who replaced the researchers of truth. Only the saving impact of God can raise humanity from this fall; the faith in Him, in addition to the assurance about the universal creation, rationality and purpose, is the remedy to avoid the degeneration caused by scientific excesses. This solution was well known by Bertrand Russell who moved on from his own previous position against the Christian religion when he stated the need of Christian love to gain intellectual honesty. To recall the title of a chapter from Jaki's work, it is an 'All Saving Love' (p. 179) able to restore objectivity to that science, which vainly believes itself to be salvation for human beings. In fact, in recent times it put the 'Creator in the Dock' (p. 221), but a careful examination of contemporary cosmological theories points out a clear mistake. The high degree of specificity disclosed by the new cosmologies shows an universe without the reason of its own existence within itself and needing a further reality coinciding with the essence of God; this is the point at which to claim atheism a rational error. Therefore there is not God in the dock, but only our perception of Him. Darwinism and materialist evolutionism disregarded the human mind and, basing themselves on a false factual evidence, created a kind of cultural dogmatism. Their upholders turned this vision into a sort of conceptual absolutism using the misleading teaching and the control of media as the means of their cultural power. According to Jaki, even some Christians helped spread relativism through their adhesion to erroneous philosophies such as Trascendental Thomism and Aquikantism. Actually a part of the Catholic culture prevents God from being called by His proper name, 'He Who is', causing the consideration of His presence as a mere phenomenon and forgetting that His existence, and the one of beings created to know Him, is absolute.

The completeness and variety of the subjects expressed by Professor Jaki make this a very helpful work for all those students interested in inquiring into the relationship between science and religion in the Western world. His conclusions can be arranged into two broad guidelines, too often ignored by the enemies of Christianity. The former is that Christian culture is the peculiarity of the history of the Western world, the protagonist of the scientific evolution till our times. The latter consists in the defeat of those philosophies which contrasted the religious principles and established their apparent incompatibility with the progress of science and civilization; a look at the social and political results of those ideologies shows such defeat to be a real catastrophe. All this should remind human beings that two thousand years ago a Man was born, the only One who opened the way to the right knowledge: in other words, 'The Savior of Science'.

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