ABC Theology Research Note

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Building Bridges and Preparing the Way:
The Mission and Boundary of ABC Theology

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1. Purpose of Today's Note

Today's work did not add another doctrinal claim to Paper I. Instead, it clarified why the larger ABC Theology writing program exists. The five-paper project is not intended to defeat philosophical traditions, to force mathematical structures into theology, or to replace proclamation with intellectual construction. Its vocation is better described as bridge-building and way-preparing: to enter serious questions faithfully, remove avoidable misunderstandings, test our own constructions against evidence, and help bring the reader to a place where the claims of Scripture and the person of Christ may be encountered without coercion.

We build bridges and prepare the way;
Christ is the destination, not our construction.

2. A Textual Lesson from Zhu Xi: A Tension May Reveal a Deeper Question

Our renewed discussion of the textual problem surrounding Zhu Xi's expressions "each thing possesses a Li" and "each thing possesses a Taiji" sharpened an important methodological lesson. Fang Xudong and Wu Yueqiang argue that the wording with Li in the relevant passage is a scribal slip by Zhu Xi himself and that Taiji better fits the immediate argumentative structure. Whether that historical judgment is ultimately accepted or not, the proposed explanation raises a deeper question: why could Li appear so naturally in precisely that position?

This suggests that an apparent textual mistake may sometimes disclose a conceptual pressure within a thinker's own vocabulary. ABC Theology should therefore resist the temptation either to dismiss the textual problem or to announce that we have already solved Zhu Xi. The more disciplined conclusion is:

We may have found the right question;
we have not yet earned the answer.

The question may eventually concern how particularity and wholeness are related in the language of Li, Taiji, and the myriad things. That possibility should be archived for later research rather than inserted into the already completed first paper.

3. From Zhu Xi to Hegel: Let a Thinker's Strongest Form Speak

The same research discipline should govern the transition toward Hegel and Marx. Hegel should not be reduced to the familiar classroom formula of thesis–antithesis–synthesis. For our purposes, the more important task is to study carefully the movement of Being, Nothing, and Becoming, together with negation and sublation, before comparing any of these ideas with AZF/AZSF.

In particular, Hegelian Nothing must not simply be renamed 0_ABS. Within our present mathematical terminology, 0_ABS is the terminal environment of AEW, classically realized as 0 but not identical with scalar 0. Therefore the following boundary must remain explicit:

Hegelian Nothing ≠ 0_ABS ≠ scalar 0.

Comparison may pressure-test a model; comparison does not establish identity.

This is an example of a broader ABC rule: a powerful resonance is an invitation to investigate, not permission to collapse distinct conceptual systems into one another.

4. Preparing for Paper II: Marx Must Be Allowed to Speak Before He Is Judged

Paper II, the second bridge—the human person—remains centered on Karl Marx rather than on Hegel or on a generalized political debate about Marxism. Hegel belongs in the project because Marx's intellectual development cannot be understood responsibly without asking what he inherited, transformed, or rejected. But the order of research remains historical and evidential.

- First, establish the historical facts of Marx's 1824 baptism: date, place, church, record, family religious background, and the confessional/institutional character of the relevant Prussian Evangelical Church.
- Second, allow the young Marx to speak through his own early writings concerning Christ, vocation, human purpose, and the union of the believer with Christ.
- Third, study Hegel carefully enough to understand the intellectual background of Marx's later materialist turn.
- Fourth, bring Marx's protest against injustice into conversation with the biblical protest preserved in Habakkuk.
- Fifth, apply Practice-Accountability to Marxism without treating either historical tragedy or historical achievement as an automatic verdict on an entire worldview.

A possible philosophical pressure point has emerged, but it remains a research question rather than a conclusion: when Marx condemns an existing condition as something that ought not to be, what grounds the normativity of that "ought"? We must not answer this question before Marx's own texts have been allowed to answer as strongly as they can.

Let Marx speak strongly before we ask where Marx reaches his limit.

