Can we trust the Bible?

我们能相信圣经吗?

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How can we trust what the Bible says when there are hundreds of church denominations

that believe different things?

我们怎么能相信圣经所说的,当有数百个教堂教派信仰着不同的东西?

That is a good question, a question you may have heard someone ask. Or it might be a question you ask. After all, if the Bible is true and Christians believe in the truth, why can't they agree about what it says? There are hundreds of Christian denominations in the United States alone. Presbyterian, Baptist, Pentecostal, Methodist, Christian Church, Church of God, Nazarene, Evangelical Free, Foursquare, Quaker, Brethren, Lutheran, Mennonite, Wesleyan, Christian Reformed, just to name a few. And once you get into one of these groups there are many varieties of Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians or Lutherans.

这是一个很好的问题,一个可能很多人都问过的问题。或者,它也许是你会问到的一个问题。毕竟,如果圣经是真实的,基督徒相信真理,为什么他们不能有一致的观点呢?仅在美国就有数百个基督教派。长老会,浸信会,五旬节派,卫理公会,基督教堂,神的教堂,拿撒勒,基督教播道,四方,桂格,路德,信义,门诺,卫斯理,基督教归正教会,只是仅举几例。一旦你进入这些群体,其中还会有许多不同的小的分支。

Some matters of Christian doctrine and practice are really clear in the Bible, such as not murdering or lying. Others are less clear, or at least not viewed as clear in the same way by all Christians. Some churches stress God's control while others emphasize human choices. Women serving in certain leadership positions is acceptable in some churches while not in others. Some churches teach that water baptism is essential to the new birth in Christ, while others do not see water baptism as required to be a Christian.

有一些基督教教义和实践的指导是在圣经中明确指出的,如不能谋杀或不能欺骗。其他指导都不 是很清晰,或者至少不被视为会被所有的基督徒都接受的清晰的指导。有些教会强调神的控制, 而其他强调人的选择。有些教堂接受女性做领导的职位,有些却不能接受。有些教会教导说水的 洗礼是受洗时必不可少,而其他的教会却没有这样的要求。

Trying to determine if some points of doctrine or practice are more critical than others to the Christian faith can be confusing. I grew up in a solid Bible teaching church with no question regarding the authority of Scripture. But it was really hard as a teenager because there were so many points of doctrine and rules of conduct, and they were all held equally in terms of their centrality to the Christian faith. So my world was rocked when, in high school, our pastor came to our youth group to inform us that he had, for the first time in his life, went to a movie theater to watch a movie. Our church had one template for how a Christian lived and what he/she believed. This did not fit the template. He had taught us before that such activity was mixing with the world and compromising the message of the gospel. Now in his careful explanation a new category was allowed.

单确定是否某些关于教义的指导更重要会给基督信仰带来困扰。我生长在一个扎实的圣经教导的教会,没有任何对圣经的权威的困惑。但是当我是个青少年时,因为在圣经中有很多的教导和规矩,而所有的教导对基督信仰都同等的重要,这一点让我的生活变的很困难和困扰。在高中的时候,当我听到一个牧师在青年组分享,他生平第一次去电影院看电影,我觉得我的世界都被震撼和颠覆了。我们的教会有一个标准模式,一个基督徒应该如何生活和应该相信什么。看电影没有写在这个模式中。他以前教我们这样的活动是属世界的,会影响福音的教导。但是现在,在他的细心解释中,一个新的活动类别是被允许的。

How can we trust the Bible with so many different interpretations and how should we sort through which doctrinal positions are essential and which are not? 我们怎么能相信圣经有这么多不同的解释,我们应该如何进行排序,那些教义是重要的必要的,哪些不是?

