

# Life

Second Series – Sermon Twenty

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This sermon on “Life” is another of MacDonald’s beautiful bookends. This chiasm begins with “The Last Penny,” which is all about our debt of love, then “Life” as the reflection on Penny, which is all about the Divine’s debt of love to us, the cost of freedom. And transformation right there in the middle as the way forward for Them to share Their Life with us. This transformation is “Abba, Father!” sandwiched right there as both the book’s thesis and the series’ theme, with how this all will come to pass through **our becoming what we are!** We need Their help to pay the Penny, and our transformation is how we manifest Their Life in us. What we need is more Life, Their Life in us!

It is clear that resurrection Life was Their way forward as well. They knew the cost from the first and were more than willing to pay Their last Penny. Resurrection is the doorway through which Life destroys darkness and death as we enter into Their fulness through it! Life is what They wanted in the beginning for us to share, which is far beyond our concepts of heaven and is what we were created to have!

## Outline

**Life** - We really want and need Life, and this Life comes from the Divine Life within each of us!

**Creation** - Oh the beauty of creation in relationship, the intricacies of mutuality built into all of it!

**Difficulty and Glory** - It would have been far easier to create a predetermined world of known and predictable outcomes.

**Cost of Freedom** - The Trinitarian God whose irreducible truth is relationship can only satisfy Its' own heart in giving Themselves for Their creation!

**The Joy of Life** - Many of us undoubtedly mistake the joy of life for Life itself.

**God's Life in Us** - We look *out* for life, when we should be looking *in*! Real-Life, Divine-Life, flows out!

**What Are We to Do?** - We must take Their costliest and most precious gift of all - free will - and exercise it in the pursuit of this gift of Life.

**Obedience** - Obedience is the path of the will! This obedience is not the religious one we were handed.

### **John 10:10 NAS**

*"I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly."*

## **Life**

Jesus came to supply all our lack starting from our deepest roots and moving outward. What we need from the very core of our being is more life. What the infant needs is more life, and the mother gives it in abundance. What does the older person need, whose limbs are weak and whose pulse is low, but more life? Weary with their weakness, they call upon death, but in reality, it is life that they want. It is death that desires more death. We long for rest, but there is no rest in death. Death is no more a place of rest, as it is to weariness or weakness. It takes strength to find rest in weariness.

How different is the weariness of the strong man after a day's labor, from the sick person who wishes and cries in the morning, "I wish it were evening!" and in the evening, "I wish it were morning!" **This sad one imagines themselves weary of life, but it is death, not life, of which it is weary.**

No one who knows what life is cries out for death. Even those who seek death in suicide are looking for life. They are, in reality, trying to escape from death, the end of their homelessness, coldness and hunger, failure, disappointment, exhaustion, confusion, madness, and fear of discovery. They seek the darkness as a refuge from the death that possesses them. They are creatures consumed by death. What they call life is but a bad dream filled with death.

**"More life!" is the unconscious prayer of all creation, for all creation groans and travails for the redemption of its children as sons.** This travail is the cry seen in the faces of flowers, animals, and much of what we call nature.

## **Creation**

All things are possible, but not all are easy for God. The Divine life is easy for God, for it is Their nature. But to create after their grand thoughts and desires, which alone would satisfy Their heart and will, is not easy. **Because of Their very nature and being, it must have been hard and painful, as history shows, to create beings as close to Themselves as possible without being Themselves. Oh, the price our freedom has cost Them!**

**The problem was one of union and distinction in making a creation that would be, by necessity, dependent on Them, yet distinct in choice and will as individuals. Distinct as real persons, able to turn to Them and choose to have a real relationship with Them. "I will arise and go to my father."** Able to develop in itself the highest of the Divine life that humanity is capable of becoming and to have the ability to choose the good from which they came, thus completing the circle of discovery. Enjoy being able to live in the moment, consciously and actively from its life's source in its very own being. In the end having been, restored to the one in which our Maker had imagined from the start. Encompassing all that was in His mind from the beginning when His creation was originally formed.

