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Chapter 5. Hell, Plague, or Wrath? The Ethics of Warfare and Keeping One's Mind in Hell

Perhaps the most obvious connection between Staretz Silouan's sentence—"Keep your mind in hell"—and social ethics involves warfare given that the phrase 'war is hell' has become commonplace for talking and thinking about the ethics and politics of warfare.

War as hell, war as a plague, war as wrath—which metaphor best describes warfare? For Mennonite theologian, John Howard Yoder, it seems that wrath ought to be used for thinking about warfare because both war and wrath are temporary and experienced in the here and now. War happens only because human beings deny God's intentions for the world, and wrath occurs as the result of human beings refusing God's love for humanity. The ethicist and just war theorist, G. Scott Davis offers a compelling and concise argument against hell as a metaphor for war and for why plague ought to be considered the best metaphor for war: "war is much better captured by the metaphor of plague rather than…hell, for in hell everything is final and accomplished, whereas plague, with its constant and unanticipated variations on horror, breeds despair, self-indulgence, and indifference."[1] In the end, though, I find French philosopher Michel Foucault's connections between politics, racism, and warfare the most insightful when it to comes to thinking about wars since the nineteenth century.

Building on Foucault's connections between politics, racism, and warfare, in this chapter I argue that hell seems to be the most appropriate metaphor for war because wars never come to an end in the sense that they continue through other means for the purposes of population control

[1] Davis, *Warcraft and the Fragility of Virtue*, 87.

and racial cleansing. I conclude by reflecting on a particular conversation between three doctors and the priest from a television show from my childhood: M*A*S*H*.[2]

[A]War as Hell: The Historical Origin of the Phrase

During a commencement speech at the Michigan Military Academy in 1879, William Tecumseh Sherman (1820 – 1891) first used the sentence: "War is hell."[3] Of course, the phrase or sentence might have been used before Sherman used it—and he most likely used it in other contexts as well. Nevertheless, Sherman is credited with using it as part of this commencement speech. Speaking to graduates of the military academy, the full context of the sentence reads:

> **[EXT]**I've been where you are now and I know just how you feel. It's entirely natural that there should beat in the breast of every one of you a hope and desire that someday you can use the skill you have acquired here. Suppress it! You don't know the horrible aspects of war. I've been through two wars, and I know. I've seen cities and homes in ashes. I've seen thousands of men lying on the ground, their dead faces looking up at the skies. I tell you, War is Hell![4]**[/EXT]**

The second war Sherman references is what is known as the "Indian Wars" in the 1860s.[5] Sherman fought against Native Americans in both Kansas and Missouri.

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[2] In this chapter, I employ a similar method to that of Stanley Hauerwas's "War and Peace" in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and European Thought* (2013): blend historical events with philosophical analysis and theological reflections on warfare. In his insightful chapter, Hauerwas examines the so-called religious wars of the seventeenth century with philosophical analysis guided by Michel Foucault and Immanuel Kant and the theological reflections of Paul Ramsey and John Howard Yoder pertaining to warfare (see Hauerwas, "War and Peace," 361-373). In this chapter, I employ a similar methodology but with the addition of concluding with my own reflections on a source from popular culture.

[3] See O'Connell, *Fierce Patriot*, 326. O'Connell agrees that Sherman originated the sentence but places his first use of it in a different context.

[4] Sherman, "Commencement Speech at the Michigan Military Academy," (1879); accessed online through several websites. About this speech, Edward Tick writes: "Reportedly, more than 10,000 people attended to him hear him speak on this occasion. Sherman gave many versions of his 'War is hell' speech over the years. It was a message he could not rest from expounding" (Tick, *Warrior's Return*, 271).

[5] See Cozzens, *The Earth Is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West*, (Vintage, 2017).

