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ABC Theology: Faithful Continuation, Cultural Memory, and Accessibility without Exhaustion

ABC 神学：忠实延续、文化记忆与“可及而不穷尽”

I. English Research Note

1. Purpose of Today’s Work

Today’s work concentrated on bringing the pre-submission Dao Feng manuscript closer to a content-frozen form while clarifying the methodological identity of Analytic Biblical Continuation (ABC Theology). The guiding discipline was: begin in reviewer mode and end in finalization mode. Instead of expanding the manuscript indefinitely, we repeatedly asked what a skeptical reviewer would challenge, tightened the argument, and separated material necessary for the present article from hypotheses better reserved for later ABC research.

2. Why “Analytic Biblical Continuation”?

A decisive clarification concerned the origin of the name ABC Theology. Its methodological inspiration comes from analytic continuation in mathematics. The analogy is limited and methodological: Scripture is not a mathematical function, and theological interpretation does not possess the formal uniqueness of analytic continuation. The relevant intuition is that continuation cannot be arbitrary. Just as analytic continuation must remain faithful to a structure already given, constructive biblical-theological continuation must remain constrained by what has genuinely been given in Scripture.

> *Continuation is not free extension but faithful continuation.*

This led to a concise methodological definition that was judged suitable for freezing in the Dao Feng draft:

> *ABC Theology is a biblically normative, evidence-constrained, culturally conscious, and practice-tested method of constructive theological continuation.*

3. Four Methodological Pillars

The discussion identified four interlocking disciplines. First, ABC seeks progressively better-constrained interpretations oriented toward the truth of the biblical text; it does not claim that a particular human interpretation is infallible. Second, well-established contemporary knowledge, including scientific knowledge, functions as an evidential constraint upon responsible interpretation and constructive theology. Third, ABC takes seriously the formative power of culture: language, inherited concepts, family patterns, education, historical memory, and social life shape the person who reads Scripture. Fourth, theological understanding remains open to testing in lived and social practice. Practice does not create truth, but it may expose inadequacies in our understanding of truth.

> *Scripture is normative; interpretation is corrigible.*

4. ABC and Neighboring Theological Approaches

ABC was compared fundamentally with contextual theology, comparative theology, constructive theology, Sino-Christian theology, inculturation, and Analytic Theology. The conclusion was deliberately modest. ABC should not claim to have invented cross-cultural or constructive theologizing, nor should it present itself as a rival replacement for Sino-Christian theology. Its proposed distinctiveness lies in the organization of several concerns into a bounded procedure of continuation: Scripture opens the question; cultural memory and established knowledge deepen the inquiry; constructive theology continues the reflection; epistemic boundaries prevent that continuation from being confused with additional revelation.

Comparison is therefore a means in ABC rather than its defining end. ABC would like to function as a bridge within Chinese-language Christian theology: a bridge that permits serious engagement with Chinese cultural memory without identifying Zhu Xi with Christian doctrine or making Chinese tradition a second revelation.

5. Zhu Xi: Li, Qi, and the Question of Antecedence

The Dao Feng manuscript was tightened around a central Zhu Xi problem. Statements concerning the priority of Li must be read together with statements denying a simple temporal before-and-after relation between Li and Qi. The question is therefore not whether Zhu Xi imagined Li existing for a period of time before Qi, but what kind of grounding or priority is intended when temporal priority is denied. This provides the point of encounter with Christian creation theology.

> *Zhu Xi gives ABC a question, not a Christian answer.*

The Christian boundary was formulated as an explicitly constructive synthesis: “The Living God Alone Is Antecedent.” Antecedence here is primarily ontological rather than chronological: created reality depends upon God, while God does not depend upon created reality. The manuscript therefore preserves the inequalities Zhu Xi ≠ Trinitarian theology and Zhu Xi ≠ ABC Theology.

6. From “Impersonality” to “Non-Agency”

A further editorial correction concerned the description of Zhu Xi’s Li. “Impersonal” risks imposing a modern philosophical category too quickly. “Non-agency” is more precise for the argument being made: Li is not, without further argument, a willing, deliberating, actively creating agent. This permits a sharper comparison with the biblical Creator without caricaturing Zhu Xi.

7. Ultimate Formlessness and Mathematical Representation

The working expression “Qi, at its ultimate, is formless; Li is numerically representable” was retained only as an ABC constructive formulation, not as a quotation or historical summary of Zhu Xi. “Ultimate formlessness” was distinguished from ordinary invisibility and from a hypothetical undiscovered microscopic substance. The present Dao Feng article should not develop detailed AZF mathematical constructions such as $1/\Omega$. Such representations, if used in later ABC work, must be explicitly identified as constructive accessibility representations rather than exegetical conclusions.

