

The Catalogs of Vices and Virtues in the Pauline Literature

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ABSTRACT

It was common to find in the writings of the different Greco-Roman philosophical schools of the first century certain catalogs of two or more vices and virtues. They were used to teach that a virtuous life ensured well-being and health while encouraging their disciples to abandon their vicious life leading to ruin. These catalogs influenced the composition of moral catalogs in the New Testament, especially in the letters written or attributed to Paul. Their catalogs were used as a rhetorical tool where the moral teachings of Christianity were developed and taught. According to the divine plan in Christ Jesus, good acts or virtues were considered divinely inspired because they helped the growth of the human person. On the other hand, bad actions or vices were seen as unworthy or sinful because they go against God's plan and as a sign of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. Thus, the catalogs of vices and virtues invited conversion and invited us to wait for the day when God will make all evil and corruption disappear from the world when love (*agape*), the Christian virtue per excellence, would be the norm for all.

Keywords: Catalogs, vices, virtues, Christianity, New Testament, Paul, proto-Pauline letters, deuterion-Pauline letters, church, ethics, rhetoric, and Greco-Roman, philosophical schools.

INTRODUCTION

Between the first and the third century CE, the different catalogs of vices and virtues have reached their most popular extension in the Greco Roman culture in their three distinguished modalitiesⁱ. Due to their rhetorical functions, such catalogs served the Christian practice of exhortative preaching in protreptic and parenetic functions to persuade their audience to renounce their old lifestyle and encourage and instruct them in the Christian life. There is no surprise to find such rhetorical catalogs in many of the moral teachings of the New Testament books and, even if they maintain their classical Greco-Roman style, they also reflect a distinctive aspect of the first Christian communities: the unity in the Spirit, the practice of charity and, above all, the commandment of love.

It is convenient to clarify that the catalogs of virtues and vices did not copy exactly the classic terms of Greek and Roman philosophy in the New Testament. For example, the Christian authors considered a "vice" any action against God and the new life in Christ Jesus. A "virtue" was any action of righteousness, justice, and goodwill, imitating the saving action of God in Jesus Christ. Moreover, these catalogs often mixed good and bad Christian attitudes with the traditional virtues and vices of the Greco-Roman schools.

According to J. Daryl Charles, they used the classical polysyndeton catalogs where the elements in the list were united through the repetition of conjunctions in succession, and they refer to the same idea (cf. 1Co 6: 9-10). They also used the asyndeton style that had not connections

between the elements of the structure of a sentence, even if there were grammatical conjunctions in the list (cf. Ga 5:22-23a)ⁱⁱ. Finally, David Aune points out that some catalogs of the New Testament were presented in an amplified style, that is, as a discursive expansion of some or all of the elements of the list (for example, 1Tes 4:3-7 shows four of the five vices mentioned in Col 3:5 in expanded form)ⁱⁱⁱ.

So let's take a look at the catalogs of Christian vices and virtues presented in the epistolary body of the New Testament. They were written in different places, dates, and circumstances. Since its inception, Christianity has used this medium to encourage, despite the distance, the members of the new Christian communities scattered throughout the Mediterranean basin. Its basic content was to remind them that they had abandoned the bad behaviors and vices of the past and had regenerated, converted to live a life according to the faith professed in Christ Jesus, striving to progress each day in the practice of charity and spirit of unity.

I will translate the text based on the Greek New Testament of Kurt Aland (4th edition). As a visual aid to identify the components of these catalogs, I will write in **bold** an item presented as virtue or right action and underline an element shown as a vice or evil act^{iv}.

THE PROTO-PAULINE LETTERS

In the New Testament, the Pauline letters appear not in chronological order but according to the length of these letters. Of the thirteen letters attributed to Paul, scholars are convinced that seven are undisputedly from his authorship: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Romans is the longest, and Philemon is the shortest. This group of letters, written between 50 and 60 CE, is called Proto-Pauline because they provide direct access to Paul's theology and a window into the world of the first Christians. To see the influence that the doctrine of one letter probably had on the others, I will study them according to the chronological order accepted by most exegetes^v. The reader could see the rhetorical differences between the Pauline texts and the development and implementation of the classical catalogs of virtues and vices according to the social context of each community.

First letter to the Thessalonians

Once in Macedonia, Paul began to preach in the synagogues of Thessalonica. Many God-fear people accepted his message. However, due to persecution from the Jewish leaders, he abandoned the city without spending enough time to consolidate the fragile faith of the Thessalonians. Paul saw the necessity to send them a letter with more information, encouraging them to preserve their faith. It is considered the earliest writing of the New Testament, written between the years 49/50 CE.

The short catalog presented here was not an original Christian moral teaching nor an exact copy of a moral catalog in a classical Greco-Roman school. It was, rather, a rhetorical tool used in the rabbinic traditions denouncing the sins of idolatry^{vi}:

*[For] this is the will of God - your **sanctification**; to abstain you from whoremongering, each of you to know his own vessel to possess in **sanctification** and **honor**, not in the passion of lust, as also the nations that were not knowing God, not to transgress and defraud in the acting towards his brother, because the Lord [is] an avenger of all these (1Tes 4:3-7a).*

This short pericope is a mixture of vices and virtues that appear in an amplified style. For Paul, those members of the community had been called by God to their sanctification (cf. Lev 19:2, 20:26). And they answered this call by leaving behind their wrongdoings and dedicate themselves to be good. Lastly, the appeal of “not to transgress and defraud” indicated that, for Paul, Christian faith was manifested in action, in the way a believer treated others, imitating the way God treated them in the person of Christ. Failure to do so would put the believer in the same situation as those who will be judge by God.