Sherman's life is noteworthy for better understanding his use of the metaphor of hell for describing war.[6] He was born in Ohio but raised as a southerner, spending his childhood in foster homes throughout Louisiana. The family that finally took him in permanently was a Roman Catholic family, and he eventually married a southern Roman Catholic woman named Ellen Boyle Ewing. Sherman taught and worked at Louisiana State Seminary—which is now Louisiana State University (LSU)—until Louisiana officially seceded from the Union. At which time Sherman resigned and left the state. Sherman was a soldier in the Union Army during the American Civil War who worked closely with—and eventually replaced—Ulysses S. Grant as general.[7] President Lincoln named him general. Some historians argue that Abraham Lincoln won his re-election in part because of his promotion of Sherman to general and his public praise of Sherman's commitment to the Union.

How does this help us better understand his use of the metaphor of hell for describing war? Sherman became known for employing a particular strategy against Confederate troops. This strategy is known as *indirect approach* or *maneuver warfare*. In maneuver warfare, the commander or general fights the enemy on the battlefield with strategies that emphasize disruption, shock, and surprise. This might seem obvious to us today, but at the time it was quite novel. Sherman thought this would save more lives for the Union Army because it minimizes the use of frontline attacks, which decreases the number of soldiers needed at the front. Sherman's troops won the famous battle called the Atlanta Campaign by employing this strategy to its absolute fullest. While making it look like soldiers were heading straight toward the frontline in Georgia, Sherman used the technique of a *flanking maneuver* where soldiers would surround the

[6] In what follows, I combine insights and stories from three biographies on Sherman: John Marszalek's *Sherman* (1992), James McDonough's *William Tecumseh Sherman* (2017), and Brian Reid's *The Scourge of War* (2020).

[7] See Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship that Won the Civil War*, (Harper Collins, 2006).

enemy on both sides rather than attack them directly from the front. Hence the element of surprise from where gunshots were being fired. The Confederate soldiers had to re-adjust their position, but usually by the time their re-adjustment happened the ones on the outer edges had been killed or severely injured.

Another result of an indirect approach or maneuver warfare is that it put Union soldiers in between Confederate soldiers and their supplies, which were usually stored on train cars. So the medics for injured Confederate soldiers could not access the equipment needed to save the lives of their soldiers. In this way, an injured soldier becomes a dead soldier within maneuver warfare. In addition to blocking access to equipment, Sherman also employed what he called "hard war": destroying anything that might be useful to the enemy.[8] This includes equipment, food, shelter, and water through contamination. Historians now call this tactic the scorched-earth policy within warfare: contaminate, destroy, and eliminate all goods that human soldiers need for their survival.

Sometimes, Sherman would send his troops to attack Confederate soldiers from behind them—making it quite difficult, if not impossible, for the Confederate troops to follow any type of offensive strategy. Attacking from behind not only increases the element of shock and surprise, but it means that the possibility for surrender immediately before an attack becomes unlikely. It also means that soldiers are not only killing enemy combatants but also medics and runners (the military word for messengers) because one cannot decipher who is who while attacking from behind.

Attacks from the side and from behind, cutting off access to medical and military equipment, destroying all goods necessary for survival: *Sherman made war hell for the enemy*.

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[8] See Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 98-104.

Perhaps at this point readers might say: ‘good for Sherman to eliminate by any means necessary the defenders of racism, slavery, and white supremacy. Confederate soldiers deserved hell because of the hell they created for African-Americans’. I admit that it would be nice to think of Sherman as a kind of John Brown figure, but history tells a different story. Sherman was neither against slavery nor for racial equality. Sherman was pro-slavery and a white supremacist; he fought for the Union because he was simply against the southern states dividing the Union. He refused to allow African-American soldiers to join the troops of which he was in charge. Sherman might have been on the right side of the American Civil War but not for the right reasons: he wanted to keep the US the way it was prior to Southern secession from the Union—a United States where half the country owns slaves and where African American persons do not count as full citizens but only as free or cheap labor.

[B]War as Hell: Brief Historical Commentary

So this is the military general, the person, who first uses the metaphor of hell for describing war. Now for some historical commentary. Returning to his commencement speech: “You don’t know the horrible aspects of war” means you do not know how horrible the people are who make decisions about how to wage war; “I’ve been through two wars, and I know” means I had to fight for the oppression of African Americans and then fight for the oppression of Native Americans; “I’ve seen cities and homes in ashes” *because he set fire to them*; “I’ve seen thousands of men lying on the ground, their dead faces looking up at the skies” because he is the one who ordered striking them from behind with no chance of their surrender and no access to their own medical equipment for their survival; lastly, “I tell you, War is Hell!”—yes, when you fight like Sherman fights a war.