The Bible itself speaks to this reality, giving us a framework for processing matters where there is different interpretation or understanding of Scriptural principles. In Romans 14 Paul describes two examples for the First Century Christians in Rome. There was a group of Jewish Christians in Rome who had become vegetarians. The Old Testament did not command complete abstinence from meant, but restricted the kinds of meat which could be eaten (Lev 11). But they felt that theirs was the safest route because it was so difficult to be sure meat was kosher in Rome. While others taught that eating meat was OK, they were convinced it was clearly immoral. There was also the issue of the Sabbath. The Jewish Christians felt very strong about observing the Sabbath and did not agree with the notion floating around that every day was equally devoted to serving God. They formed the *anti-meat-eating-law-observing* segment of the church in Rome.

圣经本身就在揭示这个答案,在我们遇到有不同的解释或圣经原则的理解的时候,它给了我们一个模板帮助我们处理这样的情况。在罗马书 14 章保罗介绍了两个例子,为在罗马的一世纪的基督徒。在罗马有一群犹太基督徒成为了素食主义者。旧约没有命令的意思完全禁食肉食,但限制了那些肉类可以食用(利 11)。但他们认为他们这样做是最安全的方法,因为有时很难分辨什么肉不可以食用。当另一些人教导说吃肉是可以的,他们却认为这显然是不道德的。还有安息日的问题。犹太人基督徒认为应该严格的遵守安息日的规矩,强烈的反对可以任意改变安息日的时间,不同意任何一天去服侍神是没有区别的理念。他们在罗马组成了反肉食的教会。

Here is how Paul addressed these issues:

保罗是这样解决这些问题:

Romans 14:3-9 (NIV)

The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

3吃的人不可轻看不吃的人。不吃的人不可论断吃的人。因为神已经收纳他了**4**你是谁,竟论断别人的仆人呢?他或站住,或跌倒,自有他的主人在。而且他也必要站住。因为主能使他站住。

One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

5 有人看这日比那日强,有人看日日都是一样。只是各人心里要意见坚定。6 守日的人,是为主守的。吃的人,是为主吃的,因他感谢神。不吃的人,是为主不吃的,也感谢神。7 我们没有一个人为自己活,也没有一个人为自己死。8 我们若活着,是为主而活。若死了,是为主而死。所以我们或活或死,总是主的人。9 出于这个原因,基督死了,回到了生活,使他可能是两个死人和活人的主。

Paul here gives crucial guidance for all Christians when we are wading through various interpretations, convictions and positions. The warning is real: we can allow our theological positions or biblical interpretations to overshadow the centrality of Jesus Christ and his redemptive work on the cross. After all, when asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus did not say, "Have the correct doctrinal position on important matters of the day." He said we should love God with all our heart and love other people.

当我们艰难的梳理圣经中各种不同的解释,信念和立场的时候,保罗给所有的基督徒给出了非常重要的指导。这样的警告是真实的:我们有可能会让我们的神学立场或圣经的解释掩盖了应该以耶稣基督为中心的生活和耶稣基督在十字架上的救赎。毕竟,当被问及什么是最大的诫命时,耶

稣没有说,"对每天的重要事务需要有正确的神学理论。"而他说,我们要用全心去爱上帝和爱 其他的所有人。

Throughout the history of the church there has been extraordinary agreement on the major doctrines of the church. These are reflected in, among other places, the Apostles Creed, a statement that we first discover in the 4th Century. It is actually not written by the Apostles, but is a statement by the early church summarizing the basic teaching of the gospels and NT epistles. 纵观整个教会的历史,也出现过对教会的主要教义非常一致的阐释。这些都出现在使徒的信经中,曾经在第四世纪时的时候第一次被发现。这实际上不是使徒写的,是早期教会对福音和 NT 书信的基本教义的总结。

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit

and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic (universal or whole) church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