Letter to the Galatians

Galatians, written between the years 54/55CE, was one of Paul’s most strong letters sent to a group of communities that other preachers influenced after Paul left the region of Galatia, where he established different communities in two of his missionary travels, according to the book of Acts. In this letter, a catalog contrasts the bad actions (vices) of their past life with the good attitudes (virtues) of their life in Christ:

*Evident now are the works of the flesh, which are whoremongering, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, enmities, strife, jealousy, wraths, rivalries, dissensions, sects, envying, drunkenness, reveling, and such like, of which I tell you before, as I also said before, that those doing such things the reign of God shall not inherit. But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control**; against such, there is no law (Ga 5:19-23).*

The list is a mix of Judeo and Christian moral precepts. The first group in this catalog, in asymptotic style, consists of fifteen negative components related to the “works of the flesh,” and the second consists of nine positive elements: the “fruit of the Spirit.” Note that the vices are presented as multiple “works of the flesh,” while the virtues are cataloged as one expanded “fruit of the Spirit.” Moreover, the list of virtues can even be grouped into three groups of three items each. In the first group, inner personal virtues: love, joy, and peace.

The second group contains the virtues manifested in the treatment of others: patience, kindness, and goodness. The third group consists of the virtues considered honorable in a Greco Roman society: faith, gentleness, and self-control.

As part of the Christian rhetorical speech, this catalog allows the reader to contrast the first vice, prostitution, and the first virtue, love. The former is a manifestation of the works of the flesh, while the latter is the manifestation of God’s Spirit. For that reason, the list of virtues finishes with the expression that there is no law against them because love is the fulfillment of the law (cf. Rom 13:10, Gal 5:14).

Finally, the list of vices ends with the expression “and such like,” and the list of virtues ends with the expression “against such,” showing that both lists do not exclude other vices virtues not mentioned here.

Letter to the Philippians

The Philippians were the first Christian community established by Paul on European soil (cf. Acts 16:9-40). The Philippians may well have been Paul’s most beloved and supportive group of converts, maybe because they were mostly converts from paganism and not from a local synagogue.

The present canonical text was formed by at least two or three short letters sent to this particular community around the year 56 CE. No wonder this letter presented a group of vices popular among the Greco-Roman philosophy and adopted as part of the Christian attitude in a Roman colony:

Finally, brothers, whatever is **true**, whatever **venerable**, whatever **right**, whatever **pure**, whatever **lovely**, whatever **admirable** - if any virtue and if any praise - think on these things (Phil 4:8).

It is, in effect, a short catalog of only six virtues composed asymptotically and summarized in the key phrase of the pericope: "if any virtue and if any praise." The enumeration of this short catalog is possible because, in the Greek text, the correlative pronoun *hosa* (translated as whatever or anything) is repeated six times before the adjectives: true, venerable, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. Then, the Greek conjunction/conditional *ei* (if) before two nouns separates the final phrase, as if a summary of the Christian life is recognized: virtue and praise.

First Letter to the Corinthians

The canonical letter to the Corinthians is a compilation of several of Paul's letters between the years 56/57 CE to the Christian communities in Corinth, one of the most unique, loving, and challenging of all Pauline's communities. In this letter, the use of moral catalogs is evident, and they are found throughout the letter.

However, these catalogs were not the classical Greco-Roman style, but rather a combination of Judeo moral values that were part of the Jewish preaching in a synagogue outside Palestine, and of which many converted to Christianity. These moral codes were inserted as a way to expand or explain a particular religious dogma or teaching.

The first catalog, in polysyndeton style, presents a catalog of vices in a personified manner. It was a rhetorical style to emphasize that anyone who repeats an action, either good or evil, becomes good or evil:

I wrote to you in the letter not to associate with whoremongers, of this not all the whoremongers of the world or with the covetous and swindlers, or idolaters - since you would need, then, to depart from this world -. Now, however, I wrote to you not to associate with one being called a brother, is a whoremonger or coveters or idolater or verbal abuser or drunkard or swindler - with such a one not even to eat (1Co 5:9-11).

This pericope could be divided into two groups of vices rejected as Christians, although the second group not only repeats but increases the list of vices. The first part of the list seems to echo four vicious actions done by those who "belong to this world," that is, those who are not Christians. Paul advised not to associate with them not to fall again into the evil actions considered "normal" in a pagan world. The second part of the list repeats some of the same vices as the first part and adds two more: verbal abuser and drunkard. This list was easy to identify in the Greek texts because the conjunction *ē* is repeated five times before the nouns coveters, idolater, verbal abuser, drunkard, and swindler. This amplified list described "one being called a brother."

This information may give the reader an idea of what problems the Corinthian believers had to deal with back then. For Paul, paganism and Christianity did not mix. A Christian could not behave like a pagan unless they were infiltrated in the community.

Paul used a catalog of personified vices again this letter, in which he echoed six vices from the previous pericope, but within another rhetorical discourse in which he dealt with brothers suing another in front of a Roman civil court^{vii}:

Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither whoremongers nor idolaters nor adulterers nor effeminates nor male-bedders nor thieves nor coveters nor drunkards nor verbal abusers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God (1Co 6:9-10).