## **Difficulty and Glory**

I can imagine the difficulty and complexity of creating a creature distinct from Himself, a creature with its own will to choose. Creating something so diverse yet in such mutuality is only possible from the Divine mind flowing through Their own Life and Being. **These thoughts and imaginations of God preceded creation itself, forming a man wonderfully unique with individuality, consciousness, and choice. Conscious choice at its purest is choosing the right, the true, and the divinely harmonious.**

**Therefore, the end of distinction is not individuality but the means to it, which ends in a oneness that is impossible without it. There is no unity, no delight of love, no harmony, no good in being, where there is but one. In order for there to be oneness, there must be at least two; the greater the number of individuals, the more remarkable, lovelier, richer, and more divine the possibility of unity.**

**God is life and the willing source of all existence. In the overflowing of that life, I come to know Them. When I am told that They are love, I understand that if they were not loving and self-giving then they would not and could not create.** I know nothing more profound in Them than relational love, nor believe there is anything more profound than that, no, that there can be anything deeper than this love. **The very being of God is love, therefore creation! It is in their essential nature to create. They saw it was not good for man to be alone because They, the Father, Son, and Spirit, had never been alone, in Their eternal being and union as the Trinity.**

I know I am speaking here after my poor, limited, and human perspective, for that is all that I have, **when I say that the Father, Son, and Spirit were never content to be alone in Their love. Through the Son, as the original and perfect idea of humanity, they decided and worked to give life to other beings who would be blessed with Their character and nature. Beings growing into the image of the Son. This likeness for far too long was small. However, this likeness was forever growing, having not yet arrived at its fulness, in an image and likeness whose idea we have even not yet grasped.**

Let no one think that to say God undertakes a difficult task in Their desire to bring many sons and daughters into participation in Their Divine nature is to reflect negatively on Their power and glory! The greater the difficulty, the greater the glory for Them that complete what They start. Complete without a

shadow of compromise or limited success, reveling in the satisfaction and triumph of bringing unto Themselves innumerable radiant souls!

## **Cost of Freedom**

**They knew what it would cost from the beginning! It was not just the energy of will alone, or the original creation and distinction from Themselves, even though this could have been painful. But the suffering that could only be Theirs, that we cannot imagine, in our transformation into what we are in Christ. In the ongoing suffering of Their labor opposed by us at every turn. Our resistance is causing them to continue to suffer through the painful process and costly experience, which is the only means left to them by us.**

**We find it hard to get what we want because what we want is not the best or good for us. The Divine find it hard to give because They give what is only good for us, and we don't want it. What Jesus did, is what They have always been doing. The suffering He endured is the suffering They have experienced from the foundation of the world—the misery reaching its climax in the Son's life. The Divine was providing the sacrifice, the sacrifice of Himself. He is always and forever has been sacrificing Himself to and for His children. This giving lies at the very heart of Their creation of us as distinct and free beings bound in union!**

**Besides dividing religion from its love and righteousness from its debt, the worst heresy is to divide the Father from the Son, separating Them in any way, in thought, feeling, actions, or intent, or to represent the Son doing anything differently from the Father. Jesus said and did only what His Father said and did. When Jesus suffered for us, it is because the Father suffers for us. Only Jesus came closer to us through a body and its senses so that He could bring us closer to His Father and our Father, and by His sacrifice give us Life, and losing what could be lost of His own.**

**Jesus is the Divine Savior. It is because They came to save us that Jesus is our Savior. The God and Father of Jesus Christ could never be satisfied with less than giving Himself for His children! An unbeliever could easily imagine a better God than what most theology and religions offer them. But the loveliest the human heart is capable of can barely reflect the length, breadth, depth, and height of the Divine love expressed in the Son who is of one mind and heart with His Father!**

## **The Joy of Life**

**The whole of history is the story of Divine agony to give Their Life to all Their children. And the outcome of this creative struggle's efforts is radiant Life, with unspeakable joy in its' blossoming. Every child will look into their Father's eyes and receive His infinite embrace. This Life Jesus came to release in us is a Life exceeding the highest that an untransformed person knows, and Life more than that of all Their other creatures. More and more Life is given to those who will receive it now and on into eternity. The Son has Life in Himself and that Life is the Light of men. We can only know Life through the Light that enables us to see. Growth in the Christian comes through more and more of the Life they receive. **At first, this life will be indistinguishable from the desire to save ourselves. However, in the end, we lose that life in Their glorious love, and by this love, save it. The new self becomes but a cloud that filters the Light into unspeakable harmonies.****

"In the midst of life, we are in death," said one. This statement is more accurate than amid death we are in life. **Life is the only reality. Death is but a shadow cast from Light, and death is a word for something that cannot be.** It would be the denial of life, an idea in opposition to, and a mere shadow of real Life. It owes its idea only in contrast to Life, but in Life, there is no death. If God were not, there would not even be the idea of "nothing." For even nothing must be preceded by Life, for nothingness owes its very idea in contrast to existence, a something.

