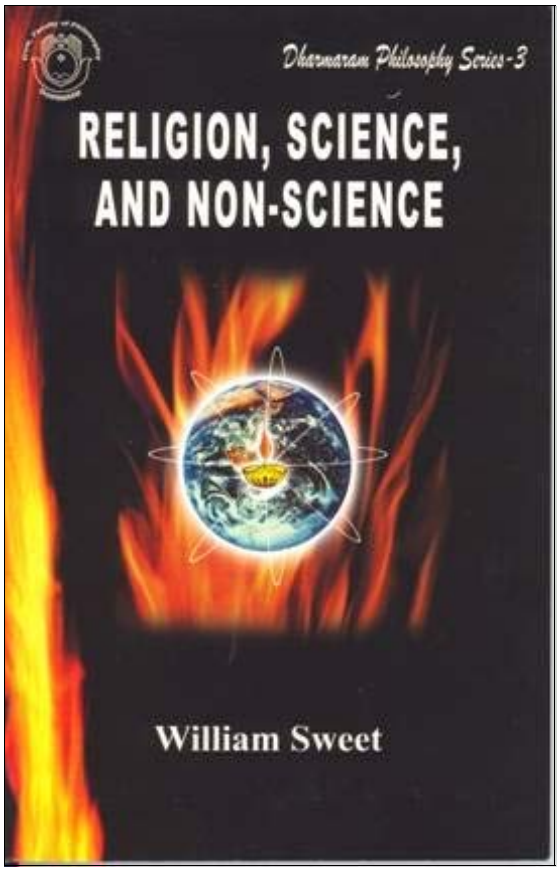
Religion, Science, and Non-Science

William Sweet



Do science and religion conflict? For many today, the examples of Galileo and Darwin – and their descendants in astronomy and biology – show that they do. But others insist that science and religion do not conflict. Copernicus and Mendel, and more recent figures such as John Polkinghorne and Arthur Peacocke, are often given as examples of those whose scientific views are fully compatible with their religious faith.

William Sweet maintains that the relation between science and religion is neither a scientific question nor a religious one – it is a philosophical one, and that philosophy can help us to understand the relation of science and religion.

Sweet argues that science and religion bear on one another, but are not reducible to one another. He adds that there is nothing unique about this. Other instances of 'non-science,' such as ethics and aesthetics, also bear on the aims, methods, and practices of the sciences – and vice versa.

Central to Sweet's claim is his novel analysis of religious belief and religious truth. Unless these are properly understood, he says, we cannot determine how far science conflicts with – or is compatible with – religion.

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