This moral catalog comes in a polysyndeton unity, united by the Greek negative clause *oute* (translated as neither-nor). In this list of ten personified vices, four vices were added that were not present in the previous pericope: adulterers, effeminate, male-bedders, and thieves. Interestingly, this list echoed those catalogs used by Hellenistic Judaism that pointed out idolatry's "negative aspects" among the pagans.

From this perspective, this catalog of vices could be divided into two groups. The first five vices went against the Jewish laws of purity, while the second group reflected the evil actions against a neighbor. Paul seems to borrow such a common theme from Hellenistic Judaism to speak about those believers who expected to inherit the eschatological kingdom of God. Still, they acted as pagans following the principles of the Roman Empire. For that reason, they were called "unjust," a term used to describe anyone who has not been justified in Christ Jesus^{viii}.

The last moral catalog found in 1 Corinthians was an extensive listing of good actions (some of them presented as a vice to avoid):

*Love [is] **patient, kind**; love [is] not envious; love [is] not boastful not puffed up not improper not seeks that of its own not easily provoked not keeps account of wrongs not delights at injustices; **believes** all things **hopes** all things **endures** all things (1Co 13:4-7).*

In the Greek text, the vices are all preceded by the adverb *ou* (translated as not). It was typical of early Christian rhetoric to present the value of an action by expressing it as evil to avoid (i.e., it is not proud, it is not unjust, it is not selfish, etc.). Therefore, it is accurate to say that this pericope presents love as the ultimate expression of thirteen virtues in action. For this reason, this passage is difficult to translate because each element of the catalog is a verbal form that does not have a similar translation in English that requires the auxiliary verb "to be" to be understood.

Although they could also be read in amplified form, all the elements appeared in asymptotic style as they concatenated individual elements with sentences. It explained the characteristics of the Christian life and gave an idea of who was God for them, as revealed fully in the person of Christ.

This catalog was a mixture of virtues presented in a verbal form, that is, an action in the present tense: patient, kind, believes, hopes, and endures (5 in total), and a mixture of vices in a negative

form: not envious, not boastful, not puffed up, not improper, not seeks its own, not keeps account of wrongs, not delights at injustices (8 in total). The progression in the definition of *agape* (love in action) was remarkable.

The end of this speech gave the keynote that places love above all other virtues, “Now faith, hope, and love subsist, these three. But the greatest of them all is love” (1 Co 13:13). For Christianity, *agape* was the greatest of all virtues because it reflected the essence of God manifested fully in the person of Jesus Christ and identified a Christian by the imitation of these actions.

Second Letter to the Corinthians.

Continuing with the correspondence of Saint Paul to the community of Corinth, there are two catalogs of vices and virtues in the canonical form of the Second Letter to the Corinthians, written around the year 57 CE.

The first catalog shows a clear Christian identity. It does not borrow the ordinary elements of the moral codes from a Greco-Roman philosophical school. It is an impressive list of thirty-seven components in asymptotic style:

*We place no obstacle before no one, so the ministry should not be blemished. Rather we are commending ourselves in everything as God's ministers in great endurance, in tribulations, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fasting, in **purity**, in **knowledge**, in **patience**, in **kindness**, in **Holy Spirit**, in **genuine love**, in **word of truth**, in **power of God** with the weapons of **justice** to the right and the left. Through **glory** and dishonor, through a bad report and **good report** as imposters, and yet **truthful**, as being unknown, and yet **well-known**, as dying, and yet, behold, **we live**, as being disciplined, and yet **not being killed**, as being sorrowful, but **always rejoicing**, as poor, but **enriching** many, as having nothing, and yet **possessing all things** (2 Co 6:3-10).*

Each item in the list has no logical relationship to the preceding one, even if they appear connected by prepositions or conjunctions. They are listed as a group that stands out in the Greek text for its constant use of prepositions and conjunctions. It could be divided into two large sections. The first group unites eighteen nouns with the Greek preposition *en* (translated as in). It is the explanation of what is “everything” that Paul commended to God in his ministry. The first ten elements present the difficulties of his ministry, and the final eight are those virtues that flourish thanks to his ministry.

Moreover, the first four virtues were achieved by the good habits of the believer: purity, knowledge, patience, kindness. The final four virtues were graces given by their faith in Christ: the Holy Spirit, genuine love, word of truth, and power of God. Those were the “weapons of justice^{ix}.”

The second group stands up because it united seven pairs of vicious accusations with seven virtues with the Greek conjunction *hōs – kai* (as – and yet). For those following the ethics of the Roman Empire, Christians were believed to be impostors, unknown, dying, being disciplined, sorrowful, poor, and having nothing. However, Paul used the Christian rhetorical skill of using

negative connotations to express the reality of the Christian ministers: truthful, well-known, alive, not being killed, always rejoicing, enriching many, and possessing all things (in Christ Jesus, obviously).

It is remarkable how Paul did not echo the moral catalogs of the Greek philosophers. Instead, he crafted a list of vices and virtues that had a distinctive Christian character, presenting Christianity as a virtuous life in itself. It was a rhetorical presentation of how was the life of a minister of the Gospel, the good and bad reports circulating about Christian preachers and ministers, their glory and dishonor.

