

Journey from Gauntlet to Paradise

Roger Vincent

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In *Journey From Gauntlet to Paradise*, Roger Vincent shares the story of his life and the reason he has hope for life after death. His memoir is filled with the wisdom and no-nonsense personality of a man who has “reach[ed] the knowledgeable age of seventy-five years young.”

The book begins with fond memories of Vincent’s boyhood in Catskill, New York, on his grandma’s farm. He moves quickly to his young-adult life when he meets his wife, Betty May. Readers will be touched and inspired by his commitment to Betty, but they may cringe at Vincent’s blunt descriptions. He claims that at their first meeting, Betty was “built like a brick outhouse” and “looking like Dolly [Parton].” He describes his wife’s family by saying, “Talk about the Clampets at the shack by the creek!”

Readers then follow Vincent’s travels as an adult through his day-to-day life and more than sixty national parks. His love for nature, however, pales in comparison to his longing for heaven. The author walks readers through his journey toward understanding God’s grace even when humans fail. He shares his faith adamantly throughout the book, and urges readers to enjoy this life as they seriously consider eternity.

The theme of reconciling God’s perfection with human inadequacy will resonate with those who long to understand this dichotomy. Vincent’s hope of heaven, and his confidence that his journey is far from over, compel him to end the book with the phrase, “in the beginning,” echoing Genesis 1:1 and contrasting the more common “the end”—an intriguing twist.

The text does not always comply with what one would typically expect to find in the standard parts of a book. For example, it is unclear who wrote the foreword—it seems that it may have been the author rather than someone else. Likewise, the acknowledgements are like a bibliography, and the beginning of the first chapter reads like an introduction: “Guess what? After lengthy discussions, and with heartfelt encouragement from friends and family, ‘self’ (as I like to refer to myself) came to the conclusion to write this book. And now you have decided to partake! *Fasten your seat belt.*”

While Vincent’s disclaimer—“my being no literary genius will leave one disappointed if they expect to find proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation”—explains some of the text’s errors, not all readers will have the patience to be forgiving of the misplaced commas, misspelled words (including proper nouns), and excessive exclamation points. The long paragraphs and chapters also require uncommon diligence from readers.

Those who approach this book with the mindset of an attentive listener will find Vincent’s life charming, and his faith inspiring.

MELISSA WUSKE (November 7, 2012)

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