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### **“Don’t Stop Believin’”: Dante’s and Christian’s Journey to Heaven**

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Senior Paper

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“Don’t Stop Believin’”: Dante’s and Christian’s Journey to Heaven

Dante Alighieri and John Bunyan wrote allegorical narratives in which Dante and Christian, the pilgrims, travel through various geographical locations to arrive eventually at some form of Heaven: Paradise for Dante and the Celestial City for Christian. Dante is guided by Virgil for the first part of his journey, then by Beatrice; Christian is accompanied by Evangelist at essential but various times during his journey, then by Hopeful until the end (after being accompanied by Faithful until his martyrdom)<sup>1</sup>. Hopeful travels alongside Christian, but his influence on Christian’s decision making throughout their journey allows him to be considered a guide. Throughout each pair’s journey, the relationship between pilgrims and their guides grows, forming a father and son relationship for Dante and Virgil, and allowing Christian to find an accountability partner with Evangelist. Beatrice, a guide who represents the theological virtues of love, faith, and hope, takes over for Virgil, who represents reason, in the Earthly Paradise at the end of *Purgatorio*. Hopeful represents hope for Christian when he is at a moral low point and helps him through Vanity Fair and beyond after Faithful is killed. The guides also collaborate with the physical path of the protagonists’ journeys. Dante’s geography guides him through *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, while Virgil merely accompanies the geography and acts as a bodyguard or protector. Beatrice allows Dante to guide himself through the freedom of Paradise, contrasting the restraining geography of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, and offers counsel when various characters

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<sup>1</sup> Faithful also walks alongside Christian but acts not as a guide but as merely another journeyman.

are speaking to Dante. For Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he relies on himself to navigate the geography with guides such as Evangelist and Hopeful helping along the way. The guides and geography that both Dante and Christian encounter allow them to grow in their spiritual journey and ultimately enter into their form of heaven.

Dante's journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise is not an easy one. He is introduced to Virgil in Canto I of *Inferno* when Virgil sees Dante blocked by the three beasts on the mountain. The text reveals that Virgil was sent to help guide Dante to Paradise. Virgil uses reason to explain to Dante that "I think and judge it best for you / to follow me, and I shall guide you, taking / you from this place through an eternal place" (*Inferno* 1.112-14) so that he may get to Paradise. From there, Virgil begins to lead Dante through Hell. Dante describes Virgil first as "Poet" (*Inferno* 2.10, 7.113), but their relationship develops over time into a friendship, which leads to various other addresses for Virgil. Dante later tells Virgil "Now go; a single will fills both of us: / you are my guide, my governor, my master" (*Inferno* 2.139-140). He continues throughout the beginning of *Inferno* and throughout *Purgatorio* to call him "my guide" (*Inferno* 3.94, 16.110, 17.28, 24.20) or "my master" (*Inferno* 1.85, 6.13, 8.16, 34.82). Their relationship is based, as Guy P. Raffa writes, on "mutual affection and good will, a shared commitment to virtue and excellence, experiencing good and bad times together, the willingness to give (and receive) advice and criticism" (73). In *Inferno*, Dante and Virgil's relationship grows to the point that Dante refers to his guide as his father. Dante notes during their escape from the hypocrites that Virgil carried him "just like a son, and not like a companion" (*Inferno* 23.51). This comes at a point of crisis for the pair when they are being chased out of the eighth circle. Dante relies on and trusts Virgil with the same trust that a child would put in a parent. Dante and Virgil's relationship grows throughout *Inferno*, where Virgil gives Dante great advice, but also grows in

the sense that the pair becomes “one,” with Virgil having “made one bundle of himself and [Dante]” (*Inferno* 31.135).

There is also a significant growth in Dante and Virgil’s relationship after they leave Hell, mainly because both are new to the realm of Purgatory. Virgil is a guide in *Inferno* and is quite familiar with the territory because he explains to Dante that “I was among those souls who are suspended” (*Inferno* 2.52), meaning that he lives in Hell, specifically Limbo. When Virgil enters Purgatory, he turns into a fellow pilgrim with Dante. Virgil wipes the tears off Dante’s face to reveal the “color that Inferno had concealed” (*Purgatorio* 1.129), which begins the journey through Purgatory together. Dante addresses Virgil as “my only comfort” (*Purgatorio* 3.22), signifying a close relationship in which Dante feels safe and comfortable with Virgil, even after doubting him moments before. Their relationship can also be described in a loving way, with adjectives like “gentle” (*Purgatorio* 10.47) to characterize Virgil. Virgil also recognizes the change in their relationship, preaching to Dante that