There is another catalog of vices and virtues in 2 Corinthians. It enlists eleven vices that should not be part of Christian life:

I fear that, perhaps, having at least come [to you], I find you not as I wish, and I may be found by you, not as you wish: Not quarreling, jealousy, anger, contentions, slander, gossip, conceit, disorder. Not that coming again before you my God shall humble me and I shall mourn over many that have sinned before and have not converted from impurity and whoremonger, and sensuality that they have practiced (2Co 12:20-21).

This catalog is divided into two sections. The first one contains eight vices in an asymptotic style that seems to be the situation inside the Corinthian communities. The second section contains only three vices in a polysyndeton style, typical of the traditional catalog used by Jewish Hellenistic communities in denouncing the non-Jews for their sin of idolatry.

Maybe, Paul was afraid that his mission in Corinth wasn't as fruitful as he expected, and, once he returns to visit them, he may find the Corinthians acting upon their old pagan practices as if they never accepted the Gospel.

Letter to the Romans

The Letter to the Romans, the longest undisputed letter of Paul written between the years 57/58 CE, synthesis the ministry and thought of Paul sent to the Christian communities located in Rome. Paul sent this epistle as a formal presentation of his ministry. He was looking forward to closing his mission in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia and advancing the preaching of the Gospel to the West of Rome (Hispania).

The Letter to the Romans has become an impressive work of early Christology or Christian theology. No wonder it contains catalogs of vices typically used in Judeo Hellenic circles of thought to denounce the sins of the idolatry of the pagan nations and as an apologetic to the revelation of God in the Sacred Scriptures.

One first catalog of vices appears at the beginning of Paul's argument:

And just as they did not see fit to have knowledge of God, God handed them over to a foolish mind to do things [that] are not proper, being filled with all injustice, whoremongering, covetousness, malice, filled up of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolents, arrogant, boastful,

inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish, untrustworthy, heartless, unmerciful (Rm 1:28-31).

It is the longest catalog of twenty-one of vices or wrong actions in an asymptotic style, and it can be divided into four sections that are distinguished from each other by their grammatical differences in the Greek text:

The first section consists of four nouns written in the dative singular (*adikia, ponēria, pleonexia, kakia*). They explained what happens when the knowledge of God is rejected. The second section comprises five nouns written in the genitive singular (*phthonou, phony, eridos, dolou, kakoētheias*). The third section consists of eight nouns written in the accusative plural (*psithyristas, katalalous, theostygeis, hybristas, hyperēphanous, alazonas, epheuretas*). The final section comprises five adjectives written in the accusative plural, using the Greek privative alpha (*apeitheis, asynetous, asynthetous, astorgous, aneleēmonas*). They explained what filled the heart of those who rejected God and the reason for their evil deeds.

This list does not lead to a progression that culminates with love, the Christian virtue par excellence, as presented in other New Testament catalogs of vices and virtues. It is a complete circle in which the beginning is united to the end. The words “justice” and “unmerciful,” which are the first and last negative elements of this list, are written with an exclusive *alpha* (*adikia, aneleēmonas*). In other words, Rhetorically speaking, this list is presented as an example of a vicious life from which humans cannot break free without divine intervention.

The total absence of virtues in this catalog makes me believe that Paul echoes the same rhetorical tool used by the Jewish Hellenistic communities against the damnation of idolatry.

It is also the case of the second list of vices employed by Paul to illustrate the difference between living in the light (as a Christian) and living in the dark (as a pagan):

As in daytime, we should walk properly, not in reveling and drinking, not in promiscuity and sensuality, not in dissension and jealousy. But clothe [yourself] with the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision of desires of the flesh (Rom 13:13).

This short grouping of six bad actions is presented to us in asymptotic style divided into three pairs joined by the Greek conjunctions *mē-kai* (not-and). For Paul, the moral behavior was consistently good, no matter if it was in a public or private environment, especially when they gathered together at their Eucharistic banquets. Christianity was not just a philosophical school of moral conduct towards society or as one of the mystery religions or associations. It was a radical change of life in words and deeds.

THE DISPUTED LETTERS OF PAUL

Another group of six letters in the New Testament attributed to Paul are widely regarded by scholars as written not by Paul but by his disciples sometimes between 70 and 120 CE: Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. For this reason, these disputed letters are called Deutero-Pauline because they present development in Paul's insight and offer pastoral responses to situations that arouse among the communities after the death of the Apostle.

Second Letter to Timothy

It was one of the two letters sent to Timothy and argumentatively attributed to Paul. Together with the Letter to Titus, these letters were called Pastoral Letters by some eighteenth-century commentators. The author of 1 Timothy, inspired by Paul's authentic letters, expressed his concerns on the role of Church ministers in dealing with the new issues that arose in some Christian communities after the death of the Apostle.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, an expert on St. Paul from the *École Biblique de Jérusalem*, argued, based in part on recent research on the style of these letters, that 2 Timothy contained an authentic note sent by Paul to Timothy at the end of Paul's ministerial career (cf. 2 Tim 4:6-22)^x. This letter, probably written in the late 60s-70s CE, was not very well known at the beginning due to its private nature, but it was finally published for the benefit of the Church.

The first catalog of vices and virtues in asymptotic style was address to Timothy to become a role models for young ministers. For the author, a trustworthy minister of the Church shall:

Flee from youthful lusts; and pursue **justice, faith, love, peace**, along with those calling on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim 2:22).