The shamrock analogy was useful methodologically: a created representation may provide partial accessibility to one aspect of a theological claim without being identical to, or exhausting, the reality represented. The legitimacy of analogy does not validate every analogy.

8. Scripture, God, and Accessibility

A further foundational distinction emerged late in the discussion: even the Bible, within ABC's accessibility language, must not be identified with the LORD our God. Scripture possesses a unique normative role in Christian theology, but normativity does not imply divine identity. The Bible truly and normatively witnesses to the Living God; it is not the Living God and does not exhaust divine reality.

> *LORD our God ≠ Holy Scripture ≠ our interpretation of Scripture*.

This yields two complementary principles: Accessibility without Identity and Accessibility without Exhaustion. The distinction also protects the Johannine Logos from being reduced to the physical or textual Bible as a book. Christ the Living Word is not identical with the biblical book, although Scripture normatively bears witness to Christ.

9. Rereading Rather than Rewriting

The discussion also recognized the value of the Israel Institute of Biblical Studies slogan about rereading rather than rewriting the Bible. Because this wording belongs to IIBS, it should not be presented as an original ABC slogan if cited in scholarly writing. Nevertheless, its spirit resonates strongly with ABC's discipline: the biblical text remains normative, while readers and interpretations remain corrigible. Rereading therefore means deeper linguistic, historical, canonical, cultural, evidential, and practical examination—not rewriting Scripture to fit contemporary preference.

10. Content Freeze of the Dao Feng Draft

By the end of today's work, the central theological argument of the pre-submission Dao Feng manuscript was considered ready for content freeze. New large theoretical constructions should not be added unless the existing argument cannot stand without them. Remaining work is editorial and evidential: verification of Zhu Xi primary texts, representative scholarship on the Ming–Qing–Republican–contemporary reception history, formal sources for neighboring theological methods, reliable sources on the development of Trinitarian terminology, language tightening, and anonymous-review simulation.

The methodological heart of the frozen draft may be summarized in three sentences:

> *ABC Theology is a biblically normative, evidence-constrained, culturally conscious, and practice-tested method of constructive theological continuation*.
>
> *Scripture is normative; interpretation is corrigible*.
>
> *Continuation is faithful, not arbitrary*.

11. Research Boundary for Future ABC Theology

Several important ideas were intentionally kept outside the present Dao Feng manuscript: detailed constructions of God's Proto-Order, TC-based Trinitarian analogies, 1/Ω, INS, Self-Similarity, and other AZF-derived theological representations. These may remain important for ABC Theology as a wider research program, but preserving the present manuscript requires distinguishing the article's argument from the larger research horizon.

12. Concluding Reflection

Today's work clarified that ABC Theology does not seek novelty through unrestricted speculation. Its constructive character is disciplined by fidelity. It seeks to reread Scripture more deeply, to learn from established knowledge without turning science into revelation, to recognize cultural formation without making culture normative over Scripture, and to accept practical testing without confusing success with truth. Its bridge-building purpose is therefore neither cultural surrender nor cultural conquest, but a disciplined attempt to help Chinese readers encounter Scripture, Christ, and Trinitarian Christian faith through serious engagement with the cultural memory that has helped form them.

> *The purpose of digging deeply in theology is not to manufacture another rock, but to place the foundation more faithfully upon the Rock.*

II. 中文神学研究札记

一、今日工作的目的

今天的工作集中于两个彼此相关的目标：一是继续以匿名审稿人的眼光收紧准《道风》稿，使其进入"内容冻结"状态；二是进一步澄清"分析性圣经延续"（Analytic Biblical Continuation，ABC Theology）本身的方法论身份。我们确立的每日工作纪律是："以审稿心态开始，以定稿心态结束。"因此，今天不再以增加新概念为主要目标，而是不断追问：严格的审稿人会在哪里质疑？哪些论证必须加强？哪些内容虽然重要，却应当留给以后 ABC Theology 的专题研究？

二、为什么叫"分析性圣经延续"？

今天一个决定性的澄清，是重新说明 ABC Theology 名称的真正来源。它的方法论灵感来自数学中的解析延拓（analytic continuation）。这种类比是有限而方法论性的：圣经不是数学函数，神学解释也不具有数学解析延拓意义上的形式唯一性。我们所借用的是"受约束延续"的直觉：如同解析延拓必须忠实于已经给定的函数结构，建设性的圣经神学延续也不能任意发生。