“Love that is kindled by  
 virtue, will, in another, find reply,  
 as long as that love’s flame appears without;  
 so, from the time when Juvenal, descending  
 among us, in Hell’s Limbo, had made plain  
 the fondness that you felt for me, my own  
 benevolence toward you has been much richer  
 than any ever given to a person  
 one has not seen; thus, now these stairs seem short” (*Purgatorio* 22.10-18)

During their journey through Purgatory, Dante and Virgil develop love for one another, shifting the perception of Virgil from guide to a father figure. This is reflected in how Virgil leaves Dante at the end of *Purgatorio*, with Dante noting that “Virgil, the gentlest father, Virgil, he / to whom I gave my self for my salvation; / and even all our ancient mother lost / was not enough to keep my cheeks, though washed/ with dew, from darkening again with tears” (*Purgatorio* 30. 50-54). While Dante calls Virgil “father” in this passage, it is important to note that Virgil’s fatherhood in this case is philosophical and not literal in how Virgil treats Dante. Dante refers to Virgil as “father” in this passage because through their developing relationship, Virgil has been preparing his “son” to continue to Paradise without him. Rather than a literal rite of passage, Virgil gives Dante a philosophical rite of passage into the Earthly Paradise and into manhood. After Virgil’s departure, Dante can be seen assuming Virgil’s role of reason as he begins to travel through Paradise with Beatrice. He does this by beginning to ask his own questions, as Virgil asked for him throughout the first two books of the Comedy.

The geographical aspect of the journey Dante takes is allegorical in the sense that he is being guided by the geography that ultimately leads him into Paradise. In order to journey to paradise, the journey requires “another path you must take” (*Inferno* 1.91) Virgil tells Dante, who then leads him down through Hell. This journey to God is guided by the different realms that Dante travels through. The path that Dante journeys through in *Inferno* does not allow for him to move freely or choose his own path; it is set for him due to the cone shape of Hell. Because of this, traveling down through Hell allows the reader to see the various types of people and things that are of Hell and that Dante is led, by the path set for him, to interact with. This continues throughout the rest of *The Divine Comedy* as well. Virgil speaks wisdom to Dante, guiding him so that he will live a life that will ensure that he will not end up in Hell. Virgil also

talks often with various characters who warn Dante of the dangers and mistakes that they made or experienced. *Inferno*'s geography is much different from *Purgatorio* or *Paradiso* in the sense that there is a set way to get through it. Virgil's role in Dante's journey through *Inferno* is not necessarily to guide him spiritually and theologically, but rather to accompany the geography and offer wisdom, advice, and protection from the various threats that Dante encounters and guide him literally. Their clockwise motion through Hell differs from Purgatory, where in Hell they move to the left, and Purgatory they move to the right, representing Aristotle's theory that as Dante gets closer to Paradise, he "move[s] to the right" (Freccero 170). While he is moving down through Hell, Dante is actually being guided toward Purgatory and eventually Paradise. At the end of *Inferno*, in the center of the Earth, Dante and Virgil climb down to escape Satan. Virgil tells Dante "It is by such stairs / that we must take our leave of so much evil" (*Inferno* 34.83-84). He then climbs through a rock, and Dante sees Satan "with his legs turned up" (*Inferno* 34.90) which signifies the beginning of their ascent to Purgatory. In order to move up into Purgatory, they have to climb to the lowest part of Hell, which then flipped, and they began climbing up to Purgatory rather than continuing down through Hell. Virgil tells Dante when in the final circle of Hell that "you were there as long as I descended; / but when I turned, that's when you passed the point to / which, from every part, all weights are drawn" (*Inferno* 34.109-11) leading them to a spot in which "we climbed—/ he first, I following—until I saw, / through a round opening some of those things / of beauty Heaven bears" (*Inferno* 34.135-38). This ultimately affirms Aristotle's exhortation about motion that you must "descend, so that you may ascend" (Freccero 171).

Beatrice's guidance that Dante experiences differs from Virgil's at the end of *Purgatorio* and moving into *Paradiso*. Beatrice is Dante's muse who inspires Dante to keep journeying to