Later on, the author of this letter presents a long list of vices that a new minister of the Church will see as proof of a doctrinal heresy attacking the sound doctrine^{xi}:

[You] shall realize this, that in the last days, difficult times will be present. Humans will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive to parents, disobedient, unpersuaded, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, unappeasable, dividers, without self-control, without tame, without love for good, treacherous, reckless, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Tim 3:1-5).

This first list consists of nineteen vices in an asymptotic style^{xii}. Following the Greek text, this list could be rhetorically analyzed as if it was composed as a chiasm, in which the dividers or slanders (*diaboloi*) with their false teachings destroy and divide the unity of the community, just as the devil (*diabolos*) destroys and divides humans from God:

- A) Two vices that begin with the Greek prefix *phil-* (lover of)
 - B) Three bad action consider here as vices.
 - C) Five vices that begin with the negative Greek prefix *a-* (un- or without)
 - D) Dividers (*diaboloi*)
 - C') Three vices that begin with the negative Greek prefix *a-* (un- or without)
 - B') Three bad action consider here as vices
 - A') Two vices that begin with the Greek prefix *phil-* (lover of)

Another rhetorical analysis is that the catalog begins and ends with two vices with the Greek prefix *phil-* (lover of): lovers of self, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, and lovers of God. It makes this list a vicious circle, a common rhetorical style (cf. Rm 1:28-31). It is an indication that when humans misuse love for their benefits, they fall into a never-ending circle of bad actions.

Few verses below this pericope, there is a short catalog of virtues (already known and practiced by the faithful):

*You, however, have closely followed my **teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings** such as it happened to me in Iconium and Lystra (2 Tim 3:10-11a).*

This second group presents a list of seven virtues to imitate and thus avoid falling into the errors mentioned above. This list is presented in a progressive asymptotic style that brings the center the virtue of love.

The author invited the reader to consider the virtue of endurance manifested in the persecutions and sufferings (two bad actions that, in the Christian rhetoric, are transformed as virtues when supported for the sake of the Gospel).

Letter to the Colossians

Following the dangers of those new teachings (either early Gnosticism, Judaizers, or apocalypticists) that begun to appear during the last decades of the first century, the author of this letter, composed c. 80s CE, wanted to warn the community at Colossae about them, and to highlight the unique role of Christ in the story of salvation. To contrast any false teaching, the author gave a list of mixed vices and virtues which every believer shall strive to avoid or to accomplish:

Put to death, therefore, the members upon the earth whoremongering, impurity, passion, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of this, the wrath of God is coming to the sons of disobedience [...]

But now, you too put away all these: anger, rage, evil, slander foul language out of your mouth, do not lie to one another. Put off the old humanity with its practices [...]

*Put on, therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, **entrails of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience**, bearing with each other and **forgiving** each other if one has a complaint against another.*

*As the Lord forgave you, forgive yourselves too. Beyond all of these, put on **love**, which is the bond of perfect unity (Col 3:5-6. 8-9a. 12-14).*

There are three distinct sections composed of six elements each. The first two sections are only vices, and the last one is only virtues. The catalog ends with the participial phrase, "bearing with each other and forgiving each other if one has a complaint against another," a fact that will be repeated continuously to conclude the components of a list within a Christian moral catalog from the end of the first century^{xiii}.

Finally, the virtue of love is set aside in a subtle rhetorical composition leading the reader to progress through the life of a believer. Rejecting a life of vices, the believer begins to recognize that love is the summit of all Christian virtues. This love was manifested to them in the redemption offered by Christ and united to him perfectly^{xiv}.

Letter to the Ephesians

The author of this letter, written around the 90s CE in a very close resemblance to the letter to the Colossians, declared that the Christian mystery of salvation is the source of true wisdom and that this salvation was offered to Jews and non-Jews alike. It illustrated the issues the Christian communities faced as they became a religious institution at the end of the first century, especially in household and worship.

In this letter, the use of moral codes of vices and virtues was more employed than any other New Testament letter. The first catalog consisted of three virtues found between two prepositional phrases that do not correspond to the classical style of such catalogs:

*I exhort you, therefore, I, a prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily according to the calling to which you were called with **all humility** and **gentleness**, with **patience** bearing with one another in **love**, being diligent to keep **the unity of the Spirit** with the bond of peace (Eph 4:1-3).*

This short catalog is clearly distinguished because the Greek preposition *meta* unites the virtues (with)^{xv}. The final virtues of love and unity (in the Holy Spirit) are written in a participle phrase. As in the Letter to the Colossians, it is a rhetorical composition to show the believer's progress to the virtue of Christian love. Few verses later, there is another, more extensive and traditional catalog:

*All bitterness, and anger, and wrath, and clamor, and slander shall be removed from you, along with all evil. Now, be **kind** to one another, **tenderhearted**, **forgiving** each other, as God also forgave you in Christ (Eph 4:30-32).*

This catalog is clearly divided into two groups. The first one contains six polysyndeton vices presented in a closed circle; The first vice and the last vice uses the Greek adjective *pasa* (all bitterness – all evil). The second group consists of three virtues presented in asymptotic style in which the virtues are inside the participle phrase “as God also forgave you in Christ.”

What calls my attention is that these virtues or good actions are unique to the Christian moral teaching; Anyone who believes in Christ lives, removes all vices from their lives, and begins to live a life of virtue for the benefit of others. These virtues and their goal were not ordinarily found in the traditional lists of virtues of the Greco-Roman schools of philosophy.