使徒信经

我相信上帝,全能的父,

创天地。

我相信耶稣基督,他唯一的儿子,我们的主,

是经圣灵

由童女马利亚所生的。

他在遭受本丢彼拉多,

被钉十字架, 死了, 埋葬了。

他下到地狱。

第三天, 他再次从死里复活。

他升天

并坐在圣父全能的右手。

从那里,他会来审判活人和死人。

我相信,在圣灵,

圣天主教 (通用或全部) 教堂,

圣徒相通,

罪得赦免,

身体的复活,

和生命的永生。阿门。

This creed encapsulates the central message of redemptive truth, those points of believe that make a person or group "Christian." As with any statement of belief, there are minor nuances that reflect the language of the day and might be slightly modified to adjust to modern vernacular. On our church website under the tab, "Who We Are" you will find a tab labeled, "What We Believe." There you will find The Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America, the movement of churches we are a part of. This is our attempt at expressing the core essentials of the Christian faith. It is not perfect, as no statement ever is, but it points us to the biblical truth that matters most for a life of faith and obedience to the Lord.

这个信条装载了救赎真理的核心的信息,是这样的信仰才使得一个人或者一个团体成为基督徒。 对于这样的信仰陈述,如果用现代的语言表达会有细微的差别,可能需要略作修改,以适应现代 的语言习惯。在我们的教会的网站上,在写着"我们是谁"的标签下,你会发现一个标签标记, 写着"我们相信什么。"在那里,你会发现福音自由教会的信仰的声明。这是我们尝试表达基督 教信仰的核心要素的方法。它不是完美的,因为没有任何声明是完美的,但它带领我们指向圣经 的真理,这对于我们生命的信仰和顺服于主是最重要的。

It is worth mentioning that our church is not like many very good churches in that we do not have a long list of sub-points, positions on minor theological issues that must be adhered to in order to be part of our fellowship. You can be a member of this church if you identify more with a Presbyterian church emphasis on the way God oversees and controls events or if you identify more with a Nazarene church emphasis on human beings having free will and responsibility for their actions. There are a host of issues that we can differ on within our church, choosing to embrace the central message of the Bible. I am convinced that this is one of the key strengths of the Free Church and one of our greatest connection points. The world desperately needs to hear about Jesus, not about our views on miracles in the church today.

值得一提的是,我们教会不象某些好教会,对一些小的神学问题有这样那样的规条和立场,你得在这些上与他们保持一致才能归属于这个教会。如果你象长老教会那样比较注重监管,没问题,

你可以来我们教会;或者你象拿撒勒教会那样比较注重个人自由和责任,没问题,你也可以来我们教会。只要在圣经的核心信息上保持一致,我们可以在教会里对很多问题容纳不同的意见。我相信这是 Free Church 的重要长处。这个世界急需的是关于耶稣的信息,而不是我们关于当今教会的奇事的观点。

This approach to doctrine also allows for some variation within Evangelical Free Churches across the country. While the Statement of Faith does not mandate any particular mode of baptism, we, for example practice believers baptism. There are some EFCA churches who practice a covenant baptism of infants.

这样的教义让全国范围内的 E Free 教会可以存在一些不同。例如,信仰告白里并没有规定洗礼的具体形式,我们教会采用浸礼;而有些 EFCA 教会施行婴儿洗礼。

In 1993 Mike Andrus, when he was the pastor of this church, wrote an article for the EFCA Ministerial Association titled, "Drawing Doctrinal Lines: Where? And How?" In this article he describes how the wide toleration of viewpoints not directly addressed in the EFCA Statement of Faith can be both a strength and a liability. It is a strength, as I mentioned, because we can focus on the core essentials of the faith and not spend too much energy fighting for something that is not, in the end, critical to salvation.

1993年,当时任这间教会牧师的 Mike Andrus 给 EFCA 的牧者协会写了一篇题为"教义的界线:在哪儿?怎么画?"的文章。文中他阐述了 EFCA 信仰告白中没有直接陈明的一些大范围相容的观点如何既可以是长处也可以是缺点。可以是一个长处是因为我们可以专注于信心的基本核心内容,而不用花过多精力去争执一些最终与救赎关系不大的东西。

This approach can be a liability because, while not essential for salvation, there are other very important matters that require sound biblical interpretation. Some conclusions hold more weight than others when viewed through the history of the church and accepted biblical understanding.

