

ARCHE

The first key concept Bob introduced was his translation of [Ephesians 6:2](#):

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (KJV)

He challenged us to re-think our understanding of "principalities", which in the Greek is "[arche](#)" [pronounced "ar-kay"] (from whence we get [architect](#), as well as [monarch](#)). We charismatics typically think of that as referring to demonic strongholds, but he had something broader in mind. He used the example of a kid ("Mario") in the [Crips street gang](#), who does things when he's acting "as a member" that he would never do on his own. Bob described such as gang as a "non-corporeal being" -- something that has well-defined beliefs and desires that persists even when individual members come and go. That is, an "arche"

Intriguingly, Bob didn't directly address the question of whether such arche are simply "emergent" aggregations of individuals or "real" spiritual beings who somehow "indwell" a group of people. Either he didn't know, or it doesn't matter -- or maybe the question itself is moot! After all, we don't even know how my spirit inhabits my own body, given that many of the atoms and cells recycle themselves all the time.

At any rate, his main point is that our understanding of Christianity is *itself* an arche. This isn't a condemnation, but a recognition. It was still extremely sobering, as the three arche he identified were theology, doctrine, and the church. Not that they are wrong, but they are all *inadequate*. ("inadequate" became the buzzword of the conference :-). Our challenge (as he learned the hard way) is to stop being "sheriffs" that enforce conformity with our own arche, and humbly seek to integrate this into Christ's kingdom instead.

[Delightfully, he illustrated this using the three-overlapping-circles ("triploid") motif of [Radical Centrism](#) (he nearly fell over when I showed my RC business card!). I've reinterpreted his slide on the [inadequacy of arche](#) using my graphics, which he's expressed interest in my doing for others of his slides.]

AGAPE

This led to his second major theme (also the conference theme): the [glory of God](#) (which, as you can see, I also interpreted as [three overlapping circles](#) :-). He defined this using [Exodus 34:6](#):

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth (KJV)

Intriguingly, he defined these seven attributes:

1. Forgiving

2. Slow to Anger
3. Faithful
4. Compassionate
5. Gracious
6. Merciful
7. Truth

as not merely the "glory of God", but also as "the face of Christ", and "[agape](#)". Moreover, the "kingdom of God" is really just the rule of agape (what I've also called "the image of Christ").

He covered a lot more territory than just that (including a fair amount of physics!), but the basic idea is that God's desire is for us to be transformed/redeemed from human *arche* (which I translate as "systems") into Christ's *agape*.

EXAMPLES

At the risk of vast oversimplification, I might characterize the rest of the conference as simply elaborating on and illustrating that theme, from *arche* to *agape*.

Friday, May 4th

On **Friday night**, he illustrated this using what I might call an "emergent hierarchy of nature":

1. Matter (Physics)
2. Life (Biology)
3. Mind (Psychology)
4. Soul (Theology)
5. Spirit (Mysticism)

The key point (I think) is that "authenticity" is when all are aligned, and the Spirit rules over what is lesser (rather than vice versa). Otherwise, we end up constructing/serving false personas, that collapse under stress; or, worse, try to impose our falsity on those around us.

Saturday, May 5th

On **Saturday morning**, he talked about how the Christian Church itself can be an "arche", and that we need to exchange our human constructions for the glory of God -- that is, the face of Christ. Which, as he pointed out, as cynical, atheistic, post-modern world is actually dying to see (and tragically, often does not, in us).

Later that morning, he gave a brief but fascinating history of Christendom in 500-year segments (or, I suppose, "arches"):

1. The Early Church (starting from "[The New Covenant](#)")
2. The Imperial Church (from [Constantine's](#) conversion)
3. The Medieval Church (from the [Roman/Orthodox schism](#))
4. The Modern Church (from [Luther's 95 Theses](#))
5. The Post-Modern Church (from the 1906 [Azusa Street Revival](#))

The sobering lesson is that the church endures these periodic, painful transitions and emerges undefeated, but NOT unshaken (and we are entering a time of great shaking!). This is why we need to remember that we are merely stewards, not the owners of God's kingdom on earth. And instead of fighting God's transitions due to nostalgia, we need to embrace what God is doing that we might see a greater vision of His kingdom, a post-national/post-denomination world of "religion-less Christianity" (though **not** church-less).