Paradise. She becomes the female figure that replaces the parents (whether father or mother) that Virgil became. Dante notes this about Beatrice as they begin their journey through Paradise, saying that “she / settled her eyes on me with the same look / a mother casts upon a raving child” (*Paradiso* 1.100-02) and later that she was “like a mother quick to reassure / her pale and panting son with the same voice / that she has often used to comfort him” (*Paradiso* 22.4-6). The separation from Virgil near the end of *Purgatorio* and the first encounter with Beatrice makes Dante feel “just as / a little child, afraid or in distress, / will hurry to his mother—anxiously” (*Purgatorio* 30.43-45). Virgil and Beatrice’s roles are seen differently by the reader but are seen similarly by Dante. Dante sees her in a motherly role, similar to how he viewed Virgil. Beatrice, like Virgil, is not of the world that Dante is from (although at one point she was alive and on earth); she is of Paradise and is perfected. The contrast between Virgil and Beatrice is represented through the place they meet Dante as well as how Dante views Beatrice in *Paradiso*, when he says that “Beatrice looked at me with eyes so full / of sparks of love, eyes so divine that my / own force of sight was overcome, took flight, / and, eyes downcast, I almost lost my senses” (*Paradiso* 4.139-42). Described as having “purity within her eyes” (*Paradiso* 18.55), she is not referred to as a guide or other terms like Virgil was, but Dante does call her “the lady leading me to God” (*Paradiso* 18.4), which signifies the ultimate goal of Dante’s journey. The purity described in her eyes helps Dante shift his view of Beatrice and affirms how the reader sees differences between Beatrice and Virgil and their characteristics. Near the end of *Purgatorio* and through *Paradiso*, Dante views Beatrice as Divine Love. Her role as Dante’s guide is also a reflection of this. Beatrice and Virgil contrast in the sense that Virgil represents reason in guiding Dante, while Beatrice represents the theological virtues: hope, faith, and especially love. However, like Virgil, Beatrice is not showing Dante how to walk a life that glorifies God as we

see in various characters in *The Pilgrim's Progress* but rather is offering counsel to Dante to always keep his desires fixed on God.

The three theological virtues that Beatrice represents help guide Dante to do this. The virtues can be found when she first reveals herself to Dante and Virgil with “her dress beneath, flame-red” (*Purgatorio* 30.33). This red is the “flaming red of charity,” or love (Wimsatt 410). The “white veil” and “her cape that was green” (*Purgatorio* 30.32-33) symbolize other virtues: green for hope and white for faith. These virtues explain why she is in Paradise, but they also explain how Dante uses Beatrice to get to God. Her virtues, unlike Virgil’s virtues that he develops once they get further away from Hell, are what separate her from Virgil as a guide and also explain why she is guiding Dante through Paradise and not through Hell or Purgatory. Virgil even calls Beatrice “Lady of virtue” (*Inferno* 2.76) at the beginning of their journey. Because of her status, Dante seeks a different kind of relationship with Beatrice than he had with Virgil. An example of this is Dante seeking consent to speak when being accompanied by Beatrice on their way to Paradise, or Dante feeling that her loveliness “must be left among / the visions that take flight from memory” (*Paradiso* 14. 80-81). Another way that Virgil and Beatrice differ appears when Dante refers to Beatrice as “an admiral” (*Purgatorio* 30.58) when she speaks to him after Virgil departs. This respect and admiration come also when she is speaking, and Dante sees himself “as one who does not interrupt her speech” (*Paradiso* 5.17). Dante is hooked on Beatrice’s words, knowing that whatever she is saying is vital and not supposed to be interrupted.

Beatrice’s theological virtues influence Dante and his journey, but her beauty is a quality that Dante notes often, and her beauty also guides and influences Dante. Dante is mesmerized by Beatrice’s beauty, and he describes Beatrice with endearing lines ranging throughout *Purgatorio*



and *Paradiso* that suggest a different type of love for her than he had for Virgil. In *Paradiso*, there are multiple instances in which Dante is altered by Beatrice's beauty and love. He says at the end of Canto 3 that "she then struck my eyes with so much brightness / that I, at first, could not withstand her force; / and that made me delay my questioning" (*Paradiso* 3.128-130). He describes himself looking at her, calling himself "stupefied; / for in the smile that glowed within her eyes, / I thought that I—with mine—had touched the height / of both my blessedness and paradise" (*Paradiso* 14.33-36).

Beatrice's beauty in *Paradiso* transcends her earthly beauty, with Dante saying that "beneath her veil, beyond the stream, she seemed / so to surpass her former self in beauty / as, here on earth, she had surpassed all others" (*Purgatorio* 31.82-84). In fact, Dante thinks of her as an almost-divine figure before he interacts with her, as well as when they interact at the end of *Purgatorio* and through *Paradiso*. James Wimsatt writes about Christ-like characters in medieval literature that can also be connected to Mary. Comparing Beatrice here to Beatrice in *La Vita Nuova*, he writes that "Beatrice again—this time in *Purgatorio*—is one of these. This is not to deny that she there also represents Revelation and Wisdom. She may even in a sense stand for Christ" (403). Her Christ-like character helps Dante grow in his relationship with God and ultimately leads Dante to no longer view Beatrice as his true love or his god, but rather God as his true love. Upon first meeting Beatrice, Dante says that I do not know if she [Beatrice] said more than that, / because, by now, I had in sight one who / excluded all things other from my view" (*Purgatorio* 32.91-93). While he holds Beatrice in high regard, not even she can outshine God. Towards the end of their journey, Dante observes that now she "did not transfix me with / amazement so intense, nor show to me / a semblance that was so akin to God" (*Paradiso* 32.91-93). Dante was previously inclined to view Beatrice in the same light as God. Dante writes that