可以是缺点是因为,这些虽然不是救赎的基础,但是是一些很重要的议题,需要坚实的符合圣经的解释。从教会历史和符合圣经的角度来看,某些议题比另外一些议题显得更为重要一些。

Mike proposed four levels of theological thought using a pyramid diagram. These levels are general descriptors and somewhat arbitrary. The purpose of this chart and the article is to help Christians sort through various issues rather than to create exact lines of distinction. I have slightly adapted his categories for our use today as he wrote the article for the EFCA Ministerial Association rather than for congregational use.

Mike 提出了一个类似金字塔图案的四个层次的神学思想。这些层次总的来说是描述性的。这个图和这篇文章的目的是在于帮助基督徒理顺些问题而不是划定区分的界线。我稍稍修改一下他的分类以适今用,因为他当时的文章是写给牧者协会而不是教会会众的。



[highlighted words/phrases in this section will be added to diagram as they are mentioned.]

The lowest level he called *speculation* which warrants little more than curiosity. *Theory* is the second level of the pyramid and represents issues that are open for debate among Christians, but about which there can be very strong convictions. *Doctrine* is the third level of the pyramid

and would encompass those positions that we hold very closely. *Essentials* is the top level of the pyramid and contains those issues that are of the highest certainty and value to the work of Christ. Note that there is less room at the top section of the pyramid, meaning there are fewer essentials than there are matters of doctrine or theory.

最底的一层是推测,就是跟好奇差想相去不远,第二层是理论,就是在基督教圈子内可供辩论的议题,这些议题往往不乏各持己见的支持者,第三层是教义,就是我们相信和紧握的立场,最高的一层是基要真理,这是耶稣基督事工的终极肯定和价值。请注意金字塔的顶尖比较狭窄,指出了基要真理总比教义和理论在数量上占较少数。

But how do we know what matters are essentials, doctrine, theory, or speculation? Andrus goes on, "There are four factors which, if kept in proper perspective can help us determine how to categorize ideas properly. In his diagram these are the four corners of the pyramid:

- Is it clear what the Bible teaches on this topic? This refers to how clearly the Bible speaks to the issue being considered.
- How central is this topic to salvation? This refers to the connection that the issue being considered has to the central theme of God's redemptive plan.
- How much does the Bible talk about this topic? This is simply how much the Bible speaks to an issue or concept.
- What is the level of agreement in church history? This looks at the view on a particular issue throughout the history of the church.

我们如何把不同的议题归纳在基要真理、教义、理论或推测的层次中?艾牧师继而说:"从恰当的观点与角度出发,我们可引用四则准绳去量度信仰的理念"。以下是他金字塔图解中的四个角落:

- 圣经对这议题是否有清晰的教导? 就是说圣经有没有清楚地说明议题的重点。
- 议题距离救恩的核心有多深远? 就是说议题与神拯救计划的相关性。
- 圣经中有多少编幅论及议题? 就是圣经有多少次说明一个议题或概念。

• 在教会历史中对议题观点的一致程度? 就是在历史中, 教会对某一议题的看法。

[Keep diagram on screen as I discuss topics related to the diagram]

So pick a topic. Let's start with the question, "Should Christian women wear head coverings in worship?" The instruction from Paul to the Corinthian church is pretty clear. (11:3-16) The topic is not, however central to salvation, nor does the Bible give lots of attention to it. The church has recognized a contextual element to the Corinthian situation that impacts the interpretation of this matter. So I think this issue rests as a theory or for some it might touch the doctrine section. 让我们挑选一个议题:"主内姊妹们在崇拜时应否蒙头?"保罗对哥林多教会的指示是十分明确的【十一章三至十六节】,可是,这议题与救赎没有多大关系,而圣经亦没有很着重的教导,教会需要认识到,这只是因着当时哥林多教会的环境因素,影响着对此议题的演绎,故此,我认为这议题应被纳入理论的层次,对某些人来说,这议题也可能触及教义的范围。

What about whether your dog or cat will be in heaven and if so will he/she recognize you? Probably lands in the speculation section. There could be some guiding principles from the Bible, but it is not clearly addressed.