General Sherman thought of war as hell because he made war hell for others, and his vision of the US involved continuing to make life hell for African American and Native American citizens.

Sherman's claim that war is hell has become commonplace for talking and thinking about war. We hear this sentence from journalists, political scientists, and townspeople talking in local coffee shops and pubs.[9] From the perspective of ordinary language philosophy, which takes the way that people actually talk as normative, we ought to conclude that hell serves as the best metaphor for war since it is the metaphor used most by people talking about war. What if, however, we chose not to take that route?

[A]Yoder on Hell vs. Wrath: From the Historical to the Theological

Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder argues that scholars and thinkers tend to misuse the concept of hell when applying it to activities or problems in the here and now. In this way, Yoder would strongly disagree with my thesis in this book—which means his argument deserves to be taken up. According to Yoder, "'Wrath' is the word for this process already at work in human experience and 'hell' is the word for its finality."[10] Yoder says we ought to use the word wrath for depicting problems in the here and now, and Yoder thinks problems in the here and now become wrathful when they result from refusing God's love: "Wrath is therefore God's seriousness with our negative response to God's offer of love."[11] We experience wrath as

[9] For a full length and gripping defense of "war is hell" from the perspective of both a journalist and veteran, see Boudreau's *Packing Inferno*.

[10] Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 319.

[11] Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 320.

a result of refusing God's love for us, and our refusal of God's love plays out in particular ways historically.

According to Yoder, wrath either leads to divine salvation—God saves human beings from wrath—or to the finality and permanence of hell. Salvation, for Yoder, is not only a promise about the afterlife and eternity. Salvation means that God's people find themselves living within wrath yet saved from the wrath—perhaps Yoder's playfulness on the Johannine claim that Christians are in the world but not of the world (see John 17:13-19). This is why Alex Sider uses Silouan's sentence—"Keep your mind in hell, and despair not"—to describe Yoder's pacifism: Yoder's pacifism does not provide an escape route that avoids conflict and violence; rather, Yoder's pacifism claims that the role Christians play within history involves being subject to wrath (keep your mind in hell) yet saved from it as well (despair not). Yoder, however, would not use the word 'hell' to describe his own pacifism because we are not currently experiencing hell in past and present history. Rather, we experience wrath that results from refusing God's love. With God's love comes grace, harmony, justice, mercy, and peace. We experience the opposite of these—not because the oppositions are more determinative—but because we have refused them by turning away God's love.

Sider's book on Yoder's pacifism, *To See History Doxologically*, can be described as a theology of history with an eye toward the moral and political implications of what it means to think historically from a doxological—rather than chronological—perspective. According to Sider, part of Christian scholarship requires thinking historically on the terms of doxology—a summary or synopsis of liturgical performance—rather than on the terms of efficient causality. Doxological thinking occurs in both Jewish synagogues and Christian churches when the fullness of liturgical performance becomes accented by how it re-orients us toward and within the world.

This doxological thinking not only re-orients us as individuals within the world, but Sider argues that doxological thinking also provides a way to think historically and to understand history. Such a re-orientation involves the hope for holiness—a holiness promised by God in relation to the brokenness and suffering often identified by historians, philosophers, and political scientists as a key characteristic of the progression or digression of history. In the work of John Howard Yoder, Sider finds a scholarly model for how to think doxologically about history—which means, in part, how to see the hope of healing and holiness alongside the recognition of brokenness and suffering within history.

