

# A Remedy for 'Virtue'

by [Guy Walker](#) (October 2019)



*Young Woman With Red Fan*, Hermann Max Pechstein, 1910

## The Gospel of the Virtuous

"A jealous God! I am a jealous God!  
Because of that I'll smite you with my rod!  
I'll take the seas again and mix the rains,  
Drown all mankind, expunging all his stains.  
The only ground I'll leave for you and yours  
Will be a hilltop just above the roars  
Of stirring floods. This ground will go here by  
The name of "Moral," with the name of "High."  
The few who clamber to its sweet green shore  
And gasp for rescue, with voices that deplore  
The woes that suffered those who almost died,  
Will know what it is to be justified.  
For they alone now enter the elect—  
A band Jehovah's thunder will protect.  
Just when they thought that they could sink no lower  
They find themselves decreed the latest Noah."

## Jasher—She Who is Upright and Righteous

Reciting Jasher closed the Gospel book  
The one that, each day, she in duty took  
As guiding text before the daily war  
For which she braced. In her mind's eye she saw  
Some righteous falling from the grassy mound

And desperate, damp souls clawing at the ground.  
She knew the saved were numbered—each one strayed,  
Or each shut out, could guarantee she stayed.  
She knew a zero sum of rectitude  
Meant every loss her gain. And fortitude,  
With nails and elbows, bitterness required,  
To win the competition that had tired  
Those swallowed by the breakers.

And the route

To her success lay with the destitute  
In real worlds. Those she found in towns, on streets,  
Homed in on; those adjudged that life defeats;  
The sick, the black, the female, the oppressed,  
All served her calculation, doubtless, best.  
To win the hilltop's strife she must compete,  
Sustain her virtue's show—avoid defeat.  
The 'poor' provided prospects by allowing  
Means to battle and be seen; by endowing  
Her with credentials of heroic sheen,  
A sword fine burnished with a breastplate clean.  
And, so, can be explained her burning need,  
Vampiric appetites that wished to feed  
On suffering—opportunities it gave;  
And pain—the thing designed to make her rave.  
This selfish urge could even see her boast  
Of selflessness. So deep was she engrossed  
In routing island-dwellers—seeking rest  
On pristine land kept dry just for the blessed.

## The Mistake

The one thing she had judged exactly right

Is how much moral matters will excite  
The human breed. For morals do define  
Our separation from untroubled swine  
And beasts in general, those who worry less  
And seldom seem, at pasture, to depress  
Themselves for spotless reputations' sake.

And yet she erred and made a sad mistake,  
Espousing testaments so dry and old,  
The ones that painted worlds as cruel and cold.  
One wonders where she found her Gospel book,  
Or why, misguided, so much notice took.  
She had not heard of Codex 14b  
Which cast such doubt on the veracity  
Of her rare Gospel of the Virtuous,  
And made its saving claims seem fatuous.  
Was ignorant of Bedouins finding text  
In caves creating it mere subindex  
Of better, kinder teachings. Was her fuss  
Redundant effort, time misused? And thus,  
Instead of haste to make her goodness show  
Should she, aflame, have paused and questioned so:

Unnecessary, was the frantic scrabble,  
Avoiding being among the drowning rabble?  
Investments in advertisement in vain?  
For nothing was it that she feared the rain?  
Believing wrongly hostile are the stars,  
That failure matters—and from love debars?  
And her forgiveness doubted faithlessly,  
Preferring condemnation's sting to see?  
Did she think every woman for herself,  
So scared of wasting on a moral shelf?  
Did she deem it was down alone to her  
And to her shoulders burden would transfer?  
She tried to manufacture her salvation,  
Not sensing it outside her own donation?

Did she believe that she could gull the world,  
That every sinner from the island hurled  
By her would make, for her, a better case,  
Discrediting all in the human race?  
In her desire to steal the moral crown  
Unpleasantness, in fact, is all she's shown?

## Envoi

Unhappy modern Pharisee! You need  
Not so have doubted love. It would have freed  
You from such driven, needless strife,  
And better suited you to peaceful life.

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