Sunday, May 6th

On **Sunday morning** we took a slight detour onto the issue of control, as represented by Goliath. He described repentance as an act of violence against myself and my kingdom, giving up my "Non-Negotiable Right to Myself." (**NNRM**) In particular, he emphasized the role of water baptism in moving from NNRM to **NNSFW** (Non-Negotiable Service/Surrender to the Father's Will). He used a poignant example of a father cutting a child's hamburger to illustrate how we need to give God permission to violate our personal space, in order to come under to not merely His universal Sovereignty (as King) but also His relational Providence (as Father). This requires us to work through the [grief cycle](#) and come to a place of acceptance, where we trust God due to the fact that:

- He loves me
- He chose me
- I love Him
- I choose to respond to Him

He also made the fascinating claim that [The Great Commission](#) actually call us to first disciple people (help them understand who Christ is), and only *then* baptize and teach them. That is, it is a three-step process *starting* with discipleship, not a two-step process *comprising* discipleship. Pretty mind-blowing, paradigm-changing stuff!

Sunday night he returned to the theme of choosing between the Kingdom of Our Father and the Religion of our Mother, the Church. Yes, we are called to love and honor our mother, but we need to recognize that she is sometimes (as we see in Hosea) "a dysfunctional whore" who seeks to do "her own thing" rather than carry out the Father's will. This was a hard saying, and could easily be misinterpreted if we didn't know Bob Mumford was speaking as a man of the church, to churches he helped found and still loves deeply. The bottom line is that our purpose ("teleos") is to wholeheartedly seek God's own government, in order to inherit the fullness of the kingdom (which he sees as more than just salvation). Even at the price of dying to everything we thought Christianity (as religion) meant.

Monday, May 7th

For his final session **Monday morning**, Bob gave us Seven Equations (the man longs to become a physics geek :-)) about the nature of God's Kingdom. I may try to redo the equations themselves later, but here's the gist:

1. The Kingdom's **Purpose** is to fill the world with God's glory (doxa) through the fulfillment (teleos) of His love (agape)

The world needs and wants "glory" -- that is, Kingdom -- not more "church"; and "agape" is the route to the restoration of the supernatural.

2. The Kingdom's **Process** is moving from NNRM (ownership) to NNSFW (stewardship).

As we see going from Adam to Jesus.

3. The Kingdom's **Principle** is both profoundly orthodox yet radically modern.

Our historic doctrine is not so much wrong as inadequate, and we need to somehow move forward while holding on.

4. The Kingdom's **Presence** is pervasive throughout creation.

He called it "[pan-en-theism](#)", (as [distinct](#) from pantheism), and had some fun with [strange attractors](#) and [fractals](#) to illustrate his point.

5. The Kingdom's **Providence** moves from Sovereign "use" to panentheistic "restoration"

I'm not sure I got this one right, but it is based on the idea of Christ [restoring all things](#), and how with God as our benevolent Father we don't need to fear the future.

6. The Kingdom's **Product** is a Transformed Spirit (vs. an ungoverned Soul).

In a sense, our mind-emotions-will are the fertilized egg whose center is replaced by Christ's genetic material, putting us under the Rule of Agape. That is, the Christian life is less a matter of what we do than than what we are (cf. [Hebrews 4:12](#)), and about being sensitive to God's Spirit rather than being wise in our own introspection.

7. The Kingdom's **Promise** is that as Stewards we will experience the benefits of God's Sovereignty and Providence, and thus Gain the Kingdom (instead of being Owners, who lose it through Resentment and Rebellion)

The difference is that God's Providence includes what He takes away, not just what He gives. If we see ourselves as owners, we'll never accept that, and will end up fighting His Kingship. But if we surrender to His Kingdom, and accept that we are stewards, we will receive far more than we ever imagine.

The bottom line is that if we look at history through the eyes of religion, we will feel that we are in a losing battle against society. But if we look at it through the eyes of Agape, we will recognize that God is in fact building His Kingdom. The question is, will we give up everything we have to gain that [Pearl of Great Price](#)?