Seven virtues

In the Catholic catechism, the seven catholic virtues refer to the combination of two lists of virtues, the 4 cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, restraint or temperance, and courage or fortitude, (from ancient greek philosophy) and the 3 theological virtues of faith, hope, and love or charity (from the letters of Paul of Tarsus); these were adopted by the Church Fathers as the seven virtues.

A list that was developed later, sometimes called the seven heavenly virtues, was proposed by a Christian governor named Aurelius Prudentius who died around 410 CE, in his poem "Psychomachia" or "Battle/Contest of the Soul". This poem proposed seven virtues to directly counteract the seven deadly sins. The virtues were chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, patience, kindness, and humility.

History

The seven virtues were first penned by the Greek philosophers, Aristotle and Plato. However, when they first came into being, there were not seven of them as we know them now, but four. These four initial virtues — temperance, wisdom, justice, and courage — were seen as the main attributes for a person to have. It was not until the New Testament began to be more extensively studied that these first virtues are widely referred to as the four cardinal virtues while the latter three are referred to as the three theological virtues, as mentioned by Stalker in his book The Seven Cardinal Virtues. [1]

Seven heavenly virtues

There is another list of the seven virtues to oppose the seven deadly sins. The seven heavenly virtues were derived from the Psychomachia ("Contest of the Soul"), an epic poem written by Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (c. AD 410) entailing the battle of good virtues and evil vices. The intense popularity of this work in the Middle Ages helped to spread the concept of holy virtue throughout Europe. Practicing these virtues is considered to protect one against temptation from the seven deadly sins, with each one having its counterpart. Due to this they are sometimes referred to as the contrary virtues. Each of the seven heavenly virtues matches a corresponding deadly sin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtue</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>(Vice)</th>
<th>(Latin)</th>
<th>Virtue's Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chastity</td>
<td>Castitas</td>
<td>Purity, knowledge, honesty, wisdom</td>
<td>Lust</td>
<td>Luxuria</td>
<td>Abstaining from sexual conduct according to one's state in life; the practice of courtly love and romantic friendship. Cleanliness through cultivated good health and hygiene, and maintained by refraining from intoxicants. To be honest with oneself, one's family, one's friends, and to all of humanity. Embracing of moral wholesomeness and achieving purity of thought-through education and betterment. The ability to refrain from being distracted and influenced by hostility, temptation or corruption.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temperance</td>
<td>Temperantia</td>
<td>Self control, justice, honour, abstention</td>
<td>Gluttony</td>
<td>Gula</td>
<td>Restraint, temperance, justice. Constant mindfulness of others and one's surroundings; practicing self-control, abstention, moderation, zero-sum and deferred gratification. Prudence to judge between actions with regard to appropriate actions at a given time. Proper moderation between self-interest, versus public-interest, and against the rights and needs of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>Caritas</td>
<td>Will, benevolence, generosity, sacrifice</td>
<td>Greed</td>
<td>Avaritia</td>
<td>Generosity, charity, self-sacrifice; the term should not be confused with the more restricted modern use of the word charity to mean benevolent giving. In Christian theology, charity -- or love (agapē) -- is the greatest of the three theological virtues. Love, in the sense of an unlimited loving kindness towards all others, is held to be the ultimate perfection of the human spirit, because it is said to both glorify and reflect the nature of God. Such love is self-sacrificial. Confusion can arise from the multiple meanings of the English word &quot;love&quot;. The love that is &quot;caritas&quot; is distinguished by its origin – being divinely infused into the soul -- and by its residing in the will rather than emotions, regardless of what emotions it stirs up. This love is necessary for salvation, and with it no one can be lost.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diligence</td>
<td>Industria</td>
<td>Persistence, effort, ethics, rectitude</td>
<td>Sloth</td>
<td>Acedia</td>
<td>A zealous and careful nature in one's actions and work; decisive work ethic, steadfastness in belief, fortitude, and the capability of not giving up. Budgeting one's time; monitoring one's own activities to guard against laziness. Upholding one's convictions at all times, especially when no one else is watching (integrity). (The vice &quot;acedia&quot; is more commonly known as &quot;sloth&quot;).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Patientia</td>
<td>Peace, mercy, ahimsa, sufferance</td>
<td>Wrath</td>
<td>Ira</td>
<td>Forbearance and endurance through moderation. Resolving conflicts and injustice peacefully, as opposed to resorting to violence. Accepting the grace to forgive; to show mercy to sinners. Creating a sense of peaceful stability and community rather than suffering, hostility, and antagonism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Humanitas</td>
<td>Satisfaction, loyalty, compassion, integrity</td>
<td>Envy</td>
<td>Invidia</td>
<td>Charity, compassion and friendship for its own sake. Empathy and trust without prejudice or resentment. Unselfish love and voluntary kindness without bias or spite. Having positive outlooks and cheerful demeanor; to inspire kindness in others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Humilitas</td>
<td>Bravery, modesty, reverence, altruism</td>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>Superbia</td>
<td>Modest behavior, selflessness, and the giving of respect. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less. It is a spirit of self-examination; a hermeneutic of suspicion toward yourself and charity toward people you disagree with. The courage of the heart necessary to undertake tasks which are difficult, tedious or unglamorous, and to graciously accept the sacrifices involved. Reverence for those who have wisdom and those who selflessly teach in love. Giving credit where credit is due; not unfairly glorifying one's own self. Being faithful to promises, no matter how big or small they may be. Refraining from despair and the ability to confront fear and uncertainty, or intimidation.</td>
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</tbody>
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**Theology**

Restraint is the keystone of the seven holy virtues. The other holy virtues are created through selfless pursuits:

- Valour: Pursuit of Knowledge
- Generosity: Pursuit of Charity
- Liberality: Pursuit of Will
- Diligence: Pursuit of Ethics
- Patience: Pursuit of Peace
- Kindness: Pursuit of Love
- Humility: Pursuit of Modesty
Popular culture

In the Dungeons & Dragons third-edition fantasy role-playing game, the Seven deadly sins and the Seven heavenly virtues each made an appearance as the philosophical Cleric Domains, providing the option to exemplify the moral/ethical conflict of these ideals, rather than abstract ideology or tenets of a deity. They were originally featured in two separate issues of the Dragon Magazine (Issue #323 & Issue #355), but later on were collected and released in Dragon Compendium (-Volume 1-) hard-cover anniversary-edition published by Paizo Publishing.

In White Wolf Game Studio's newer World of Darkness role-playing game, both the Seven deadly sins and the Seven heavenly virtues constitute required attributes of each player character in game mechanics. A character acting in accordance with his or her defining Virtue or Vice traits are rewarded, but the reward is greater for fulfilling the Virtue than for indulging in the Vice. The 49 possible Virtue/Vice combinations are not used as 'character types', but do appear as categories of disguises used by the Guardians of the Veil.

References

[1] "It is of distinct advantage to be reminded that the Christian character has a natural foundation... but certainly the latter are cardinal also—that is hinge virtues; and it is convenient to have a single adjective for designating the whole seven" The Seven Cardinal Virtues(p.10)


• The Seven Cardinal Virtues by James Stalker © 1902

External links

• "The Seven Deadly Sins" (http://whitestonejournal.com/seven_deadly_sins/), White Stone Journal
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