> *延续不是自由延伸，而是忠实延续。*

由此，今天正式形成并冻结了 ABC Theology 的简明方法论定义：

> *ABC Theology is a biblically normative, evidence-constrained, culturally conscious, and practice-tested method of constructive theological continuation.*

即：ABC 神学是一种以圣经为规范、受确立知识约束、具有文化自觉、并接受实践检验的建设性神学延续方法。

三、ABC 的四根方法论支柱

第一，ABC 以不断逼近经文真实意义为首要方向，但并不宣称某一个人的解释本身无误。第二，当代已经确立的知识，包括具有充分证据支持的科学研究成果，可以成为负责任释经与建设神学的重要事实约束。第三，ABC 充分认识文化对于人格与理解视域的塑造：语言、家庭、伦理、教育、历史记忆与社会生活共同塑造来到圣经面前的读者。第四，ABC 重视生命与社会实践的检验。实践不能创造真理，却可能暴露我们对真理理解的不足。

圣经具有规范性；人的解释始终可以被纠正。

四、ABC 与相关神学路径的根本比较

今天我们把 ABC 与处境神学、比较神学、建设神学、汉语神学、本色化以及 Analytic Theology 作了根本性比较。结论应当保持克制：ABC 不应宣称自己发明了跨文化神学或建设神学，也不应把自己描述为汉语神学的替代者。它较有辨识度的贡献，在于把若干已经存在的神学关切组织成一种具有明确认识论边界的“忠实延续”程序：圣经开启问题；文化记忆与确立知识深化追问；建设神学继续思想；认识论边界则防止这种延续被误认为追加启示。

因此，“比较”在 ABC 中是一种方法，而不是最终目的。ABC 愿意成为汉语基督教神学中的一座桥：认真面对中华文化记忆，却不把朱熹等同于基督教教义，也不把中华传统提升为第二启示来源。

五、朱熹：理、气与“先在”的问题

准《道风》稿今天进一步围绕朱子的一个核心张力收紧：有关“先有此理”的表述，必须与否定理气之间存在简单时间先后的表述同时阅读。因此，问题不能被简化为“先有一个独立的理，过了一段时间才有气”。真正的问题是：如果这里的“先”不是普通时间轴上的先，那么朱子所谓“理在先”究竟是哪一种根据性或优先性？这一问题构成朱子思想与基督教创造论真正相遇的入口。

朱子给 ABC 的首先是一个问题，而不是一个基督教答案。

基督教的边界则以一个明确标示为 ABC 建设性综合的命题表达：“The Living God Alone Is Antecedent.” 这里的先在首先是本体论上的依赖关系，而不是普通时间意义上的“更早”：受造实在依赖于神，而神不依赖于受造实在。因此，准《道风》稿继续坚持朱熹 ≠ 三一神学、朱熹 ≠ ABC Theology。

六、从“非人格性”收紧为“非能动性”

今天还完成了一个重要的编辑性修正。用“非人格性”描述朱子的理，容易过早套用现代哲学范畴；“非能动性”更准确地对应本文所需论证：理本身不能未经进一步论证就被理解为具有意志、谋划并主动创造万物的agent。这样既能更精确地与圣经创造主进行比较，也减少对朱子思想的简单化。

七、“终极之无形”与数学表征的边界

工作命题“气终极之无形，理可数也”只保留为 ABC 的建设性表达，而不是朱子原话或对朱子思想的历史归纳。“终极之无形”也必须区别于普通的“看不见”，更不能直接等同于某种尚未发现的微观物质。准《道风》稿目前不应展开 1/Ω 等 AZF 数学构型。以后如果 ABC 使用这些数学表达，也必须明确标示为建设性可及表征，而不能冒充某一节经文的释经结论。

三叶草类比今天帮助我们澄清了一个方法论原则：一个受造表征可以使某一方面获得部分可理解性，却不等于被表征的神学实在，也不能穷尽它。类比在方法论上的合法性，不等于每一个具体类比都成立。

八、圣经、主神与“可及而不穷尽”

今天后段出现了一个更根本的认识论区分：即使圣经这本书，在 ABC 的 accessibility 语言中，也不能与主神本身等同。圣经在基督教神学中具有独特而规范性的地位，但“规范性”并不等于“神性同一”。圣经真实而规范地见证永活的主神；圣经不是主神，也不穷尽主神的实在。

> *LORD our God ≠ Holy Scripture ≠ our interpretation of Scripture*.