Because of this hope for healing and holiness, Yoder focuses on the human refusal of God's love instead of claiming that wrath and hell are divine punishments. He argues,

> **[EXT]**Wrath and hell are the biblical words for the bindingness of our historicity…. The historicity of human nature is that people are what they become…. If…I have made myself a selfish person, ultimately committed myself to myself, then I do not fight God; I just do not notice or want God. When God lets me be selfish, leaves me with myself (which is another word for hell), God is not being nasty, judgmental, or vindictive. God is being loving because by respecting the freedom God gave me to bottle myself up, the freedom God lovingly gave creatures. God respects that freedom by not tearing open the shell I have built around myself. The respect God has for the freedom of given creatures gives the creatures in its rebellion a degree of autonomy over against God.[12]**[/EXT]**

Neither hell nor wrath represent God's intentions for anyone, but temporary wrath and permanent hell result from refusing God's intentions for the world and turning away God's love for us. God seeks to heal us through making us holy, not punish us for acting on our own freedom.

As a Christian pacifist, Yoder finds all forms of war sinful—as a refusal of God's love for humanity.[13] Because of his pacifism, would Yoder claim that war is hell? It seems as if he

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[12] Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 318.

[13] Hauerwas describes Yoder's Christian pacifism on these terms: "As an alternative to secular pacifism, Yoder…developed an account of Christological pacifism that was political exactly because it is non-coercive.

would not make this claim because war is an activity that takes place in the here and now. Yoder provides us with theological reasons for using the concept wrath for ways in which we experience God's absence in the here and now. Of course, for Yoder, God is not absent; rather, human beings refuse God's love making it seem as if we experience God's absence. Therefore, Yoder's metaphor for warfare would have to be war as wrath—a temporary human activity taking place in the here and now.

I bring up Yoder's view of wrath in this chapter for three reasons. First, I think Sider is mistaken to apply Silouan's sentence—"Keep your mind in hell, and despair not"—to Yoder's pacifism because of Yoder's actual views on hell vs. wrath.[14] The fact that Sider applies Silouan's sentence to Yoder's pacifism, however, requires me to take it up as part of the genealogical use of the sentence. I applaud Sider for playfully borrowing from Silouan and Gillian Rose, but I disagree with Sider's argument—both in his critique of Rose's use of the sentence (as I argue in chapter 2) and in his application of the word 'hell' to understanding Yoder's pacifism.

Second, I find Yoderian wrath as a promising metaphor for thinking about the ethics and politics of warfare; war as wrath seems new to me as a metaphor for warfare. Although I end up not doing so, part of me wants to embrace wrath as the proper metaphor for thinking about the ethics and politics of warfare. Third, and broadening out the second point, it seems to me that for those readers who think the metaphor of hell as over-dramatic and unrealistic—because of its religious and theological roots—I wonder if Yoderian wrath might be an alternative for such

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Pacifism, according to Yoder, is required by the cross of Christ for it is in the cross that God refuses to save coercively. Jesus, therefore, does not fit the Kantian mould because he is not commending his ethic for anyone, but [only] for those that would be disciples" (Hauerwas, "War and Peace," 371).

[14] See Sider, *To See History Doxologically*,

readers. Yoderian wrath remains deeply theological, but it does not necessarily come with the same baggage as the medieval notion of hell does. In my judgment, Yoderian wrath requires us to look downward as the beginning point of ethics. In this way, Yoderian wrath serves as a viable alternative to my use of hell throughout this book. Instead of keep your mind in hell, however, the proper grammatical claim would be: keep your mind on wrath. Of course, for Yoder, we ought not despair because of the promise of healing found within ancient Christianity. Keep your mind on wrath, and despair not.

[A]War as Hell Reconsidered: From the Theological to the Philosophical

Was the Confederate Army in the US worthy of being defeated and destroyed? Yes. Does that mean that any means necessary should be used to defeat and destroy them? No. War is hell only if you assume that sin and vice are the only options within warfare. Although it may sound counter-intuitive to us—to those of us who have been raised on the cliché that war is hell—but there is a description of warfare where sins and vices are not the only options available to commanders, generals, and soldiers. According to just war theory, wars can be fought with honor, integrity, and virtue. With this alternative view of war also comes another alternative metaphor for hell: war as plague.

