

# The strange history of vengeance

## 1 Old Testament

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.<sup>1</sup>

## 2 New Testament

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. ... Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;<sup>2</sup>

## 3 John Stuart Mill

The sentiment of justice, in that one of its elements which consists of the desire to punish, is thus ... the natural feeling of retaliation or vengeance, rendered by intellect and sympathy applicable to ... those hurts, which wound us ... in common with, society at large. This sentiment, in itself, has nothing moral in it; what is moral is, the exclusive subordination of it to the social sympathies, so as to wait on and obey their call. For the natural feeling tends to make us resent indiscriminately whatever any one does that is disagreeable to us; but when moralized by the social feeling, it only acts in the directions conformable to the general good: just persons resenting a hurt to society, though not otherwise a hurt to themselves, and not resenting a hurt to themselves, however painful, unless it be of the kind which society has a common interest with them in the repression of.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Book of Psalms 58:10-11.

<sup>2</sup>Book of Matthew 5:38-44.

<sup>3</sup>*Utilitarianism* Ch. 5, par. 21.