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Introduction to Spiritual Formation

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Hurnard Reflection Paper

Hannah Hurnard was an English author responsible for a vast number of novels including *Hinds' Feet on High Places*. Published in 1955, the novel has become a very successful Christian fiction with a newest edition being published in July of 2005. The story aims to show the salvation journey of an individual from being a non-believer all the way to being a mature believer, walking with God on a daily basis on the high spirits of joy and also the humiliating sides that are a cause for a Christian to lose his/her perspective. This article compares and contrasts the protagonist's spiritual journey to my own spiritual journey.

The story is about an orphaned young woman called Much Afraid who is journeying away from her adoptive Fearing's family and into the shepherd's high places guided by suffering and sorrow, who are both her companions. The book draws its title from the Bible in the book of Habakkuk 3:19, a verse that depicts God as being a source of strength and the one who gives people the power to walk on high places. The story begins with Much Afraid in a humiliating valley, which is her home, receiving advances from Craven Fear who so happens to be her cousin. Much Afraid is portrayed as an ugly girl, who walks on club feet, has deformed arms, sporting distortion and a crooked mouth which could be as a result of a stroke or something of that sought.

In the beginning of the story, The Good Shepherd is tender with Much Afraid, his sudden departures are however seen as bizarre, hurtful and rude but he later returns in the same way.

Much afraid mentions that she would like to dance at the high places like a sure-footed deer and The Good Shepherd praises her for her desires. As a way of helping her accomplish her desires, the good shepherd offers to plant a love seed in her heart. She is stricken with fear at first glance of the seed which looked like a long black hawthorn seed, but she later gives in and after her first intense experience, she realizes that there is something different within her although there is no much of a difference in her physical appearance. When Much Afraid is almost at the high place, the path's trajectory gears downward towards a desert. There is a very high cliff that must be climbed to by a steep narrow track. The following days are spent by much afraid together with her friends suffering and sorrow in a cabin and Much Afraid anguishes if she will ever get to reach the high places.

The story transforms Much Afraid from an ugly, lost and frightened soul, into a joyful, spiritual and beautiful person. She transcends the difficulties present in her path, takes a different name, Grace and Glory, and has a different perspective about the world, she now sees the world differently which has allowed her growth in love. The journey had although been tough following criticism from her adoptive family trying to make her return back to the valley of humiliation.

The journey towards realization of a higher self can be difficult and full of obstacles, but all one needs to bear in mind and in heart, is that where they are headed, is at a much better place, a place full of newness and love, and anyone can get to experience these new fulfillments if they embark on the journey too. Christianity is a journey just like any other journey, full of obstacles, difficulties and dangers, and my journey towards Christianity was no different. Coming from a non-religious background, I was faced with ridicule from friends and family who did not understand why I had to take on Christianity. Party lifestyle and self-pity threatened my

Christianity journey, but just like Much Afraid, I was determined to make it to the other side and nothing and no one was going to successfully stop me.

Arriving at the destination has brought forth much joy and fulfilment, just as Much Afraid experienced so much despair and sorrow in her former life, she was a stutterer and had a very hard time trying to speak and was also afraid of the public, but in her new life she is confident and joyful ready to take on the world, and I also now know that I no longer have to walk alone in sorrow and suffering, I but can walk with God, a fact which serves as consolation owing to the fact that the world can be a lonely and brutal place. Christianity has changed my view on life, I now take on the world with a more positive and vibrant attitude.

Much Afraid's story seems to have been more challenging compared to mine, I am not an orphan nor do I have any physical deformities, in as much as I faced ridicule for taking on the Christianity journey, I had a little bit of support from immediate family members, I had never experienced difficulty in speaking, neither did I have walking troubles.

In conclusion, just as many Christians faced suffering, ridicule and humiliation in their journey towards Christianity, so did Much Afraid, who had it worse as some people may conclude. As also indicated in the bible, the path towards salvation is narrow and filled with despair, but the same bible also encourages individuals to take on this path, persevere through by the strength given to them by God, and in the end their efforts shall be rewarded.