This idea of permanence, when it comes to keeping one's mind in hell, means that the oft used metaphor for war—war is hell—might be misleading. Writing from a just war perspective, G. Scott Davis simultaneously critiques the metaphor of hell and defends a different metaphor for warfare: "In fact, war is much better captured by the metaphor of plague rather than…hell, for in hell everything is final and accomplished, whereas plague, with its constant and unanticipated variations on horror, breeds despair, self-indulgence, and indifference."[15] The

metaphor of hell suggests that everything is accomplished and final whereas the metaphor of plague, according to Davis, suggests that the activity—in this case warfare—will come to an end. Wars do come to an end. Therefore, hell is not an appropriate metaphor for understanding warfare.

I agree with G. Scott Davis that hell is not the best metaphor to use for thinking about warfare in general.[16] I also agree with Michel Foucault that, starting in the nineteenth century, wars result from racism. In Foucault's words:

> **[EXT]**In the nineteenth century—and this is completely new—war will be seen not only as a way of improving one's own race by eliminating the enemy race…, but also as a way of regenerating one's own race. As more and more of our number die, the race to which we belong will become all the purer…. From this point onward, war is…not simply a matter of destroying a political adversary, but of destroying the enemy race, of destroying that sort of biological threat that those people over there represent to our race.[17]**[/EXT]**

If Foucault is right about this, hell becomes the best metaphor for thinking about war because war is no longer about justice but about racial superiority. This does not prove Davis's argument wrong but rather Foucault provides a framework for making the judgment that most of the wars since the nineteenth century do not qualify as 'war' in the just war sense that Davis defends and develops. According to Davis's just war perspective, wars are not hell because they are trying to respond to the hells created by injustice and oppression; wars are not hell because wars do not endure but have an ending and a finality. Foucault never delves into the best metaphors for war, but I spend some time with his argument in order to continue to think through hell as a metaphor for war.

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[15] Davis, *Warcraft and the Fragility of Virtue*, 87.

[16] For my full appreciation of Davis's argument, see my "Foreword" in Davis's *Warcraft and the Fragility of Virtue*, vii-xii.

[17] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 257.

When racism drives war, on Foucault's account, wars do not end; wars do not have a finality. Rather, when a war seemingly ends it actually gets continued through other avenues. According to Foucault, "the role of political power is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals."[18] Foucault continues, "politics is the continuation of war by other means."[19] In other words, politics "sanctions and reproduces the disequilibrium of forces manifested in war."[20] In *The Oxford Handbook on Theology and Modern European Thought*, Stanley Hauerwas comments on Foucault's claim "politics is the continuation of war by other means" in this way: "a crucial transition in the practices and institutions of war, which were initially concentrated in the hands of a central power, became associated both in *de facto* and *de jure* terms with emerging power."[21] Hauerwas clarifies, "Foucault argues…that we cannot assume that society, the law, and the state…put an end to wars. Beneath the law, war continues to rage."[22]

For instance, one might claim that the American Civil War never really ended. The Union Army stopped fighting the Confederate soldiers, but the racism driving the American Civil War simply was carried out and continued in other ways. Although not talking about the American Civil War, one of Foucault's claims provides a way in which the American Civil War remains active today. In some countries, war continues in the form of criminality: "Once the mechanism

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[18] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 15-16.

[19] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 16.

[20] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 16.

[21] Hauerwas, "War and Peace," 364.

[22] Hauerwas, "War and Peace," 364.

of biopower was called upon to make it possible to execute or isolate criminals, criminality was conceptualized in racist terms."[23] This seems to be one way to understand Michelle Alexander's argument in *The New Jim Crow*: the US turned to the criminal justice system to continue the oppression of African-American men. Foucault mentions both isolation *and* execution: not only are African-American men executed by the state through capital punishment more than any other group of people, but execution also happens on the streets when police officers choose to murder African-American boys and men.