The author of Ephesians included another catalog contrasting the wrong moral conduct of those who did not belong to the kingdom of God and the moral life of those who lived pleasing the Lord:

But, whoremongering, and all impurity, or covetousness, let not even be named among you, as also is proper to saints. And filthiness, and language or crude joking, things that are not fitting, but rather thanksgiving. Realizing that, as you see, any whoremonger, or impurity, or covetous, who is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God [...]

*For you were once darkness; however, now light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light because the fruit of the light is in all **goodness** and **justice** and **truth** discerning what is well-pleasing to the Lord (Eph 5:1-5. 8-10).*

This catalog could be divide into two groups in a polysyndeton style. The first group is composed of three sets of three vices each (nine vices in total) in which the first and the third set repeats the same list of vices. The second group is composed of two virtues typical of the Greco-Roman philosophical schools of ethics.

To finalize this catalog, the author used the traditional participle phrase: “discerning what is well-pleasing to the Lord.” In doing this, the author wanted to express that some ethical codes of the philosophical schools were in accord with the will of God (the fruit of light).

The letter to the Ephesians includes another moral catalog that consists only of virtues:

*Therefore having girded your loins with **truth**, and having put on the breastplate of **justice**, and having tied up on the feet the readiness of the gospel of **peace**, stand up! Above all, Take up the shield of **faith** with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take also the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Eph 6:14-17).*

The virtues in this catalog are embedded in a participial phrase. There are two verbs in an imperative tense: stand up and take up that modify the implicit subject of the pericope (a Roman soldier). Even if it does not contain any virtue, the final phase completes the instructions by ordering to take the helmet of salvation and the sword, which is the Word of God.

Note that each virtue refers to a different part of the body: the truth around the loins to support the body, justice around the chest to protect the heart’s impulses, and sandals tied up on the feet ready to go out proclaiming the gospel of peace. Finally, the believer’s faith would protect the person from any attacks against the true doctrine, and the Word of God will combat any errors.

It seems that the author wrote this particular pericope inspired in the Greek Translation from the Book of Isaiah (cf. Isa 11:5; 59:17; 52:7; 40:3) and the Book of Wisdom (cf. Wis 5:18).

First letter to Timothy

This document dedicated to one of Paul’s most faithful coworkers deals primarily with the organization and administration of the Christian community as a religious institution and the problem of growing heresies at the end of the first century (This text was probably written between the years 80-100CE). The first catalog of vices in 1 Timothy touches, indeed, the issue of the wrong doctrine:

We see now that the law is good if one lawfully uses it, knowing that a law is not enacted for a just one, but for lawless and insubordinate, ungodly and sinful, unholy and profane, parricides and matricides, murderers, whoremongers, male-bedders, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and anything other opposed to the sound doctrine (1 Tim 1:9-10).

This catalog, in asymptotic style, contains fourteen components. The first eight vices were grammatically paired with the Greek conjunction *kai* (and), while the rest of the vices were individually enlisted.

As usual, the list concludes with a traditional participial phrase “and of anything other opposed to the sound doctrine,” assuring that there would be other vices or misbehaviors not included in this catalog but that is opposed to the Gospel^{xvi}.

The letter’s author presented those “opposed to the sound doctrine” as unjust as if Christ hadn’t saved them. The rhetorical use of stereotyped characteristics of those outside a community was typical of the ancient Mediterranean cultures. The “others” were dangerous, and dealing with them presents a threat to the common good of the inner social group.

In another catalog, the author of 1 Timothy enlisted the expected qualities of those in charge of each community’s administration:

It is, therefore, necessary that the episcopo be blameless, husband of one wife, sober, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, neither a drinker nor a striker, but gentle, peaceable, not lover of money, managing well his own house, having children in submission with all dignity [...]

Not a neophyte that, been puffed up, might not fall into the judgement of the devil. It is necessary also to have good testimony from those outsides so that he might not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Likewise, deacons shall be dignified, not double-tongued, not to be given much into wine, not greedy of dishonest gain, holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience [...]

Women, likewise, shall be dignified, not dividers, clear-minded, faithful in all things.

Let deacons be husbands of one wife, managing well his children and his household (1Tm 3:2-4. 6-9. 11-12).

The elements grouped here are presented in an asymptotic and amplified style. It could be divided into three large sections, one for the episcopos^{xvii} containing twelve good behaviors and three improper characteristics to avoid. These elements explain the meaning of being “blameless.” Then, there are two extended phrases at the end of this catalog, completing the good function that an episcopo shall have inside and outside the community.

In the second section, dedicated to deacons, the author presented a code of three bad behaviors written in a negative form and two positive qualities to explain the meaning of being “dignified” to the diaconate ministry. Later on, the author added two extra elements in this section, constructing a parallel to the final of the episcopos. This catalog ends with the traditional rhetorical participial phrase “holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.”

The third section dedicated to women leaders in the Church consists of three components: one misbehavior to avoid and two positive qualities. These also explain the meaning of women being “dignified.”

It is a very interesting catalog because it is, by no means, a traditional catalog containing virtues and vices of the Greco-Roman philosophical schools, but rather the expected behavior of local Church leaders. It is a clear example of a *Berufspflichtenlehre* or a catalog or code of behavior for a specific occupation (cf. Ti 1, 5-9)^{xviii}.