One of the questions in discussing matter and spirit is which was first and caused the other, things or thoughts. The question of whether things caused thought or thought caused things? There is no doubt that thought was first, causality preceding any material reality. So it is clear that death can be the cure for nothing, that the cure for everything must be life. So, the problems which come through existence are from its shadows, not from itself. We simply need more life, for we have nothing to do with death, for all of our relations are with life.

Someone who mourns can only mourn from lack. You cannot mourn from an abundance of being, but only from a lack of being. We are vessels of life, those not yet filled with its wine of life. Where this wine does not reach, there are cracks, ashes, and distress. Who would pour out the wine that is there instead of filling the vessel to the brim with more wine! All of our being must partake in Their essential Being, our life assisted, upheld, and comforted in every part with Their Life. Life is the food, the law, and the necessity of our life. Life is everything!

**Many of us undoubtedly mistake the joy of life for Life itself.** And longing after this joy, we suffer an insatiable thirst, but even this thirst points to the spring of Life. These mistaken ones love only themselves, not Life, and this self is but a shadow of real Life. When the shadow is taken for life itself and placed at the center of our being, it becomes a source of death in us, a devil we worship as a god, the delusion we take to our hearts as our one true joy!

The one filled with Divine harmonies has Life, a more significant being, than the one consumed with care. A wise person has a more significant life than a clown. The poet is more alive than the rich, whose life flows from their money and things. The one who loves his neighbor is Infinitely more alive than the one who thinks himself better than others—the one who strives to be better than those who seek the praises of men. **The person in whom God is All-in-all is the one whose life is rooted with Christ in God. This one knows they are the inheritor of all wealth, worlds, and ages, yes, and has all power in themselves, and this one has truly begun to live.**

Let us in all the troubles of this life remember that what we need is more life, more of Their Life-making presence, making us more and more alive! When we are most oppressed and weary of life, as our unbelief would say. Let us remind ourselves that it is death's inroad and presence of which we are weary. When we are most inclined to sleep, let us rouse ourselves to live. And for sure, let us avoid the tired and hopeless collapse of a false refuge and yield to things as they are. It is life in us that is discontent with this life of death, and we need more of this discontent, not more of its cause. Discontent, I repeat, is life in us wanting more of itself, discontent calling out for more life! **We have the victory when in the midst of our pain and weakness, we cry out, not for death, nor a state of forgetfulness, but for strength to fight. Call out for more power, more consciousness of being, more of God in us.**

**The true man trusts in a strength that is not his own. A force he does not feel or always wants but trusts in a power outside of himself. A power that goes to the root of his fatigue and need for rest and**

**gives strength as far from death as it is from effort. The trusting of God in our weakness and say, "When I am weak, then God is strong." To seek from God who is our Life, help for all that we need and the power to do, be, and live when we are weary. This Life is the victory that overcomes the world.**

He believes in God, who is his strength in the face of denial, weakness, unbelief, numbness, and weariness. He chooses belief in the wide-awake real during his distorted dream of death. He wills awakening when his very being seeks a godless rest. These are the broken steps to the high places where rest is a form of strength, strength as a form of joy, and joy but a form of love. "I am weak," says the honest soul, "but not so weak that I cannot be strong, not so sleepy that I cannot see the sunrise or so lame that I cannot walk! **Thanks be to God who perfects strength in weakness and gives His loved one's strength while they sleep!**

If we will but let our God and Father work His will with us then there would be no limit to the growth in our existence, to the flood of life with which He will flood our consciousness. We have no idea what Life is and the vastness of our consciousness of which we are capable. Many can remember moments in which life seemed richer and fuller than ever before. Moments mostly in dreams, either awake or asleep, that seem to contain greater joy than their life in the living God. A Life which God can enlarge, perpetuate, and seal. Can a human dream be capable of generating or holding a fuller life than the morning of our Divine Life?