So how does Foucault define racism, and how does he connect racism as a justification for warfare? On March 17th, 1976, Foucault asked himself the question: "What in fact is racism?" His answer:

> **[EXT]**It [racism] is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die. The appearance within the biological continuum of the human race of races, the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races, the fact that certain races are described as good and that others, in contrast, are described as inferior: all this is a way of fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls. It is a way of separating out the groups that exist within a population. It is, in short, a way of establishing a biological-type caesura within a population of that appears to be a biological domain.[24]**[/EXT]**

According to Foucault, racism is the attempt to distinguish and prioritize races under the guise of biological differences. The fictional hierarchy gets used to justify political control of and power over the general population, creating an us vs. them mentality within the same general population. Unlike Plato's argument for noble lies, which are justified fictions told for the sake of national and political unity, we now have fictions or lies for the sake of cultivating hate and national division.

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[23] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 258.

[24] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 254-255.

How does racism become a justification for warfare? Because racism opens the possibility for a constant feeling for the need of death. Foucault claims: "On the one hand, racism makes it possible to establish a relationship between my life and the death of the other that is not a military or warlike relationship of confrontation, but a biological-type of relationship."[25] On the other hand, according to Foucault, this relationship is not strictly about political power: "the enemies who have to be done away with are not adversaries in the political sense of the term; they are threats, either external or internal, to the population and for the population."[26] Foucault continues, "[I]n other words, killing or the imperative to kill is acceptable only if it results not in a victory over political adversaries, but in the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or race."[27] Finally, for Foucault, "race or racism is the precondition that makes killing acceptable" because "racism is the indispensable precondition that allows someone to be killed, that allows others to be killed."[28] Once this becomes set in place at the societal level, "racism alone can justify the murderous function of the State."[29] War becomes collapsed into attempts at racial cleansing and population control, which means it no longer matters if a war is an aggressive war (external) or a civil war (internal) because their aims are now the same.

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[25] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 255.

[26] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 256.

[27] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 256.

[28] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 256.

[29] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 256.

If Foucault's observations are accurate concerning the connection between politics, racism, and war, then I argue that hell becomes the best metaphor for talking and thinking about warfare because racism lacks a clear finality.

> **[EXT]**War is the motor behind institutions and order. In the smallest of cogs, peace is waging a secret war. To put it another we have to interpret the war that is going on beneath peace; peace itself is a coded war. We are all inevitably someone's adversary.[30]**[/EXT]**

Yes, we might imagine what a peaceful post-racist society looks like; however, the realization of that society will not happen in a clean and clear moment. Racism may not be permanent but seems to have permanency. What is racism if not a false sense of peace, which "itself is a coded war"?[31]

So like General Sherman was on the right side but with the wrong beliefs about the goals of the American Civil War, Sherman was also right about hell as a metaphor for war but for the wrong reasons: the American Civil War was hell, is hell, because it continues in the form of institutional racism in the US and the 2015/2016 political revival of white supremacist attitudes and rhetoric.[32]

[A]Conclusion: Metaphors of War in M*A*S*H*

As a child, I often watched the television series entitled M*A*S*H* both by myself and with my parents. M*A*S*H* is a comedy that takes place in the context of the Korean War. I enjoyed this television series for at least two reasons: I found the lead character Hawkeye

[30] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 50-51.

[31] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 51.

[32] On racism and white supremacy as creating a hell for all people, see Goodson's "Hatred and Hell yet Hopefulness," in *Building Beloved Community in a Wounded World*, (forthcoming with Cascade Press, 2022).

(played by Alan Alda) quite humorous and relatable, and watching the series helped me feel a connection to my grandfather who fought in the Korean War as a member of the US Air Force.[33]

M*A*S*H* stands for Mobile Army Surgical Hospital so the main characters are mostly physicians and nurses. In every episode, viewers meet new soldiers who are being treated by these main characters. The episode relevant for my argument comes in season 5—which means the main characters are Captain Benjamin Franklin Pierce (Hawkeye), Captain BJ Hunnicutt, Major Frank Burns, Major Margaret Houlihan, and Colonel Sherman T. Potter. Hawkeye and Hunnicutt have become close friends by this time in the series, and they make a hobby out of poking fun at Frank Burns.

