

# The New Book Of Nature

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IN A PREVIOUS STUDY, "Cosmic Genesis: Teilhard de Chardin and the Emerging Scientific Paradigm," I reported on a new conception of the human and the universe that seemed to affirm Teilhard's vision. In the intervening two years further progress and convergence have occurred. Science today appears poised before the discovery of an ordered cosmos that requires human participation for its genesis. At the same time, however, the threat of nuclear war has grown more ominous. Here I would like to review the outlines of this imminent synthesis, most evident in a Teilhardian perspective, and to propose that it might be viewed in terms of the traditional second book of revelation, the Book of Nature. If such an identification can be established, it might become acceptable as a new dispensation and be suggestive of an alternative future for humanity.

A salient suggestion is provided by physicist Heinz Pagels:

I think the universe is a message written in code, a cosmic code, and the scientist's job is to decipher that code. This idea goes back to Greece, but its modern version was stated by Francis Bacon, who wrote that there are two revelations. The first is given to us in scripture and tradition, the second is given by the universe and that book we are just beginning to read ... Could it be that the cosmic code, revealed in the architecture of the universe, is actually the program for historical change?!

Western science originated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the conviction that a design and purpose could be found in nature to complement the scriptures and to assist in their fulfillment. The medieval world was providentially arranged as a hierarchical harmony. But this understanding became increasingly tenuous as a vast, ancient, evolving cosmos started to come into view. The universe was eventually seen as little more than a gigantic machine, accidental and profane. A technology arose that improved the human condition, but it is now frequently a source of destruction.