AKI Daily Theological Research Note

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ABC Theology as a Bridge: Zhu Xi, Intelligibility, Power, and Practice

Atlas KINS Institute — Working Research Note

English Version

1. Purpose of Today's Work

Today's work clarified the purpose and limits of the proposed ABC Theology manuscript being prepared for Dao Feng. ABC Theology is not intended to identify Zhu Xi with Trinitarian theology, nor to identify Zhu Xi with ABC itself. Rather, ABC would like to be a bridge: it seeks to enable Chinese readers deeply shaped by Zhu Xi and Chinese cultural memory to enter serious conversation with Scripture, Christ, and Trinitarian theology without first being required to repudiate their cultural inheritance. At the same time, it seeks to help Chinese Christians engage their own cultural memory and contemporary knowledge more deeply under the norm of Scripture.

2. Zhu Xi: From Primary-Text Reconstruction to Reception History

A major methodological decision was reached. The proposed article does not need to reconstruct the whole of Zhu Xi's ontology directly from the primary corpus. Instead, a small number of primary-source anchors should be retained, while the larger argument should rely on established scholarship and the history of Zhu Xi's reception. The key historical sequence is Ming → Qing → Republican China → contemporary mainland China. The question is not merely "What did Zhu Xi say?" but also "How did Chinese intellectual elites across these periods understand, revise, criticize, and reconstruct the Li–Qi relation?" This approach is both more economical and more appropriate to a constructive theological article.

3. A Persistent Ontological Question: Li and Qi

Today's discussion sharpened a working question: does the Li–Qi framework contain a persistent ontological tension, or can it be read coherently without positing two independent ultimate realities? The distinction between duality and metaphysical dualism is essential. Yin and yang as a differentiated pair do not by themselves establish two ultimate beings or principles. ABC therefore adopts a charitable but testable posture toward Zhu Xi: where several historically defensible interpretations exist, it gives serious attention to the reading that best preserves the internal coherence of Zhu Xi's thought and its openness to further questions of truth, while refusing to suppress contrary evidence.

4. ABC's Constructive Maxim: "Qi Ultimately Formless; Li Numerically Representable"

The working maxim "气终极之无形，理可数也" was reaffirmed as an ABC/AZF construction rather than a quotation from Zhu Xi. "Qi ultimately formless" resists identifying Qi simply with already formed material objects. "Li numerically representable" does not mean that Li is itself a number. Its intended meaning is that once intrinsic organization becomes mathematically accessible through an appropriate accessibility realization, order may acquire numerical representation. Number does not replace order; it represents order

under a specified realization of accessibility. Reality is therefore not reducible to number, although intelligible order may become expressible through ratio, relation, symmetry, sequence, and other mathematical structures.

5. Trinity, Intelligibility, and Mystery

A central theological principle was further clarified: intelligibility is not exhaustibility. If Trinitarian doctrine were treated as wholly unintelligible, Christian theology could not fairly demand intelligibility from Zhu Xi, Buddhism, or any other philosophical tradition. Yet the Trinity is not the mathematical assertion 3 = 1. Christian confession speaks of one God with real distinction and relation among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Traditional illustrations such as the shamrock attributed to Saint Patrick may make one aspect—unity with distinguishability—partially accessible, but no created analogy exhausts the living God. Mystery should therefore invite faithful inquiry rather than terminate it.

6. "The Kingdom of God Is Not in Word, but in Power"

First Corinthians 4:20 provided a decisive correction to purely conceptual theology: "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Divine power must not be reduced to political success, institutional dominance, or mere numerical spread. Yet neither should it be separated from the transformation of human lives, the turning of hearts toward God, the life of the Church, and the final consummation of God's kingdom. Explanatory power must never be confused with Divine Power; nevertheless, Divine Power truly at work bears living fruit.

7. Hearing, Doing, and the Rock

Matthew 7:24–27 and Luke 6:47–49 deepened this criterion. Both the wise and foolish builders hear; the decisive difference is whether the word is practiced. Luke's phrase—digging deep and laying the foundation on rock—became an important image for the present research. The purpose of deep theological inquiry is not to manufacture another rock. It is to set the foundation more truly upon the Rock. ABC may investigate Zhu Xi, Chinese cultural memory, contemporary science, accessibility, and Trinitarian doctrine, but none of these replaces Christ as the foundation of Christian theology.

8. The Practical Test of ABC Theology

A decisive mission criterion emerged: if ABC Theology does not help the Chinese Church, it has failed its Christian purpose. Academic publication, conceptual originality, and explanatory elegance are means rather than ends. ABC should help Chinese Christians hear Scripture more carefully, understand Christian doctrine more deeply, engage contemporary knowledge without intellectual amputation, and approach Chinese cultural memory without either idolizing or despising it. Most importantly, ABC should direct attention beyond itself toward the living God revealed in Christ.