“all my love / was so intent on Him that Beatrice / was then eclipsed within forgetfulness. / But not displeased by this, she smiled, and my / rapt mind was split” (*Paradiso* 10.58-62). Beatrice’s Christ-like qualities point Dante closer to God spiritually, but her guidance is still keen on getting him to the end of Paradise so that he may literally see God. The contrast between prioritizing God and Beatrice in his faith that Dante fights in his mind is one that is natural for a human to go through, and this ultimately pushes Dante’s faith to grow even more. The need for contrast between Beatrice and God shows the reader how Dante sees Beatrice and how he struggles to separate the two in the beginning of their journey through Paradise.

Dante is heavily influenced by the images around him in his journey, which help Dante understand his journey more clearly. Dante describes the characters and the scenery around him in great detail. For example, Matilda, a companion of Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise, tells Dante that the everyday beauty that he sees is sourced from “The Highest Good, whose sole joy is Himself, / made man to be—and to enact—good; He / gave man this place as pledge of endless peace” (*Purgatorio* 28.91-93). These images carry meaning to Dante, who, as William Dyreness writes, “goes to great length to describe their visual aspects” (292). Images in the Catholic faith help shape one’s faith. For example, cathedrals in the Catholic church were decorated and designed with stained glass window art for enhancing one’s faith, especially if they were illiterate. Cathedrals also serve as a hard-to-miss structure, in order to help believers see the glory of God and the church. The reader can see this through Dante’s journey. The images that Dante sees provide a different avenue of guidance than *The Pilgrim’s Progress* highlights, with Dante focusing on the present and the literal rather than the interpretation he receives from reading scripture. *The Divine Comedy* includes various Catholic figures who help the readers see the outcome of living a life of faith. Dyreness writes about images in *The Divine*

*Comedy* that “the world of Dante is filled with ‘signs’” (286), and that Dante’s viewing of these signs from the various characters are what point him closer to God and his goal of reaching Paradise.

The geography of Paradise is less structured and self-guiding than Hell and Purgatory. This also reflects how those places allow the mind to operate. In Paradise, the path is not set or carved for Dante and Beatrice, but it is looser and allows space for free thinking, even to the point that Dante notes “the greatest gift the magnanimity / of God, as He created, gave, the gift / most suited to His goodness, gift that He / most prizes, was the freedom of the will” (*Paradiso* 5.19-22). The guidance that Beatrice provides, then, is not physical or literal, but rather philosophical and theological. Different from Virgil’s literal guidance and explanation of various encounters, Beatrice guides the mind of Dante. She allows Dante to explore and dive into the opportunities to learn things from the people he meets along the way and shows that he finds comfort and familiarity in Paradise, calling Cacciaguida, his ancestor, “my father” (*Paradiso* 17.105) and Cacciaguida calling Dante “son” (*Paradiso* 17.95). This terminology is how Dante and Virgil referred to one another in *Inferno*. Cacciaguida offers Dante wisdom and Beatrice urges Dante to listen, something Virgil scarcely did, saying “turn to him [Cacciaguida] and listen—for / not only in my eyes is Paradise” (*Paradiso* 18.20-21). Through the guidance and wisdom of Cacciaguida and the prompting to think theologically from Beatrice, Dante finds that “I became aware that my revolving / with heaven had increased its arc—by seeing / that miracle becoming still more brilliant” (*Paradiso* 18.61-63). He moves through Paradise as he progresses in his knowledge and belief in God. Because of this, Dante focuses less on himself and his journey and more on the philosophical basis for his journey, and its ultimate goal. He notes this when he says that

The greatest minister of nature—he  
 who imprints earth with heaven's worth and, with  
 his light, provides the measurement for time—  
 since he was in conjunction with the part  
 I noted, now was wheeling through the spirals  
 where he appears more early every day (*Paradiso* 10. 28-33).

The farther that Dante gets into his journey, the more he begins to see God more obviously. Through the guidance, conversations, and inner growth, Dante adjusts his focus to God Himself rather than it being on Beatrice or another aspect of the faith. In the closing lines, Dante's final image of God illuminates all the signs and people that led him to where he was. All of the images that Dante sees and describes involve the idea of unity and the bringing together the many things he sees and is moved by on his journey into one final image. The images he sees, in any aspect of God's creation, keep him true to the faith, which he notes by saying "O grace abounding, through which I presumed / to set my eyes on the Eternal Light / so long that I spent all my sight on it! / In its profundity I saw—ingathered / and bound by love into one single volume— / what, in the universe, seems separate, scattered" (*Paradiso* 33.82-87). He concludes his journey to Paradise by saying that "my / desire and will were moved already—like / a wheel revolving uniformly—by / the Love that moves the sun and the other stars" (*Paradiso* 33.142-45).

Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is accompanied by guides, just as Dante was in his work. Two main guides, Evangelist and Hopeful, help him along his way to the Celestial City. These guides are different than Dante's in the sense that Hopeful is less knowledgeable in his

faith than Christian, and Evangelist only guides Christian at essential times rather than being with him constantly. Christian goes from his home, the City of Destruction, to the Celestial City, in hopes of finding a new life that glorifies Christ. This pilgrimage develops his faith through encounters with many deceitful and wicked characters, but he is ultimately guided and held accountable by Evangelist. Hopeful accompanies him through the rest of his journey to the Celestial City after Vanity Fair, where Faithful is killed. Evangelist continues to come in and out of Christian's journey, always giving advice or warning at the right time.

Evangelist meets Christian almost immediately and begins guiding him, directing him out of the City of Destruction. He reasons with Christian after seeing him following the advice of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, asking "Did not I direct thee the way to the little Wicket-gate?... How is it then that thou art so quickly turned aside, for thou art now out of the way?" (Bunyan 22). He talks more with a struggling Christian, who is feeling defeated after failing to follow Evangelist's instruction, and he tells Christian that "all manner of sin and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto men; be not faithless but believing" (Bunyan 23). Evangelist guides Christian in whom he talks to and warns against any errors into which others might try to lead him. He does this with Mr. Worldly-Wiseman and warns Christian and Faithful of troubles ahead at Vanity Fair. Christian greets Evangelist when accompanied by Faithful, saying "the sight of thy countenance brings to my remembrance, thy ancient kindness, and unwearied laboring for my eternal good" (Bunyan 83). More formally than how Dante addresses Virgil and Beatrice, Christian greets and addresses Evangelist as "sir" (Bunyan 25) in their early encounters but progresses to call him his "good friend" (Bunyan 83). Evangelist is constantly reminding Christian of what he may encounter on his way to the Celestial City and warns him to stay true to what he believes and to what Evangelist has been guiding him in.

Evangelist, through the art of description, explains to Christian where to go next and what he will encounter in each place. This differs from Dante's experience with Virgil in the sense that both of Dante's guides walk alongside him and guide him without warning, rather than describing what Dante will encounter and letting him experience it himself. An example occurs when Evangelist is describing to Faithful and Christian Vanity Fair and the various challenges and pains they will face. Evangelist tells the pilgrims that

“You will soon come into a Town that you will by and by see before you: and in that Town you will be hardly beset with enemies, who will strain hard but they will kill you: and be sure that one or both of you must seal the testimony which you hold, with blood: but be faithful unto death, and the King will give you a Crown of life. He that shall die there, although his death will be unnatural, and his pain perhaps great, he will yet have the better of his fellow; not only because he will be arrived at the Celestial city soonest, but because he will escape many miseries that the other will meet with in the rest of his Journey.” (Bunyan 85)

Bunyan uses Evangelist's knowledge to help Christian and his travelling companions gain the right mindset for the various encounters they will face. Within this, however, is a sense of uncertainty and reliance on hearsay rather than literal guidance or accompaniment. As Stanley Fish points out, Christian, differing from Dante and his pilgrimage, “must willfully refuse to credit the evidence of his senses; he must put fingers in his ears and blinders on his eyes and move in response to a voice no one else hears and walk by a light not even he sees” (274).

Christian's guidance from Evangelist and others does not involve them walking alongside him like Virgil and Beatrice walked alongside Dante, but his guidance involves being guided through accountability, interactions, and the experiences of others, such as Evangelist's warnings

about certain places and characters and the types of people Christian will meet. The experience that Christian encounters through reading and interpreting scripture mirrors Bunyan's Protestant emphasis on growing spiritually through interpretation and understanding of the Bible and how he can apply it to his pilgrimage. Christian grows in this aspect of his faith with Interpreter, who tells him when they meet that he "will show thee that which will be profitable to thee" (Bunyan 29). This knowledge "is the all-important criterion for his keeping to the way... Pilgrim must know the story so that he can himself embody its plot" (Dyreness 294). The growth that comes from better understanding the scripture "changes the way they [images] are understood" (Dyreness 293). This differs from Dante's desire for knowledge, which is found through the images of the faith and in popular Catholic figures within the church. The faith gained through knowledge and interpretation, rather than literal sight and interaction like Dante, is the same type of faith that Hopeful experiences, which he explains to Christian during their journey together. Christian asks Hopeful how God was revealed to him after Hopeful accepted Christ into his life, to which Hopeful replies, "I did not see him with my bodily eyes, but with the eyes of mine understanding" (Bunyan 135-36). Interpreter also tells Christian that "the things that are seen, are Temporal; but the things that are not seen, are Eternal" (Bunyan 32). Evangelist helps guide Christian in a way of accountability, but it is up to Christian to commit what Evangelist has said about the faith to memory and remember it when he is struggling. As Fish writes, "only by remembering the promise can a pilgrim overcome his fear of the obstacles he encounters along the way" (281). His pilgrimage comes ultimately from a place of wanting to know and rely on the promise of Christ. When speaking about going to Mount Zion, Christian tells Prudence, "For to tell you truth, I love him [God], because I was by him eased of my burden, and I am weary of my inward sickness" (Bunyan 51). Christian and Dante both travel to their version of "heaven,"