这议题又如何理解:你的猫儿或狗儿会否进入天国?倘若它们可以住在天国,它们会否认识你? 这可能是推测,圣经中可能有一些引导性的原则,但没有清晰地说明。

What about the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Bible is very clear in its teaching on this topic. It is of incredible theological importance. The New Testament is full of references to it so the emphasis is strong. And historically the church has stood in support of this as central to the faith. So it rests at the top of the pyramid as an essential, indisputable.

耶稣的肉体是否复活了?这议题又如何理解?圣经十分清晰地教导这真理,这真理带着不能否认的重要性,新约圣经屡屡道出这真理,可见这是核心的重点,教会历来亦坚守这真理作为信仰的据点,故此,这真理立于金字塔图解之巅,这是基要真理,无可争议。

Baptism is an interesting topic to run through this grid. The fact of baptism is a doctrine given

the high degree of each of the marks provide. The mode of baptism, however, does not have the clarity, biblical emphasis or historical agreement, in my opinion to land in the doctrine section. I agree with the author of the article that the mode of baptism is more a theory. Some pour, some sprinkle, some dunk. Arguments are made in favor of each position. The mode of baptism is not something we would fight about.

浸礼(或洗礼,下同)是一则有趣的议题,让我们试把这议题放进金字塔模型。浸礼的事实高度地吻合以上的准绳,但如何举行浸礼的仪式,却没有清晰的教遵,圣经亦没有强调,教会历来也没有在这议题的观点上表明一致性。我认为这议题是教义,我亦同意文章作者所说的,浸礼的施行仪式可算是理论,有倒水的、有洒水的、也有浸在水中的,各种模式也有着各自的理据,但浸礼的施行模式,绝非我们要争论的议题。

The nature of Christian marriage being between one man and one woman is a current topic in our culture and in many faith communities. Using this formula, I would place the nature of marriage as a doctrine. In his article, Mike includes the church's view of divorce as a doctrine while allowing for the issue of remarriage to land in the doctrine or theory level.

基督教的婚姻观点,就是一男一女的结合,正是在我们的文化和多个信仰团体中的当前议题,若采用这模型去分析,我会把婚姻的本质放进教义的层次。艾牧师在他的文章中指出,教会把离婚这课题纳入教义的层次,同时他把再婚纳入教义或理论的层次。

You can see how the tendency could be to push almost every issue into the very tip of the pyramid. And of course it is the issue or position I am passionate about that needs to be at the top. But the pyramid shape helps us to accept that there are lots of issues to speculate about, much to theorize over, significant areas on which to take a doctrinal stance and a handful of biblical truths that we will not move from. It also forces me to ask the very introspective question of why do I hold so tightly to this issue or position?

你们大概可以猜想,我们各人都可能趋向于把所有的议题推进金字塔模型的顶尖,而那些对自己

有着重大意义的,更应放进最高的一层,但这金字塔的形状提醒我们,触目皆是的推测性议题乃 泛泛之谈,不乏其数的理论性议题可按理分解,重点的教义性议题需要站立表彰,核心的基要真 理应当坚固持守,这模型亦促使我去自我反省,追究为何我要紧握某一观点或角度?

It is important to exercise humility when we are embracing doctrinal issues. I once had a pastor who told me that we will all have our theology corrected when we get to heaven. It would be the height of arrogance to claim to have the accurate view on every matter of faith and practice. What we believe and how we approach the truth of the Bible is tainted by our own experience, values, personality and deep inner motivations.