## **God's Life in Us**

I have been speaking as if life and our consciousness of it were one and the same. However, the consciousness of life is not life. It is only the outcome of it. **Real-life is that which is of and by itself because it wills itself in the active, not passive sense and can only be of the Divine. But in us, there should be a life corresponding to the life that is God's. For in us as well, we must have a life that wills itself, resembling the self-existent Life and a partaker of its Image, so it shares in its own being.**

Humanity must live in and by exercising its will to live. A tree lives without consciousness, known by but not to itself, but only to the God who made it. I trust that life in its lower forms is on a path to thought and blessing, in the distinction process from God in which we as living souls consist. But for now, these lower forms do not have this Life as the word is used in the Bible. Life in the higher sense knows and rules itself, and eternal Life is the Life that has awakened.

There is nothing worthy for man to call life, but eternal life, God's Life shared with us as eternal beings, for we are made in the image of God, intended to partake in Their Life, to be alive as They are alive. The outcome of this life is the light of righteousness, love, grace, and truth. However, this life cannot be defined, even as God cannot be explained. It is a power, the formless cause of form. This power has no limits whereby to be determined. It reveals itself to the one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, for right relationship with God, but it cannot show its relationship to another, except in the shining of its own light.

**The ignorant soul understands by eternal life only an endless time of consciousness. What God means by it is a being like His own, a being beyond decay and death, an essential life with no relation to nothingness at all. A being that can never become that which is not life. For we never had anything to do with non-being because we came from the Life and heart of God, the fountain of being, partakers**

of the divine nature, and have nothing in common with anything that can pass or cease any more than the Eternal Himself. God owes His Being to no one, and His child has no lord but his Father.

**This eternal life consists of a man in absolute oneness with God, oneness with everything that is of righteousness and harmony. It consists of love as deep as it is universal, as conscious as it is unspeakable. It is a love that can be no more thought out than life itself, a love whose presence is proof and justification enough and whose absence is an all-destroying imperfection. One who has not experienced life cannot understand it; how could death understand and believe in life. What delight there would be in such a being. The beauty of such a consciousness rushing through the doors of the fountain of life, the ecstasy of the spiritual life essential and immortal flowing from the heart of hearts in the great day of God meeting the individual soul!**

## **What Are We to do?**

What then is our relationship to original life? What have we to do with attaining the resurrection from the dead? If we did not and could not make ourselves, how could we now that we are made, do anything at the unknown roots of our being? **What relation of conscious unity can be between the self-existent God and beings that live at His will. Beings who cannot refuse to be, or even cease to be, but must, at the choice of another, go on living. Weary of living what is not Life, able only to assert themselves by refusing to be content with its' lack?**

**The self-existent God is the other by whose life we live. So the links of this unity must already exist and only require to be brought together. So, what is the link to close the circle of eternal oneness with the Father? We must search the deepest of our nature to find it. There we will see our will as the deepest, strongest, and most divine thing in man. So, I presume it is also in God the Father as it was in Jesus Christ, the Son!**

Here and only here, in the relationship of the two wills, God's and our own, with the vital contact with the eternal idea of unity. This meeting of wills is no one-sided union of complete dependence but a willed harmony of dual oneness with the All-in-all. When one can and does say, "Not my will, but Thine be done," and when he so wills the will of God to do it, then is he one with God, one, as a true son with a true father.

**When this is one's will, their being is conformed to the will and being of their origin, who is their life, the causing and sustaining life of their being. Their oneness is more and deeper than words and figures can express in unity with the life that is life itself, more of itself, more than itself, and causing itself. We, in humble eagerness seeking after the privileges of our origin and thereby receiving God, become in this act a partaker in the divine nature, a true son of the living God, and an heir of all he possesses. Then by the obedience of a son, we receive into ourselves the very life of the Father.**

## **Obedience**

Obedience is the joining of the links of the eternal circle. Obedience is but the other side of the creative will. WILL is God's will, and obedience is man's will, and the two make one. So, the Root Bearing Life, knowing well the many troubles it will bring upon us, creates and goes on creating other lives. Lives though incapable of self-being, they may share in the joy of our essential self-ordained being by willing obedience. If we do the will of God, eternal life is ours. **This life is no mere continuity of existence, for**

**that in itself is worthless as hell, but a being that is one with essential life and so has within his reach to be filled with the abundant and endless out-goings of His love.**

Our souls will be ever-growing vessels, and as they grow, filled more and more with the life that proceeds from the Father and the Son. So with the delight in His being and abundance of His Life He came, that we might have what we can never understand until we experience it. Even now, it is sometimes too glorious to believe, more life than we can bear to be awakened to, yet a higher life filled with the wine that our former souls were too weak to contain!