In "The General's Practitioner," a general nicknamed General Chaos attempts to perch Hawkeye as his own full-time private physician. The episode begins with most of the medical staff operating in the same room. Eventually, a conversation begins. During the dialogue, Hawkeye's patient's heart stops beating. Hawkeye makes several attempts to get his patient's heart started again and, finally, Major Margaret Houlihan announces "We have a pulse."[34] The full conversation runs as follows:

> **[EXT]**Captain BJ Hunnicutt (BJ): Do you ever get the feeling that there's a war going on?
>
> Captain Benjamin Franklin Pierce (Hawkeye): There's always a war going on. War is the world's favorite spectator sport….
>
> Major Frank Burns (Frank): Everybody knows war is hell.
>
> BJ: Remember, you heard it here last.

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[33] Arthur James Sanderson (1923 – 1988)—known to me as Grandpa Sandy, known to his comrades as Sandy, known in his retirement as Art, and known to his extended family simply as Bud—fought in both WWII and the Korean War. He taught me how to garden, play checkers, and throw a baseball. He died when I was 8 years old.

[34] M*A*S*H*, "The General's Practitioner," season 5, episode 21, (1977).

Hawkeye: War isn't hell. War is war, and hell is hell. And of the two, war is a lot worse.

Father John Mulcahy (Father Mulcahy): How do you figure that, Hawkeye?

Hawkeye: Easy Father. Tell me, who goes to hell?

Father Mulcahy: Well, sinners, I believe.

Hawkeye: Exactly! There are no innocent bystanders in hell, bur war is chock full of them—little kids, cripples, old ladies. In fact, except for a few of the brass almost everybody involved [in war] is an innocent bystander.

Frank: Well, I'm not. I'm here because my country needs me.

BJ: How do you know it wasn't just some excuse to ship you 8,000 miles from home?

Hawkeye: Yeah, the Korean War was invented so your [Frank's] parents wouldn't come looking for you.

Frank: Oh, you're a pair of sickos.

Major Margaret Houlihan (Houlihan): I'm not getting a pulse. No. No pulse….

Hawkeye: Come on! Come on, damn it!

[Hawkeye reports what he plans to do medically to get the patient's heart started again, and Houlihan continues to shake her head signifying that there is still no pulse.]

Hawkeye: Come on. Live, damn it, live! Don't let the bastards win.

Houlihan: I'm getting a pulse. It's getting better.

Hawkeye: Alright, let's close up….

BJ: Nice going, Hawk.

Colonel Sherman T. Potter: Congratulations, son.

Frank: Well, I guess it just wasn't his turn.

BJ: That's right, if it had been his turn, you would've worked on him.[35]**[/EXT]**

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[35] M*A*S*H*, "The General's Practitioner," season 5, episode 21, (1977).

This dialogue represents one of the tricks so often pulled off in a M*A*S*H* episode: seamlessly combining the comedic with the tragic—or, better put, the use of comedic conversation during a tragic circumstance. One might argue that this is M*A*S*H*'s primary feature, and what makes the series still one of the best as a television comedy.[36]

As part of this dialogue, viewers are presented with a substantive argument against hell as a proper metaphor for war. Hawkeye makes a powerful argument, which seems to be along the following lines: hell does not work as a metaphor for war because those who are in hell are there because of their own sinful actions, but those who find themselves in war are innocent bystanders. Of course, Hawkeye uses language that would be considered now politically incorrect to describe who these innocent bystanders are—but his point remains. In essence, Hawkeye offers an argument based upon the notion of free-will: those who find themselves in war are not there by their own choosing whereas those who end up in hell are there because of how they chose to act based upon their own free-will. Father Mulcahy provides the theological backing that Hawkeye needs for this line of reasoning: to the question, "who goes to hell?" Father Mulcahy responds, "Well, sinners, I believe."[37]

Hawkeye's distinction certainly falls in line with Dante's—and the medieval—view of hell. As I argue in chapter 1, however, what modernity brings about is that those who are in hell usually are there because of the sins of others—not their own sins. For instance (from chapter 1): the poor are not in hell because of their own 'sins'; they are in hell because of the sins of others—particularly the sins of corruption, greed, and selfishness. Corruption, greed, and

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[36] For readers who want to learn what Hawkeye means by "Don't let the bastards win," I address this in a sub-section of the conclusion.