5. Habakkuk and the Possibility of Protest Before God

The prospective role of Habakkuk became clearer today. Scripture does not require the faithful person to pretend that violence, oppression, or injustice are insignificant. Habakkuk preserves a fierce protest spoken before God. This opens a question that may become central to Paper II:

Must one leave God in order to protest injustice,
or can one protest injustice before God?

This question must not be used to turn Habakkuk into Marx or Marx into Habakkuk. Their grounds, directions, and hopes must be examined rather than presumed identical. The comparison is valuable precisely because it permits both voices to retain their difference.

6. The Missionary Boundary: "Prepare the Way of the Lord"

The decisive theological clarification today came from Matthew 3:3, citing Isaiah: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight." For the ABC project, this provides a fitting missionary image, provided that the distinction between our work and the Lord's work is preserved.

ABC Theology may build bridges. It may clarify concepts, examine evidence, remove false alternatives, and create intellectual accessibility. But no theological method, philosophical argument, mathematical representation, or cultural bridge is Christ. Nor can our construction produce faith by intellectual force.

Bridge ≠ Identity ≠ Proof
Accessibility ≠ Identity ≠ Exhaustion

Bridge ≠ Way ≠ Christ

The bridge is therefore an invitation to cross, not a mechanism for pushing someone across. Our responsibility is faithfulness in building; the reader remains a responsible person before God, and the fruit of the work is not ours to control.

7. The Five-Bridge Writing Program Reconsidered

Today's clarification gives the five-paper program a more coherent missionary architecture. The sequence is not a ladder by which human thought ascends to God. Rather, each bridge enters a serious intellectual or cultural question and attempts to prepare a clearer path toward encounter with biblical revelation.

- The Way (道): Zhu Xi — Li, antecedence, and created order.
- The Human Person (人): Karl Marx — injustice, vocation, grace, apostasy, and the human end.
- Emptiness (空): Nāgārjuna — to be approached only after serious study, without equating śūnyatā with 0_ABS.
- Benevolence/Humaneness (仁): a later return to Confucian thought after the preceding bridges have widened the field of inquiry.
- Civilization (文明): the future cultural question, whose conclusion must be earned rather than predicted.

The program can therefore be summarized as 道 → 人 → 空 → 仁 → 文明, but the sequence itself must never become a substitute gospel. Its purpose is preparatory and dialogical.

8. Practice-Accountability of the Bridge Itself

Practice-Accountability applies not only to the traditions ABC Theology studies but also to ABC Theology itself. If a bridge distorts the tradition it claims to engage, hides contrary evidence, confuses analogy with identity, or makes Christ less rather than more visible, then the bridge requires correction.

Accordingly, ABC Theology should continue to test itself by several questions: Does the source retain the right to disagree with us? Have we distinguished historical evidence from constructive continuation? Have we said more than the evidence permits? Have we confused mathematical accessibility with theological proof? Have we allowed our construction to become more important than the One toward whom it is meant to point?

9. Research Decisions Recorded Today

- Paper I remains frozen. The Li/Taiji question is archived for later study rather than inserted into the submission manuscript.
- Paper II remains the next major writing project, beginning with the historical dossier of Marx's 1824 baptism.
- Hegel will be studied as necessary intellectual background, not treated as a second protagonist of Paper II.
- No identity is asserted between Hegelian Nothing and 0_ABS.
- The possible normative limit of Marx's materialist account remains a question to be earned from Marx's texts.
- The larger purpose of the five-paper program is now explicitly framed as bridge-building and way-preparing, under the boundary that Christ cannot be replaced by our constructions.

10. Concluding Principle

Today's work therefore did not primarily give us another answer. It clarified the vocation under which our questions should be pursued. We may study boldly, compare widely, construct carefully, and ask radical questions; but every intellectual bridge remains provisional before Truth.

Today, faithfully lay down one brick.
We build bridges and prepare the way; Christ is the destination, not our construction.
THE LIVING GOD ALONE IS ANTECEDENT.

***Soli Deo Gloria*.**