The third catalog in 1 Timothy was addressed to new Church leaders:

*Let no one despise your youth, but become a pattern for the believers in **speech**, in **conduct**, in **love**, in **faith**, in **purity** (1 Tm 4:12).*

This brief catalogue consists of five Christian virtues in an asymptotic style and concatenated with the Greek conjunction *en* (in).

In the final catalog of 1 Timothy, the author reaffirmed what a leader of the Church should behave and act. Having Timothy, the companion of Paul, as an example of a ministry of the Church, the author encourages:

*But you, o man of God, flee from these things but pursue **justice**, **godliness**, **faith**, **love**, **endurance**, **gentleness** (1 Tm 6:11).*

This group of six virtues is presented in an asymptotic style and without concatenation between its components.

This catalog could be divided into two groups. The first group presented the virtues expected by any person in the Greco-Roman society (justice, godliness, faith). However, if a person desired something more, the second group offered those virtues presented in the Christian life (love, endurance, gentleness). In a clear parallel, just as justice was seen as a high virtue in ancient society, Christians ranked love as the most important virtue in a life renewed by Christ.

Letter to Titus

The author of the Letter to Titus (around the same time as 1 Timothy) dealt, as it was the case with the two letters sent to Timothy, with heresy and Church discipline. It urged the churches in Crete to appoint worthy elders to positions of responsibility, to preach sound doctrine, and to give examples of Christian virtues with his life.

The first moral catalog of this letter presented the necessary qualities for candidates to become Church leaders:

*For this, I left you in Crete, so that you may set in order those things lacking it, and might appoint in every town presbyters, as I directed you if anyone is blameless, **husband of one wife**, **having children believers**, not under accusation of debauchery or insubordinate.*

*It is necessary that the episcopo, as God's steward, to be blameless, not self-pleasing, not irascible, not a drinker, not a striker, not greedy of dishonest gain, but **hospitable**, **lover of good**, **self-controlled**, **just**, **holy**, **disciplined**, adhered to the faithful word, according to the teaching, that he may be able to encourage with sound teaching and convict those who contradict it (Ti 1:6-9).*

This catalog is divided into two sections. The first one presents the candidate's characteristics to be an elder in the Church (presbyter). It contains only four requirements, two good behavior, and two negative behaviors to avoid, explaining the meaning of being "blameless."

The second one presents the characteristics of a candidate to become an episcopo. It contains twelve requirements for an elder to become a blameless "God's steward," that is, to be an

overseer or episcopos^{xix}: Six bad behaviors that must be avoided, and six good behaviors are expected in a Church leader.

The catalog follows closely the *Berufspflichtenlehre* code found in 1 Timothy, where the author presented the characteristics of those being called Church leaders (cf. 1Tm 3:2-4. 6-9. 11-12). Finally, the participial phrase that closes the list in this chapter reappears, “adhered to the faithful word, according to the teaching, that he may be able to encourage with sound teaching and convict those who contradict it.”

Before the reader may conclude that these virtues and good behaviors are expected only from the leaders of the Church, the author of Titus gives another catalog of vices and virtues expected by all believers in their social activities:

Remind them to be subject to the rulers, to authorities, to be obedient to be ready for every good work, no to slander anyone, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility towards all humans. For we were also foolish, disobedient, being deceived, serving lusts and various pleasures, living in malice and envy, hating one another (Tit 3:1-3).

This catalog could also be divided into two sections. The first group, in the amplified style, contains four positive behaviors for life in society. In an amplified style, the first section contained four positive behaviors and two negative behaviors to avoid in social life. The second section contains three vices in an asymptotic way and three vices presented within three participle phrases. This section was concluded with the typical participial phrase “showing all humility towards all humans.”

It calls the attention that the first virtue enlisted in this final catalog is to be subject to rulers and authority, indicating that the Christian community was not passing through any persecution when the letter of Titus was written. Instead, they wanted to be perceived as a religious institute that was not a threat to Roman society.

Nevertheless, this final catalog of vices and virtues summarized the conversion experience of those who came from pagan traditions and how they were transformed in Christ. The catalogs in this letter were as part of an exhortative sermon. Their goal was to encourage the new community of believers to follow correct and irreproachable conduct from the perspective of social morality^{xx}.

With this letter, I conclude the presentation of the Pauline epistolary body in the New Testament because the letters to Philemon and 2 Thessalonians did not contain a clear catalog of vices and virtues in them.

CONCLUSION

A chronological presentation of the Pauline literature allowed us to appreciate the abundance of different moral catalogs adapted to the good and bad behavior that Christians shall practice or avoid. These catalogs included more vices and virtues. It may be derived from the fact that the way they used to live was considered the “normal virtuous” life for many Christian communities, but once they have been justified by Christ, the virtues of Christ are, in essence, the virtues to imitate. Moreover, the authors of the Pauline literature have added to their moral

catalogs the main ingredient proper to the Christian life: the virtue of love (agape) within a fraternal communion and in the same Spirit.

The use of moral catalogs from the Greek philosophical schools such as Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Platonism indicates how the Christian Church became less attached to her Jewish origin and became more Hellenized. The New Testament codes of vices and virtues were more developed at the end of the first and beginning of the second century. The Christian communities developed their moral catalogs for three functions: pedagogical, liturgical, and evangelization.

The pedagogical function used the codes to facilitate the disciples' memory and to remember them the discipline necessary to live in an orderly community. It also imparted order and discipline within the entire Church (for example, the *Didache*).