[37] M*A*S*H*, "The General's Practitioner," season 5, episode 21, (1977).

selfishness put people in hell, but unlike Dante's *Inferno* those who are in the fourth circle of hell because of greed are not the greedy but those who are victims of greed. In this way, Hawkeye finds himself in a hell created by others that serves as a constant threat to the lives of those he calls innocent bystanders.

My reflections on this M*A*S*H* episode invite a return to Staretz Silouan's sentence, particularly the first word: *keep*. In the way I interpret and use the sentence in this book, keep means *put*: put your mind in hell so that you can learn to be with others who experience hell in their everyday lives. This is the first step of ethics, the first direction of thought (downwardness) for moral reasoning. Put your mind in the hell(s) experienced and suffered by others so that moral reasoning becomes a task achieved on behalf of those who are downtrodden, oppressed, and suffer from the hells created by others. Since I conclude elsewhere that racism means hell for all of us,[38] I must also conclude that war means hell for all of us now that wars are fought as the result of racism rather than as responses to injustice and oppression. The latter represents the goal or hope of just war reasoning (that wars ought to be fought in response to injustice and oppression), but the former represents the reality of warfare as a racist enterprise since the nineteenth century. War is hell because racism creates a hellish society for all of us.[39] The metaphor of hell for war will cease to be useful if racism and white supremacy ever come to its desired end.

[B]"Don't Let the Bastards Win"[40]

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[38] Goodson, "Hatred and Hell yet Hopefulness," in *Building Beloved Community in a Wounded World*, (forthcoming with Cascade Press, 2022).

[39] See Goodson, "Hatred and Hell yet Hopefulness," in *Building Beloved Community in a Wounded World*, (forthcoming with Cascade Press, 2022).

[40] M*A*S*H*, "The General's Practitioner," season 5, episode 21, (1977).

What does Hawkeye mean when he says, "Don't let the bastards win," to his patient who no longer has a pulse?[41] In a later scene in the same episode, we learn the answer to this question: Hawkeye calls death "the bastards."[42] Colonel Potter claims that Hawkeye's primary understanding of his vocation as a physician in the context of a war zone involves beating back "the bastards," and Colonel Potter tells a visitor to their camp that he does not want to know who Hawkeye thinks is responsible for causing these "bastards."[43] The visitor says that he wants to know because he needs to gather as much information as possible about Hawkeye for his report to the general who wants to perch Hawkeye as his own private physician. Colonel Potter says that Hawkeye blames the politicians that told us to come over here. Not the North Koreans who are the ones who bomb and shoot the American soldiers? No, not according to Hawkeye. A theme throughout the series is that Hawkeye holds American politicians responsible for the Korean War, and he consistently claims throughout the series that the deaths of the US soldiers are the fault of American politicians. The blood of US soldiers is on the hands of American politicians. This means that when Hawkeye claims to fight against death—"the bastards"—his fight is with the decisions and policies of those who hold political power in the US.[44] Hawkeye's fight is neither with Communism nor the North Koreans. When thinking about the ethics and politics of warfare, combatant soldiers who kill enemy soldiers are not responsible for the death of their enemy; the politicians who put those soldiers on the ground are the ones primarily responsible for death within warfare. Hawkeye keeps his mind in hell when it comes to fighting

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[41] M*A*S*H*, "The General's Practitioner," season 5, episode 21, (1977).

[42] M*A*S*H*, "The General's Practitioner," season 5, episode 21, (1977).

[43] See M*A*S*H*, "The General's Practitioner," season 5, episode 21, (1977).

[44] See M*A*S*H*, "The General's Practitioner," season 5, episode 21, (1977).

"the bastards,"[45] and Hawkeye keeps his mind in hell throughout the series and does with both humor and righteous indignation. Unlike Hawkeye's actual argument about hell, hell is not comprised of sinners who deserve it. Rather, hell is made up of the stench of death caused by politicians who wage wars for unjust reasons.

[45] M*A*S*H*, "The General's Practitioner," season 5, episode 21, (1977).