

Book Review of Ginger Nicholls' Book The Kalki Avatar: Tears for Nepal

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Without exception, everyone has a story to tell. If you've ever seen the photo series Humans of New York you'll know that, if you give someone the chance, they could share a heart-moving tale. I am privileged to have met thousands of Unificationists around the world, many of them in the UK, and what strikes me is that each individual is a remarkable catalogue of history, locked away in a lifetime of memories. Amongst our midst walk entrepreneurs, social activists, politicians, game changers, missionaries – and we wouldn't know it if we just looked at outward appearances. But whenever I ask the question, "Please tell me your story," I discover an expanding treasure trove of

experience possessed by our community.

Stories are so important in providing the next generation with a sense of identity, rooting their current sense of self in the context of a historical background. The events that shaped our history are the ones which bequeathed to us our psyche; to forget that history would disconnect us from our origins. Without an understanding of why we do the things we do, any traditions or rituals lose their meaning, and our culture is poorer for it. As owners of Cheon Il Guk, we pledge to establish the culture of heart, rooted in the original lineage. Anyone of us who has made an effort to connect our own family, or the families of others, to God's lineage has a story that contributes to the culture of heart that we're trying to establish.

What worries me is that our history will be lost.

I want to make sure that our legacy is recorded. Testimonies should be recorded and archived so that future generations will know what the early settlers of Cheon Il Guk were like. Autobiographies should be written – a contemporary Acts of the Apostles – that provide evidence for the miraculous grace poured out by God in response to the devotion of sincere blessed family members. I can imagine that for many of us, the prospect of writing our autobiographies is a daunting one. But it doesn't have to be, and I think there can be a simple formula that can be followed to assist us in accepting the commission to pass on our stories:

Choose one story at a time: Don't feel that you have to reveal all the details of your life from beginning to end. Often, more is less, and by narrowing down on one particular episode or a particular time period within a lifetime it is possible to tell a more captivating story. Rather than cramming everything into one autobiography, perhaps consider writing several shorter autobiographies, each with a particular focus. Or if you feel there's only enough content to fill one volume, choose a different story for each chapter.

Be human: A reader will instinctively feel emotionally closer to an author who is genuine and authentic about their human experience. You don't have to pretend to be a perfect person; in fact, it is often in sharing about our weaknesses and limitations that the opportunity to testify to God's amazing grace emerges! By keeping it real, you may also convince the reader that miracles are not just some historical myth that cannot be experienced today; if ordinary you can do extraordinary things, then it's quite possible for any ordinary reader to do the same.

Bare witness to God and True Parents: Ultimately, a testimony should inspire others about the power of God's love and truth, as well as testifying to who True Parents are. We who are alive at the time of Sun Myung Moon and Hak Ja Han Moon owe our descendants a favour by letting them know about our personal (and human – see 2 above) encounters with the human True Parents. Further, by revealing the heart, motivation, activities and qualities of True Parents through our unique experiences with them, we create a kaleidoscope of understanding that prevents a two-dimensional limited understanding of who they are.

Humble gratitude: Don't hold back from proudly sharing about the amazing things in your life; even if you feel modest about your accomplishments, you never know whose life might be transformed by your story. But also remember that all the joy and glory should be returned to God, for it was by God's grace that such stories were allowed to occur in the first place. Often the true heroes of real stories are ordinary folks who just happen to do the right thing in the right place at the right time: When we offer our mess to God, it is transformed into a divine message; when we offer our test, God transforms it into

a testimony. Acknowledging that, and expressing gratitude to our Heavenly Parent for the privilege of receiving such opportunities, is most endearing.



Perseverance: Don't give up! Even if you've tried before and barely completed one chapter, keep going. If writing is a challenge, you may want to make an audio recording of your voice speaking, and ask someone else to transcribe it afterwards. It might be helpful to create a plan, identifying the chapter headings to break up your story into smaller episodes. Sometimes it takes years to write a book. That might seem like a long time, but once it's written it provides a historical record for posterity. The best thing is simply to start now!

A recent publication which demonstrates this formula is [The Kalki Avatar: Tears for Nepal](#) by Ginger Nicholls. A memoir of 15 years of missionary work in Nepal, this book reveals the trials and victories experienced by Ginger and her husband John as they responded to the call of becoming National Messiahs and finding a way to serve the nascent community of Unificationists in the Himalayan nation of Nepal, a developing nation sandwiched in between China and India. It is an honest account of the challenges faced, which include interpersonal tension, financial concerns, health setbacks and various aspects of tension when widely differing cultures clash.

The early stages of the mission are supported largely by overseas missionaries and early local followers, with very basic living conditions. Ginger Nicholls provides a helpful introduction to Nepalese culture, immersing the reader in the reality of industrial action, political upheaval, caste systems, treacherous roads, and generous people. Important personal background history is revealed that tells the reader who John and Ginger Nicholls are. The tenacious pursuit of their mission against all reasonable odds is a recurring theme of the memoir. This volume provides a useful case study about the National Messiah programme, especially because the author is unafraid to address uncomfortable questions. Nevertheless, as a testimony it possesses the four qualities listed above.

I encourage all members, even those who are relatively young, to begin writing their testimonies. If we start sharing them now, we will avoid losing our memory of who we collectively are. I'm sure we will continue to have even more profound experiences in the future!

Here's an non-exhaustive list of autobiographies by other members:

[The Eye of the Needle: My life of faith](#) – by Henry Masters

[Edwin's Exploits](#) – by Richard Biddlecombe

[On His Shoulders: A missionary journey in war-torn Nicaragua](#) – by Marianne Irwin

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