but what separates them is that while Dante has guides who help him along the way through the various paths, Christian resorts to faith, accountability, and a drive to know more, be better, and pursue Christ in order to get to the Celestial City.

Hopeful comes into Christian's journey when he is at a low-point, having just lost Faithful to execution at Vanity Fair. Bunyan's first description of Hopeful is that he "joined himself unto him [Christian], and entering into a brotherly covenant, told him that he would be his Companion" (Bunyan 97). Hopeful is not as experienced a guide or accountability partner as Evangelist is. He is younger than Christian, which is seen in how he acts when Demas is trying to get Hopeful and Christian to see a Silver-Mine filled with treasure. Hopeful asks Christian if they should go and see what Demas is talking about. Christian advises him to "not stir a step, but still keep on our way" (Bunyan 104). Bunyan writes Hopeful's character as a way for Christian to test his faith and see if he can apply the wisdom and characteristics of Evangelist into his life when Evangelist is not present. This does not always work, though. Almost immediately after this encounter with Demas, Christian advises Hopeful to go off the path and to the side of it, assuring him by asking "doth it not go along by the wayside?" (Bunyan 108). These two work together through repentance of what they have done, and acceptance of their situation. Hopeful then encourages Christian that "this shall be for our good" (Bunyan 109). What is beautiful about their accountability for one another is that through it all, it is rooted in Christ and their faith in Him. This way of faith is similar to the way of believing through which Evangelist guides Christian: faith and trust in the Lord. However, Hopeful and Christian's relationship is unlike Christian and Evangelist's because they rely on one another to get through various trials. Evangelist allows Christian to go through his trials and learn on his own, but Hopeful experiences the trials with Christian and encourages, challenges, and holds him accountable



through it all. This is similar to Dante and Virgil as they travel through Purgatory. Hopeful is also like Virgil in the sense that he comes to rescue Christian. As Virgil helped Dante escape from the hypocrites, Hopeful helps Christian escape from the Doubting Castle. First, Hopeful encourages him, saying to “bear up patience as well as we can” (Bunyan 113) and calls back to the various trials that Christian has already gone through. Following this, they begin to continuously pray throughout the night and into the next morning. Immediately following their continuous prayer, Christian remembers the Key, called Promise, that allows them to escape from the castle together. This experience brings Christian and Hopeful closer together, similar to how Dante and Virgil grew closer after their escape.

Christian is not confined to a single geographical path like Dante was but is advised by Evangelist at the beginning of his journey to “strive to enter in at the strait gate, the gate to which I sent thee; for strait is the gate that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Bunyan 23), referencing Matthew 7:8,13-14. Christian does not consistently follow the narrow path that is available to him. He continues to stumble and run into various trials and temptations in his journey. Ultimately, he finds his way back to the path Evangelist set him on, which is called the Way, just as the Bible refers to Jesus as “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6 NIV). Evangelist is adamant that this is the only way to get to the Celestial City, just as Christians find the way to heaven by following Jesus. The Way leads Christian to places such as Vanity Fair. Evangelist predicted that Christian’s journey would bring many trials for Christian and Faithful, who “put their fingers in their ears, and cry, *turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity*; and look upwards, signifying that their Trade and Traffick was in Heaven” (Bunyan 87). This path through Vanity Fair that Evangelist set them on was intentional, and Bunyan notes the significance of their journey through it by mentioning that Jesus also traveled through the same

Fair when he was tempted by the Devil. By sticking true to the narrow path and not wavering, Christian is able to escape the Fair. While Faithful was killed there, he gained eternal life in the Celestial City. The significance of Vanity Fair is that despite the path being full of challenges, Christian perseveres in the path that Evangelist set him on, knowing that the end of the narrow path provided him with eternal life in the Celestial City.