9. A Working Mission Statement

ABC Theology would like to be a bridge rather than a replacement. It seeks to allow Chinese cultural memory to enter serious but bounded dialogue with Scripture, Christian theology, and established contemporary knowledge without first being erased. The bridge does not declare the two shores identical; its necessity presupposes real difference. Thus Zhu Xi is not Trinitarian theology, Zhu Xi is not ABC Theology, and Li is not simply the Logos. Difference, however, need not mean incommunicability.

10. Guidance for the Dao Feng Manuscript

The updated manuscript should therefore proceed with three layers clearly distinguished: (1) a small number of precisely verified Zhu Xi primary-text anchors; (2) secondary scholarship tracing the Ming, Qing,

Republican, and contemporary reception of Li–Qi ontology; and (3) ABC's explicitly constructive theological response. This prevents the paper from claiming to rediscover the "true Zhu Xi," while allowing it to ask a new theological question on the basis of a well-documented Chinese intellectual history. The next scholarly task is to complete formal citations, publication data, and page references for the four-stage reception history.

11. Concluding Research Principle

Today's work may be summarized in four linked propositions:

The Living God Alone Is Antecedent.
Mystery may be genuinely intelligible without being exhaustively comprehended.
Explanatory power is not Divine Power, but Divine Power bears living fruit.
ABC Theology exists not to build ABC for its own sake, but to serve the Church in seeking the truth of the living God.

The research should therefore continue to "dig deep," with intellectual courage and methodological humility, while leaving the final fruit of the work in God's hands.

Closing Prayer

Lord our God, we give You thanks for the opportunity to study, question, write, and serve. Guard us from confusing our words with Your power, our models with Your reality, or our work with Your kingdom. Give us wisdom to honor truth wherever it is found, courage to correct what is mistaken, humility before Scripture, and love for the Church and for those formed by Chinese cultural memory. Strengthen us to love You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. May our digging go deep, not to create another foundation, but to build faithfully upon Christ the Rock. Establish the work of our hands according to Your will, and let all glory belong to You alone. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

AKI 每日神学研究札记

2026 年 8 月 20 日

作为桥梁的 ABC 神学：朱子、可理解性、权能与实践

中文版

一、今日工作的目的

今天的讨论进一步澄清了准投《道风》的 ABC Theology 文稿之目的与边界。ABC 神学并不把朱子等同于三一神学，也不把朱子等同于 ABC 自身。ABC 更愿意成为一座桥：使深受朱子及中华文化记忆塑造的华人，不必先否定自身文化遗产，便可以进入对圣经、基督与三一神学的严肃思考；同时也帮助身处中华文化中的基督徒，在圣经规范之下，更深入地面对自己的文化记忆与当代知识。

二、朱子研究：从全面原典重构转向接受史

今天形成了一个重要的方法论决定。准《道风》论文无需重新从朱子全部原典中重建其完整本体论。更合适的方法，是保留少数承担关键论证责任的原典锚点，而把较大的历史论证建立在可靠的前人研究与朱子接受史之上。核心历史序列为：明→清→民国→当代中国大陆。问题不再只是“朱子说了什么”，而且是“这四个时期的中国文化精英如何理解、修正、批判并重构朱子的理—气关系？”这既节省大量不必要的文献考据，也更符合一篇建设性神学论文的任务。

三、理—气关系的持续本体论问题

今天我们把一个工作性问题进一步钉牢：朱子的理—气框架是否存在持续性的本体论张力？抑或它能够在不设立两个彼此独立终极实在的前提下获得自洽解释？这里必须严格区分 duality 与 metaphysical dualism。阴阳之“二”并不能自动推出两个终极本体。ABC 因此对朱子采取一种有倾向、但可被检验的善意解释：当数种解释均有历史与文本依据时，优先认真考察最能保存朱子体系内部一致性、并使其继续向真理问题开放的解释，同时绝不压抑相反证据。

四、ABC 的建设性命题：“气终极之无形，理可数也”

“气终极之无形，理可数也”今天被再次确认：它不是朱子原话，也不是 ABC 对朱子历史思想的强行归纳，而是 ABC/AZF 借用“理”“气”二字所提出的建设性命题。“气终极之无形”拒绝把气简单等同于已经成形的物质；“理可数也”也绝不意味着“理就是一个数字”。它的严格含义是：一旦 intrinsic organization 通过适当的 accessibility realization 获得数学可及性，秩序便可能取得 numerical representation。数并不取代理；数是

在特定可及实现中对秩序的表征。因此 Reality 不可被还原为 number，但 intelligible order 可以表现为比例、关系、对称、序列以及其他数理结构。