**We were made for love, not selfishness. Our neighbor is our refuge, our selfish self our demon-foe.** We are the image of God to every person, and in the proportion that we love him, we will know this sacred truth. If this truth is so between man and man then how can it be otherwise between man and his Maker, between the child and his eternal Father, or between the created and the creating Life? For all love is infinite Life!

How little can we understand the creation's groaning and travail with our minds filled with petty cares and ambitions? It may be that you are honestly desirous of saving your own wrecked soul, but as yet know nothing of your need of Him who is the first and last and the living one.

## **CLIFFNOTES WITH ORIGINAL MACDONALD QUOTES**

### **Life**

Low-sunk life imagines itself weary of life, but it is death, not life, it is weary of.

'More life!' is the unconscious prayer of all creation, groaning and travailing for the redemption of its lord, the son who is not yet a son.

### **Creation**

In the very nature of being—that is, God—it must be hard—and divine history shows how hard—to create that which shall be not himself, yet like himself.

The problem is, so far to separate from himself that which must yet on him be ever and always and utterly dependent, that it shall have the existence of an individual, and be able to turn and regard him—choose him, and say, 'I will arise and go to my Father,'

### **Difficulty and Glory**

To set in motion that division from himself which in its grand result should be individuality, consciousness, choice, and conscious choice—choice at last pure, being the choice of the right, the true, the divinely harmonious.



Hence the final end of the separation is not individuality; that is but a means to it; the final end is oneness—an impossibility without it. For there can be no unity, no delight of love, no harmony, no good in being, where there is but one. Two at least are needed for oneness; and the greater the number of individuals, the greater, the lovelier, the richer, the diviner is the possible unity.

God is life, and the will-source of life. In the outflowing of that life, I know him; and when I am told that he is love, I see that if he were not love he would not, could not create.

The being of God is love, therefore creation. I imagine that from all eternity he has been creating. As he saw it was not good for man to be alone, so has he never been alone himself;—from all eternity the Father has had the Son,

I imagine that God has never been contented to be alone even with the Son of his love, the prime and perfect idea of humanity, but that he has from the first willed and laboured to give existence to other creatures who should be blessed with his blessedness—creatures whom he is now and always has been developing into likeness with that Son—a likeness for long to be distant and small, but a likeness to be forever growing: perhaps never one of them yet, though unspeakably blessed, has had even an approximate idea of the blessedness in store for him.

### **Cost of Freedom**

He knew what it would cost!—not energy of will alone, or merely that utterance and separation from himself which is but the first of creation, though that may well itself be pain—but sore suffering such as we cannot imagine, and could only be God's, in the bringing out, call it birth or development, of the God-life in the individual soul—a suffering still renewed, a labour thwarted ever by that soul itself, compelling him to take, still at the cost of suffering, the not absolutely best, only the best possible means left him by the resistance of his creature.

Man finds it hard to get what he wants, because he does not want the best; God finds it hard to give, because he would give the best, and man will not take it. What Jesus did, was what the Father is always doing; the suffering he endured was that of the Father from the foundation of the world, reaching its climax in the person of his Son. God provides the sacrifice; the sacrifice is himself. He is always, and has ever been, sacrificing himself to and for his creatures. It lies in the very essence of his creation of them.

The worst heresy, next to that of dividing religion and righteousness, is to divide the Father from the Son—in thought or feeling or action or intent; to represent the Son as doing that which the Father does not himself do. Jesus did nothing but what the Father did and does. If Jesus suffered for men, it was because his Father suffers for men; only he came close to men through his body and their senses, that he might bring their spirits close to his Father and their Father, so giving them life, and losing what could be lost of his own.