The Way, however, changes as Christian progresses. Throughout Christian's journey, Evangelist allows Christian to navigate the journey himself. Evangelist appears less as Christian nears the Celestial City and gives him an opportunity to guide himself and others using his experience and wisdom that he has gained throughout his pilgrimage. This is similar to Dante's journey to Paradise. As Dante's journey progresses, he has more freedom about where he is going and who he interacts with, especially after he departs from Virgil. This freedom is both beneficial and detrimental to Christian in his own journey. It benefits him because he is able to grow through experience, as when Christian and Faithful are interacting with Talkative. Christian warns Faithful of Talkative's ways, saying to "remember the Proverb, 'They say and do not: but the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power'" (Bunyan 77). His wisdom, gained through his own experience and prior knowledge of Talkative from the City of Destruction, allows him to advise and help Faithful walk in a way that glorifies Christ, even when it was tempting to listen to Talkative and his teaching. Christian rejecting Talkative's guidance allows him and Hopeful to stay on the straight and narrow path and continue on to the Celestial City. Not having a set guide or path allows Christian to encounter people of his past, meet new people who guide him, and encounter new trials that test and grow his faith. This differs from Dante's experience with Virgil, who often spoke for Dante, but similar to his experience with Beatrice and her ability to let Dante learn for himself.

An example of this different experience occurs when Christian and Hopeful travel through the delectable mountains, where they encounter the Shepherds, who help instruct them back on their path, both literally and spiritually. The Shepherds (named Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere) provide them insight as they walk with them through the mountains and to the other side. This is as close to a literal guide as Christian experiences in his pilgrimage. Quoting Proverbs, the Shepherds give Christian and Hopeful their last bit of guidance before being on their own the rest of the way. The Shepherds tell them that “he that wandereth out of the way of understanding, shall remain in the Congregation of the dead” (Bunyan 118). This brings an emotional reaction to both journeymen, causing them to want to “cry out to the Strong for strength” (Bunyan 119). The guidance that they receive brings both Christian and Hopeful closer to God and helps them recognize His importance in their lives, as well as the importance of staying on the literal path to Him instead of wavering. On the other hand, the freedom hurts Christian in his journey when, as mentioned previously, he leads Hopeful off the path and into captivity in the Doubting Castle. Because of the lack of guidance and the ability for Christian to choose his own path, he puts both Hopeful and himself in danger of harm by slipping up in his journey. The freedom allows Christian to have both positive and negative experiences on his journey, but all of his mistakes, wisdom, and decisions lead him back on the Way, the path that he was originally told to follow by Evangelist. He is also able to learn from these mistakes and does not commit them again during his journey.

Leading up to the arrival at Paradise and the Celestial City, Dante and Christian’s entrance to each space differs. In *Purgatorio*, Dante and Virgil look to enter Paradise, but are met by a wall of fire. One of God’s angels greets them on the other side of the wall by saying “Holy souls, you cannot move ahead / unless the fire has stung you first: enter / the flames, and

don't be deaf to a song you'll hear / beyond" (*Purgatorio* 27.10-13). Dante must cross through a wall of flames that were so hot that he describes them, comparing molten glass to the flames, as molten glass on earth being "coolness—because those flames were so intense" (*Purgatorio* 27.51). This is different from how Christian enters the Celestial City. Instead of moving through fire, he enters by crossing a river, which is described in the margins as "*Death*" (Bunyan 147). Virgil even tells Dante as he crosses that "My son, though there may be / suffering here, there is no death" (*Purgatorio* 27.20-21). The Pilgrims tell Christian that "You must go through [the water], or you cannot come at the Gate" (Bunyan 147). Unlike Dante, Christian must face *Death*, the river, so that he can enter the gates of the Celestial City. Both Dante and Christian enter their form of Heaven, but like their journeys, they differ in how they enter and to what degree.

Dante's journey concludes at the end of Paradise, where he has an experience with God after a long journey. The anticipation to the encounter with God is used through the dialogue of other characters and images. Bernard says in *Paradiso* that "[I] who never burned for my own vision / more than I burn for his" (*Paradiso* 33.28-29) as Dante gets closer to God. His gaze, along with the saints around him, is focused on Beatrice. Bernard encourages Dante to "turn [his] eyes on high" (*Paradiso* 33.50). As Dante prepares to encounter God, he notes that "I, who now was nearing Him who is / the end of all desires, as I ought, / lifted my longing to its ardent limit" (*Paradiso* 33.46-48). He recognizes that his journey and goal is about to be achieved and that there is nothing more desirable than encountering God. Dante notes that his vision of God "seemed to be changing. In the deep and bright / essence of that exalted Light, three circles / appeared to me; they had three different colors, / but all of them were of the same dimension" (*Paradiso* 33.114-17). Dante's vision of God at the end of *Paradiso* is indescribable through words and so is described through images. He notes this when he says, "how incomplete is

speech, how weak, when set / against my thought!” (*Paradiso* 33.121-22). This contrasts with how Christian uses words and thoughts to grow closer to God. As he nears the gates to the Celestial City, Christian recites Isaiah 43:2: “I will be with thee, and through the Rivers, they shall not overflow thee,” which powers him to finish crossing the river to the gates of the Celestial City. The memorization of scripture and his inward battle of faith help propel him out of his greatest trial and into safety. As Christian faces one of his toughest trials to date, he recalls and applies what he has learned on his journey and through his peers to ultimately reach the Celestial City.