The liturgical function used the codes to maintain the sense of the pure, the sacred, and mystical public service to God, as in the Qumran writings on community rule (cf. 1QS 3:13 – 4: 26). They could also be part of the baptismal liturgy, where the passage from an old life to a new life in Christ was emphasized (cf. Ga 5:17-24; Col 3:1-17; Eph 4:31-32; 5:3-14 and James 3:13-17).

Finally, the evangelizing function saw in these codes a tool that helped the community not feeling like a group isolated from society. On the contrary, they were always open to rediscovering some moral values (virtues) that can be assimilated by Christians of all times and places, and thus eliminate the barriers that prevent the acceptance of the Gospel message. The Christian moral catalogs remain in practice in many societies.

References

ⁱFirst, an epideictic or demonstrative function that promoted honorable acts over dishonorable. An orator used this modality to agree or disagree about past events and how the speaker praised them (a virtuous act) or criticized them (a vicious act). Second, a controversial method used to evaluate if certain teachings and ideologies are beneficial for the society (virtue) or harmful (vice). Finally, the catalogs were used in a judicial context when the actions of a person were evaluated as legal (virtue) or illegal (vice). It should be remembered that Aristotle's rhetoric teaches theoretical reflections on persuasive language as we find it in Aristoteles, *Rhetorica*, Madrid, Gredos, 1999, 26. To learn more about this modality, I recommend reading Menandro De Laodicea (The Retor), *Two treatises of epideictic rhetoric*, (trans. Manuel García García and Joaquín Gutiérrez Calderón), Madrid, Gredos, 1996.

ⁱⁱJ. Daryl Charles, "Vice and Virtue Lists," in Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background. A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2000, 1253-1254.

ⁱⁱⁱDavid E. Aune presents an example of amplified style in the text of 1Tes 4, 3-7, which shows four of the five vices mentioned in Col 3,5 in expanded form. Cf. David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, La Vergne, Ingram Publisher Services, 2001. Further work on these two forms of rhetorical use of the list of vices and virtues can be found in Siegfried Wibbing's classic monographs, *Die Tugend- und Lasterkataloge im Neuen Testament und ihre Traditionsgeschichte unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Qumrantexte*,

^{iv}I have used the Greek text of the NT presented by Kurt Aland, et al. (eds.), *The Greek New Testament*, Stuttgart, Württemberg Bible Society, 20004.

^vI will follow the chronology proposed by Raymond E. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Doubleday, 1997, although the dates of composition of these texts is still highly debated.

^{vi}The vices mentioned here are found in Col 3:5: whoremongering, lust, transgress, and defraud.

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- vii cf. 2 Tim 3: 1-13, will echo this list as well but applied to the apostates of church.
- viii We can note the successive increase in the number of "criminals" (first 4, then 6, and now 10) employed by Saint Paul in his speeches to show what "he is not a Christian."
- ix The virtues of patience, justice, and truth are the typical three virtues popularly taught in the 1st century AD, but Paul adapted them to his rhetorical discourse to exhort to the Corinthian Christians.
- x Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, OP, *Paul: A Critical Life*, Oxford, New Edition, 1998, 356-359.
- xi This is the second longest list of vices in the NT (Romans has 21 vices). But combining the 19 vices plus the 9 virtues the total would be 28 components of a list of vices and virtues, exceeding the list of 24 components (15 vices plus 9 virtues) of the letter to the Galatians (5:19-23).
- xii The author of 2Tim could have been inspired by the list of Philo of Alexandria where he shows man a long list of errors (vices) in which those who fall in love with passion and do not follow virtue will fall. Cf. Filón De Alejandría, *Sacr*, V, 32 in *Complete Works* (translated by José Pablo Martín), volume 1, Madrid, Trotta, 2009.
- xiii Particular phrases are normally found after traditional moral codes: Eph 4:1-3; 4:25-32; 5:1-14; Col 3:1-17; Tt 1:5-9; 3:1-3; 1P 3:8-9; 1Tm 3:1-12; Hb 7:26-27.
- xiv Note that four of the five vices in Col 3:5 had been already used in 1Ts 4:3-7 in a more expanded form.
- xv This is the second time that we see the use of the participle phrase at the end of a moral catalog. This style will be copied in other texts, becoming the traditional grammatical form of completion of lists in the other passages of the New Testament.
- xvi This statement leaves the options open to other errors or vices not listed in the letter, we also find it in Gal 5, 16-24 and Phil 4, 8.
- xvii This position does not yet speak of the Bishop's ministry as we know it today. The bishops or general administrators exercised the functions of leaders within the community, without it being yet possible to clearly distinguish what these functions were about and how they differed from the functions from those of deacons and presbyters of the community.
- xviii Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistle*, London, T&T Clark Ltd, 2004, 147.
- xix Most of the scholars in the letter to Titus think that the candidate referred to in the text is the candidate for the episcopate and not necessarily the presbyterate as a separate entity. According to the note in *The Jerusalem Bible*, the first Christian communities were headed by a college of presbyters (elders in the etymological sense) or notables. The "bishops" appeared related to deacons and, in some texts (Ti 1:5, 7; Acts 20:17,28) they seem practically identical to the "presbyters".
- xx This is the proposal presented by J. Daryl Charles, *Virtue Amidst Vice: The Catalog of Virtues in 2 Peter*, Journal for the Studies of the New Testament Supplement series 150, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, 112-127.
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