

# Jesus Lives Pacifism: The Case of John the Baptist

## Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, pp. 141,142

The only way to overcome evil is to let it run itself to a stand-still because it does not find the resistance it is looking for. Resistance merely creates further evil and adds fuel to the flames. But when evil meets no opposition and encounters no obstacle but only patient endurance, its sting is drawn, and at last it meets an opponent which is more than its match. Of course this can only happen when the last ounce of resistance is abandoned, and the renunciation of revenge is complete. Then evil cannot find its mark, it can breed no further evil, and is left barren. ... Violence stands condemned by its failure to evoke counter-violence. ...

## Martin Luther King, Jr.

Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love.

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate... Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.

## Matthew 5 (See also Luke 6: 27 - 36)

- <sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.
- <sup>40</sup> If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.
- <sup>41</sup> And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.
- <sup>42</sup> Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.
- <sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’
- <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

## Matthew 11

- <sup>2</sup> Now *while* in prison, John heard about the works of Christ, and he sent *word* by his disciples, <sup>3</sup> and said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or are we to look for someone else?”

## Matthew 14

- <sup>2</sup> Now *while* in prison, John heard about the works of Christ, and he sent *word* by his disciples, <sup>3</sup> and said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or are we to look for someone else?”
- <sup>3</sup> For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip.
- <sup>4</sup> For John had been saying to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” <sup>5</sup> Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet.
- <sup>6</sup> But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before *them* and pleased Herod, <sup>7</sup> so *much* that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.
- <sup>8</sup> And after being prompted by her mother, she *said*, “Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.” <sup>9</sup> And although he was grieved, the king commanded *it* to be given because of his oaths and his dinner guests. <sup>10</sup> He sent *word* and had John beheaded in the prison. <sup>11</sup> And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought *it* to her mother.
- <sup>12</sup> John’s disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.
- <sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus heard *about John*, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself;

		Nature of Violence	
		Non-Lethal	Deadly
Object of Violence	Myself		
	Loved-one		✓