五、三一神论、可理解性与奥秘

今天进一步明确了一条重要神学原则：可理解性不等于可穷尽性。如果三一神论被规定为完全不可理解，基督教神学便没有充分理由要求朱子、佛教或其他思想传统接受可理解性的检验。然而，三一神论也不是数学命题 3 = 1。基督教所宣认的是一位神，同时父、子、圣灵之间具有真实的区别与关系。传统上归于 Saint Patrick 的三叶草类比，可以使“统一中有可区别性”获得某种部分可及性，却不能穷尽永活的主神。因此，奥秘应当邀请忠实的探究，而不是终止探究。

六、“上帝的国不在乎言语，而在乎权能”

《哥林多前书》4:20 对纯粹概念化的神学构成决定性的校正：“因为上帝的国不在乎言语，而在乎权能。”这里的神之权能不能被简化为政治成功、制度支配或人数扩张；然而，也不能把神的权能与人心被改变、背向神者转向神、教会真实的生命以及神国最终的完全降临彼此割裂。解释力绝不可冒充神的权能；然而，神的权能真实运行时，必然结出生命的果子。

七、听见、去行与磐石

《马太福音》7:24–27 与《路加福音》6:47–49 使这一原则更加具体。聪明人与无知的人都“听见”；真正的分界是有没有“去行”。路加所记“把地挖深，将根基立在磐石上”，成为今天研究工作的重要图像。神学深挖的目的不是另造一块磐石，而是为了把根基更真实地立在磐石上。ABC 可以深挖朱子、中华文化记忆、当代科学、Accessibility 与三一神论，但这些都不能取代基督作为基督教神学的根基。

八、ABC Theology 的实践检验

今天形成了一条决定性的使命标准：如果 ABC Theology 不能帮助中国教会，它就没有完成其基督教神学使命。学术发表、概念原创与解释上的精巧都只是手段，而不是终点。ABC 应当帮助华人基督徒更认真地听圣经、更深入地理解基督教教义，在不割裂当代知识的情况下持守信仰，也在既不偶像化、也不鄙弃中华文化的前提下面对自身文化记忆。最重要的是，ABC 最终应当把人的注意力从 ABC 自身引向在基督里启示自己的永活主神。

九、工作性使命陈述

ABC Theology would like to be a bridge rather than a replacement。ABC 愿意成为一座桥，而不是一种替代。它希望中华文化记忆无需先被抹除，便能够与圣经、基督教神学和已经确立的当代知识展开严肃而有边界的对话。桥并不宣布两岸相同；恰恰因为两岸真实不同，桥才有存在的意义。因此：朱子 ≠ 三一神学；朱子 ≠ ABC Theology；理 ≠ Logos（不能未经论证直接等同）。然而，不同并不意味着不能相通。

十、对准《道风》文稿的指导

更新后的论文应当明确区分三个层次：（1）少数经过精确核准、承担关键论证责任的朱子原典锚点；（2）以二级学术文献呈现明、清、民国、当代大陆四阶段对朱子理—气本体论的接受史；（3）ABC 自己明确标示的建设性神学回应。这样可以避免文章声称自己重新发现了“真正的朱子”，同时又能在可靠的中国思想史研究基础上提出新的跨文化神学问题。下一步具体学术工作，是补齐四时期接受史的正式出处、出版信息与页码。

十一、今日研究原则总结

今天的工作可以归结为四个彼此相连的命题：

惟独永活之神先在（The Living God Alone Is Antecedent）。
奥秘可以被真实理解，却不能被完全穷尽。
解释力不是神的权能；然而神的权能必结出生命的果子。
ABC Theology 的存在不是为了建立 ABC 自身，而是为了服事教会，一同寻求永活主神的真理。

因此，我们仍应继续“把地挖深”：既保持思想上的勇气，也保持方法上的谦卑；尽心、尽性、尽意、尽力去做，而把最终的果效交在主神手中。

结束祷告

主我们的神，我们感谢祢赐下今天可以学习、追问、写作和服事的机会。求祢保守我们，不把自己的言语当作祢的权能，不把自己的模型当作祢的实在，也不把自己的工作当作祢的国。求祢赐我们智慧，使我们尊重一切真实；赐我们勇气，使我们愿意修正错误；赐我们谦卑，使我们伏在圣经之下；也赐我们爱心，使我们的工作能够服事教会，并服事那些深受中华文化记忆塑造的人。求祢坚固我们，使我们尽心、尽性、尽意、尽力爱祢。愿我们不断把地挖深，不是为了另造根基，而是为了更忠实地建造在基督这磐石之上。若合祢的旨意，求祢坚立我们手所做的工；一切荣耀惟独归祢。奉主耶稣基督的名祷告。阿们。

Soli Deo Gloria. Amen and Amen.