Journeys In Aeneid And Confessions

While studying the Roman world, two works share about two different journeys. One of these works is the story of Aeneas' founding of Rome, as told by Vergil in the Aeneid. The other, Augustine's conversion to Christianity as recounted in his Confessions. One journey is a physical journey, and the other is a religious journey. Despite the apparent differences, these two works have many things in common and raise serious questions about human purpose, virtue, eternal happiness, and destiny.

Obviously, there are many differences between the two works, the Aeneid and Confessions. The most obvious difference is the Aeneid is a fictional story, and Confessions is an autobiography. Another main difference in the works is in the Aeneid, Aeneas is under the rule of the Roman gods while in Confessions, Augustine is following God. One more difference in the stories is in the Aeneid. Some of the Roman gods are conspiring against him, so he does not fulfill the prophecy. They place obstacles in his way to blind him from the end goal. In Confessions, the only thing that blinds Augustine from seeing the end goal is his own sinfulness. Augustine says, "For what am I to myself without You, but a guide to my own downfall?" He is saying that without God, himself was the thin standing in the way.

While there are many differences, both of these works are considered journeys. The Aeneid is a fictional story about a journey across nations, and Confessions is about a person's journey to Christianity. Even though the works are about different types of journeys, they are ultimately about a person trying to get to a destination, whether that be physically or spiritually. In the Aeneid, Aeneas is trying to fulfill the prophecy that states he will discover Rome. Because the Greeks destroyed Troy, Aeneas and some Trojans fee to Italy where Aeneas is destined to find Rome. Through the journey, some of the Roman gods try to sabotage the voyage and set obstacles make it hard for Aeneas to complete the prophecy. One of the "obstacles" placed in Aeneas' way is Dido. Dido and Aeneas will soon fall in love, which causes Aeneas to forget about the prophecy until he decides to leave his love to follow his calling. In St. Augustine's Confessions, the work is a story about his spiritual life from beginning to end. In the beginning, sin-filled him, and he had no remorse. Later in the story, he realized his wrongdoings and asked God for forgiveness.

One thing that stood out that both the works have in common is the idea of love and duty.

In the Aeneid, love is seen as an emotion that is uncontrolled by the self. This is shown when Venus and Juno force Dido and Aeneas together. Dido, queen of Carthage, falls in love with Aeneas, despite the vow she made to her late husband that she would not marry again. Aeneas falls in love with Dido and remains with her in Carthage, even though he knows that he must continue his travel to Rome. Love is a passion that consumes the soul despite its will. Ultimately, Aeneas and Dido had no choice but to fall in love because the gods were controlling them. Eventually, Aeneas realizes that his love for Dido is holding him back from fulfilling the Roman god's plan for his life, so he leaves Dido and continues his journey. This leads to Dido being so upset that she commits suicide. Virgil describes Dido by saying, "But Dido, trembling, wild with brooding over her dread design, rolling her blood-shot eyes, her quivering cheeks suffused with spots, bursts through the inner threshold of the house, and mounts with frantic

look the lofty funeral pile”. Dido lost herself and her sanity to love. Similar, Augustine was indulging in lust. His sexual pleasures consumed him, causing him to be spiritually dead. Once Christ called on him, he dropped his sinful ways and followed Him. His love for lust meant nothing to him once he realized what God had to offer him. Just like in Meditation, Buddha leaves behind his wife and son to fulfill the plan Allah has for his life. Consistently, this idea shows that love is a setback and needs to be let go to truly accomplish their plans for their lives.

Love led to Dido’s physical death, and it leads to Augustine’s spiritual death. Virgil and Augustine further demonstrate that there are ideals greater than love. Aeneas ends his romance with Dido in order to fulfill his destiny to become the founder of Rome. Aeneas must obey the gods before his passion. Augustine abandons his life of lust when Christ calls him to do His work. He obeys his God and learns to love and esteem Him above all else. Aeneas fulfills his duty to his gods and his country; Augustine fulfills his duty to His God and his church. Duty should take place before love.

The purpose of the Aeneid was to ultimately glorify the city of Rome and Augustine. In writing this work, Virgil was able to draw attention to the major city, and it’s leader. The purpose of St. Augustine’s Confessions is to defend his faith and also to explain to people how his walk with Christ started. Augustine started at the beginning when he was lost until the end when God saved him.

These works have many things in common that are easy to relate to the other. It is easy to relate the themes of these two texts just like love and duty, but ultimately their virtues do not coexist. Christianity virtues can not coincide with Roman virtues. The Romans believe in multiple gods that each rule one specific thing in this world. They believe that these gods determine their fate, and they have all the say in what happens in their life. An example of this is when Aeneas was trying to find Rome, but the gods purposely put a storm in his path to steer him from his destination. Christians believe that there is one true God that allows one to make their own choices in life. He is all-powerful and omniscient. God allowed Augustine to make his own chooses until Augustine decided for himself he was going to follow Christ. Fate is not a concept in Christianity because yes, God is all-knowing, but He allows his people to make their own decisions.

Overall, there are many differences and similarities in the Aeneid and Confessions, but the theme of the journeys have many things in common. Both stories raise questions about human purpose, virtue, eternal happiness, and destiny. Even though Roman and Christian virtues do not coincide, people can make connections to both works.