Christian’s journey toward the Celestial City ends triumphantly and dramatically. Christian invites the two men that they meet right before entering the Celestial City to join them the rest of their way, but they said that “you must obtain it by your own faith” (Bunyan 147). The depth of the river before they encounter the gate that leads into the Celestial City is “deeper or shallower as you believe in the King of the place” (Bunyan 148), meaning that the stronger Christian’s faith was, the shallower the waters would be. This correlates to the purpose of his whole journey and the guidance of strengthening his faith through interpretation and understanding. Hopeful, until the end, walks alongside Christian and helps him through his doubt as they cross the river. Bunyan notes that “Hopeful therefore here had much adoe to keep his brother’s head above water” (Bunyan 148), despite he himself going down under the water. The duo’s working together leads them to the other side of the river; they find that the last part of their journey through “was but shallow” (Bunyan 149). Christian is told what he will see in the Celestial City, with the shining Ones mentioning the Tree of Life and that their “walk and talk shall be every day with the King, even all the days of eternity” (Bunyan 149). They are welcomed by many trumpeters and are shown the entrance to the Celestial City, which quotes

Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life; and may enter in through the Gates into the City” (Bunyan 152). The gates to the Celestial City differ from the gates that Dante sees at the beginning of his journey in *Inferno*. In Canto 3, Dante writes the inscription on the gates of Hell. The end of the gate’s inscription reads “abandon every hope, who enter here” (*Inferno* 3.9). The word “hope” sticks out in this context because Christian journeys with Hopeful into the Celestial City, whereas Dante is being told to abandon hope as he enters Hell. As Christian reads the inscription on the gates and begins to enter, he notes that Ignorance finds his way to the entrance, but “he came alone; neither did man meet him with the least encouragement” (Bunyan 153). Even though one can go through all the trials and tribulations of the faith, Christian observes there is “still a way to Hell, even from the Gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction” (Bunyan 154). He is taken from the gates of the Celestial City and put in the door on the side of the hill which leads to Hell. From this, Bunyan recognizes not only the importance of walking alongside someone in the Faith but also the truth that the heart triumphs over actions. Christian sins many times along the journey to the Celestial City, but he continues to believe, which brings him back to the path repeatedly.

Dante and Christian are two examples of an experience leading to an encounter with God. They experience journeys that take them through new territory. Dante learns through the step-by-step guidance of Virgil, who then is succeeded by Beatrice, who allows him to think freely and grow his knowledge through asking deep questions. Christian learns through the interpretation and understanding of scripture and the accountability of Evangelist and the brotherhood of Hopeful. Their experience brings them closer to God and closer to Heaven, with both pilgrims finding their way to their desired destination.

Dante's and Bunyan's stories conclude with an image or dream, which leads to a number of unanswered questions. What happens to Dante at the end of *Paradiso*? He encounters God, but then the poem ends. He is still alive, so he does not stay in Paradise. Did he reach a final destination after all of that journeying? For Bunyan, what happens after he wakes up from his dream? Christian reaches the Celestial City and his destination of the Celestial City, but what does that mean for Bunyan? There are a lot of unanswered questions that the reader is left with, which might be intentional by the authors. Part of the journey that Dante imagines, and Bunyan dreams, is their invitation or call to come back into the world that they live in and apply what they have learned in each of their journeys. Dante and Bunyan learn from their characters' different avenues of growing in their faith, and both are applicable to them as they live their lives. The lessons learned from the texts are applicable to readers as well, who continue to learn from both journeys.

The common ground between these two journeys is that they are both able to decode a formula for any religious walk. First, one needs guides. Both Dante and Christian encounter important people during their journey who help them grow and lead them through what is next. The journey cannot be made alone, and the people who guide a pilgrim may only be present for part of the journey. The next thing one needs to understand is the geography of one's journey. Dante's and Christian's paths looked different from one another, yet they have the same conclusion to their story. Each person's walk is going to be unique. The challenges they face will be essential to them, and what they learn or experience on their journey may be unnecessary for another pilgrim to learn or experience. Lastly, any pilgrim must realize that the journey will be long, and they will veer from their path many times. The application that Bunyan and Dante

imply is to keep going and keep having faith throughout the entire journey, with eyes on the goal at all times.



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