我们抱着谦逊的态度去坚信教义性的议题是很重要的,有一位牧师曾告诉我,当我们在天家时,我们所抱的神学立场都会被更正,若宣称已掌握所有信仰课题和实践的正确观点,这宣称委实是高傲的表表者,我们的人生经验、价值观、性格和强烈的内心意志,往往驾驭着我们的信念和对圣经真理的评估。

There is a continuum of doctrinal purity or of right belief, to be sure. We all have some errors or things we might cling to more than merited by the Bible. We trust the Holy Spirit to keep us close to the center of God's truth through his Word. Sometimes the errors or hobby horses we have are minor and have little impact on life with God and fellowship with other believers. We are warned in Scripture, however, to be careful not to drift from the truth and allow unbelief or false doctrines to take root, those teaching systems that contradict the central message of salvation in Jesus. When an error or deviation from accepted Christian teaching is incompatible with the Gospel message we find in the Bible, that is when we use the word "heresy."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, "so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1 Timothy 4:16 (NIV)

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

毫无疑问地,教义或信念的纯正程度,应有一定的连续性,我们总会抱着某些超越圣经确立的要点以外的谬误或个人诠释,我们仰赖圣灵会借着祂的话来保守,叫我们靠近神真理的核心,有些时候,这些谬误或个人诠释不会影响我们在神里面的生命和与其他信徒的交往,但圣经亦警告我们,千万不能流离真理,也不可以让那些与耶稣救赎信息有所抵触的谬误教义生根,当某些教义出现谬误或偏差,与公认的基督教教导有所抵触时,我们称那些教义为"异端"。

以下两段经文,可作为今天重要课题的参考:

提摩太后书三章十六至十七节

圣经都是神所默示的(或作:凡神所默示的圣经),于教训、督责、使人归正、教导人学义都是有益的,叫属神的人得以完全,预备行各样的善事。

提摩太前书四章十六节

你要谨慎自己和自己的教训,要在这些事上恒心;因为这样行,又能救自己,又能救听你的人。

So what does all of this mean for us today?

If you are investigating the Christian faith, or if you consider yourself a skeptic because there are so many denominations and interpretations of the Bible, please consider the central doctrines that bind different Christian denominations together. Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Mennonite, and Lutheran all affirm the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the salvation that comes through him. We can have confidence in the historical doctrines of the

Christian Church.

这些理据与我们当前的境况有何关系?

倘若你正在考究基督教的信仰,也许你因着宗派林立和各种对圣经的演绎而抱着怀疑的态度,但

所有的基督教宗派,不论是浸信会、循理会、长老会、五旬节会、门诺会和路得会,他们都坚信耶稣基督的生平事迹,祂的牺牲和借着祂成全的救赎,我们信赖基督教教会历年来确定了的教义。 If you are a follower of Jesus, you can humbly engage other believers in non-essential areas of doctrine and practice with the goal of promoting Christlikeness.

We can call out to the lost and dying world that there is an answer and it is found in Jesus Christ.

The message of salvation is clear and accessible to all who will believe.

倘若你已是耶稣的跟随者,你大可与其他信徒共同考究非重心的教义和实践,为要一同学习更象 基督。

我们可以向这失落和将亡的世代宣告在耶稣基督里可以找到的答案,就是清晰的救赎信息,凡愿意相信的,都可以得着祂所赐的救恩。

If you are here today and you say, "Man, I just want to know what the truth is, what do I need to believe and not budge on?" You can leave satisfied that the essentials of the Christian faith are few and they are clear through the Bible and throughout the history of the Church. It is not perfect, but the Statement of Faith of the EFCA is one attempt at expressing these core doctrines.

倘若你今天说:"我只想知道什么是真理,我如何可以踏足信仰的入门但不用立时笃信?"基督教的基要信条并不多,它们在圣经中有清楚的说明,也历年来被教会所确认,福音自由教会的信仰宣言虽未完善,但其中的信息,正是教义的主旨。

Max Lucado, a popular author, describes a magnifying glass as a way of understanding this dynamic. In the center of the glass everything is clear, but as you move to the outside things become blurred. But you can return to the center and again everything is clear.

著名作家陆家度用放大镜比例这动态,在放大镜中心看见的物件都是加倍清晰的,但当你慢慢把

视线移到放大镜的外周,物件开始变得模糊了,但你若把视线回转到中心点,那么一切都回复清晰了。