

Gresham College  
Divinity Lecture 3

The Christian Doctrine of Creation  
and the Fine-Tuning of the Universe

Professor Alister McGrath

Augustine of Hippo (early fifth century):

“You have made us for ourselves, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you.”

# Two ideas of creation in the Old Testament

1. Creation is an imposition of order on a formless chaos. This model is especially associated with the image of a potter working clay into a recognizably ordered structure (e.g., Genesis 2:7).

# Two ideas of creation in the Old Testament

2. Creation concerns conflict with a series of chaotic forces, often depicted as a dragon or another monster (variously named Behemoth, Leviathan, Nahar, Rahab, Tannim, or Yam) who must be subdued (e.g., Isaiah 27:1; 41:9-10).

# Isaiah 51:9-11

Awake, awake, put on strength,  
O arm of the LORD!  
Awake, as in days of old,  
the generations of long ago!  
Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces,  
who pierced the dragon?  
Was it not you who dried up the sea,  
the waters of the great deep;  
who made the depths of the sea a way  
for the redeemed to cross over?

# Three models of Creation

1. Emanation
2. Construction
3. Artistic expression

Alexander Pope's epitaph for Isaac Newton:

Nature and Nature's Law lay hid in Night  
God said, let Newton be, and all was Light.

# Paul Davies

“I believe any suggestion that the laws of nature are similar projections of the human mind is absurd. The existence of regularities in nature is an objective mathematical fact. . . . In conducting science we are uncovering real regularities and linkages out of nature, not writing them into nature.”

# Freeman Dyson

“As we look out into the Universe and identify the many accidents of physics and astronomy that have worked together to our benefit, it almost seems as if the Universe must in some sense have known that we were coming.”

End