由此可以形成两个彼此相辅的原则：Accessibility without Identity（可及而不同一）与 Accessibility without Exhaustion（可及而不穷尽）。这一界线也保护《约翰福音》的 Logos 不被简单等同于作为物质或文本之书的 Bible。基督作为永活之道并不等同于圣经这本书；圣经却规范性地见证基督。

九、重新阅读，而不是重写

我们也重新确认了 Israel Institute of Biblical Studies 关于“重新阅读而不是重写圣经”的口号对 ABC 很有启发。因为这句话属于 IIBS，若正式学术引用，应当注明来源，而不能作为 ABC 自创口号。但它与 ABC 的方法纪律高度共鸣：经文保持规范性，需要不断被校正的是读者与解释。所谓 rereading，是在原文语言、历史语境、正典关系、文化预设、确立知识与实践经验中继续挖深，而不是按照当代偏好重写圣经。

十、准《道风》稿的 Content Freeze

今天结束时，我们认为准《道风》稿的核心神学论证已经具备内容冻结的条件。原则上不再加入新的大型理论构型，除非没有该内容现有论证便无法成立。下一阶段主要属于引证与编辑工作：核准朱子原典的准确文字、卷次、版本、上下文与页码；补强明、清、民国、当代四阶段接受史的代表性学术来源；核准处境神学、比较神学、建设神学与汉语神学的正式文献；补充尼西亚—君士坦丁堡三一神学术语发展史的可靠来源；然后进行语言收紧与匿名审稿模拟。

今天冻结下来的方法论心脏可以归结为三句话：

> *ABC Theology is a biblically normative, evidence-constrained, culturally conscious, and practice-tested method of constructive theological continuation.*
>
> *Scripture is normative; interpretation is corrigible.*
>
> *Continuation is faithful, not arbitrary.*

十一、留给 ABC Theology 后续研究的边界

God's Proto-Order 的更详细内部构型、以 TC 帮助理解三一神学的类比、1/Ω、INS、Self-Similarity 以及其他由 AZF 引出的建设性神学表征，今天有意识地没有继续塞入准《道风》稿。这些内容可以继续属于更广阔的 ABC Theology 研究计划；而保护当前论文，则要求我们区分"这篇文章必须证明什么"与"整个 ABC 研究计划未来还可以探索什么"。

十二、今日总结

今天的工作进一步表明，ABC Theology 所追求的创新并不是无约束的神学想象，而是受忠实性约束的建设。它愿意更深地重新阅读圣经；从确立知识中学习，却不把科学变成启示；认真承认文化塑造，却不让文化凌驾于圣经之上；接受实践检验，却不把成功等同于真理。它作为桥梁的目标，不是文化投降，也不是文化征服，而是帮助深受中华文化记忆塑造的华人，在认真面对自身文化的同时，更真实地来到圣经、基督与三一基督教信仰面前。

> *神学的深挖不是为了另造磐石，而是为了把根基更忠实地立在磐石上。*

III. Closing Prayer / 结束祷告

LORD our God, we thank You for the Scriptures that bear faithful witness to You, for the created world that invites careful study, and for the histories and cultures in which You have placed human lives. Guard us from confusing our interpretations with Your truth, our constructions with Your reality, or our work with Your glory.

Grant us humility to be corrected, courage to inquire, discipline to verify, and faithfulness to continue only where the path remains accountable to Your Word. May what we study and write serve Your Church and help people seek Christ more deeply. Strengthen the work of our hands, and let all glory belong to You alone. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

主我们的神，我们感谢祢赐下圣经，使我们得以真实地听见关于祢的见证；感谢祢所创造的世界，使我们可以认真查考；也感谢祢把人的生命安置在具体的历史与文化之中。求祢保守我们，不把自己的解释等同于祢的真理，不把自己的构型等同于祢的实在，也不把自己的工作变成自己的荣耀。求祢赐我们谦卑，使我们愿意被纠正；赐我们勇气，使我们敢于追问；赐我们纪律，使我们认真核查；也赐我们忠心，使我们的延续始终受祢圣言的约束。愿我们所思想、所查考、所写下的，能够服事祢的教会，帮助人更深地寻求基督。求祢坚固我们手所做的工；愿一切荣耀唯独归于祢。奉父、子、圣灵的名。阿们。

Soli Deo Gloria.