He is God our Savior: it is because God is our Savior that Jesus is our Savior. The God and Father of Jesus Christ could never possibly be satisfied with less than giving himself to his own! The unbeliever may easily imagine a better God than the common theology of the country offers him; but not the lovingest heart that ever beat can even reflect the length and breadth and depth and height of that love of God which shows itself in his Son—one, and of one mind, with himself.

## **The Joy of Life**

At first his religion may hardly be distinguishable from the mere prudent desire to save his soul; but at last he loses that very soul in the glory of love, and so saves it; self becomes but the cloud on which the white light of God divides into harmonies unspeakable.

Life is the only reality; what men call death is but a shadow—a word for that which cannot be

Many doubtless mistake the joy of life for life itself

but the man to whom God is all in all, who feels his life-roots hid with Christ in God, who knows himself the inheritor of all wealth and worlds and ages, yea, of power essential and in itself, that man has begun to be alive indeed.

He has the victory who, in the midst of pain and weakness, cries out, not for death, not for the repose of forgetfulness, but for strength to fight; for more power, more consciousness of being, more God in him;

The true man trusts in a strength which is not his, and which he does not feel, does not even always desire; believes in a power that seems far from him, which is yet at the root of his fatigue itself and his need of rest—rest as far from death as is labour. To trust in the strength of God in our weakness; to say, 'I am weak: so let me be: God is strong;' to seek from him who is our life, as the natural, simple cure of all that is amiss with us, power to do, and be, and live, even when we are weary,—this is the victory that overcometh the world.

Thanks be to him who perfects strength in weakness, and gives to his beloved while they sleep!

## **God's Life in Us**

The real life is that which is of and by itself—is life because it wills itself—which is, in the active, not the passive sense: this can only be God. But in us there ought to be a life correspondent to the life that is God's; in us also must be the life that wills itself—a life in so far resembling the self-existent life and partaking of its image, that it has a share in its own being.

The ignorant soul understands by this life eternal only an endless elongation of consciousness; what God means by it is a being like his own, a being beyond the attack of decay or death, a being so essential that it has no relation whatever to nothingness; a something which is, and can never go to that which is not, for with that it never had to do, but came out of the heart of Life, the heart of God, the fountain of being; an existence partaking of the divine nature, and having nothing in common, any more than the Eternal himself,

This life, this eternal life, consists for man in absolute oneness with God and all divine modes of being, oneness with every phase of right and harmony. It consists in a love as deep as it is universal, as conscious as it is unspeakable; a love that can no more be reasoned about than life itself—a love whose presence is its all-sufficing proof and justification, whose absence is an annihilating defect: he who has it not cannot believe in it: how should death believe in life, though all the birds of God are singing jubilant over the empty tomb! The delight of such a being, the splendour of a consciousness rushing from the

wide-open doors of the fountain of existence, the ecstasy of the spiritual sense into which the surge of life essential, immortal, increate, flows in silent fulness from the heart of hearts—what may it, what must it not be, in the great day of God and the individual soul!

### **What Are We to Do?**

What relation of conscious unity can be betwixt the self-existent God, and beings who live at the will of another, beings who could not refuse to be—cannot even cease to be, but must, at the will of that other, go on living, weary of what is not life, able to assert their relation to life only by refusing to be content with what is not life?

The self-existent God is that other by whose will we live; so the links of the unity must already exist, and can but require to be brought together. For the link in our being wherewith to close the circle of immortal oneness with the Father, we must of course search the deepest of man's nature: there only, in all assurance, can it be found. And there we do find it. For the will is the deepest, the strongest, the divinest thing in man; so, I presume, is it in God, for such we find it in Jesus Christ.

When a man wills that his being be conformed to the being of his origin, which is the life in his life, causing and bearing his life, therefore absolutely and only of its kind, one with it more and deeper than words or figures can say—to the life which is itself, only more of itself, and more than itself, causing itself—when the man thus accepts his own causing life, and sets himself to live the will of that causing life, humbly eager after the privileges of his origin,—thus receiving God, he becomes, in the act, a partaker of the divine nature, a true son of the living God, and an heir of all he possesses: by the obedience of a son, he receives into himself the very life of the Father.

### **Obedience**

No mere continuity of existence, for that in itself is worthless as hell, but a being that is one with the essential Life, and so within his reach to fill with the abundant and endless out-goings of his love.

For we are made for love, not for self. Our neighbour is our refuge; self is our demon-foe.