



# **Somali Bible Society Journal**

**Volume IV, Issue 2**

**December 2023**

**Published by the Somali Bible Society, Mogadishu, Somalia**

**ISSN: 2709-4332**

<https://www.somalibiblesociety.org/sbs-journal/>  
[info@Somalibiblesociety.org](mailto:info@Somalibiblesociety.org)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Somali Culture &amp; Customs: Some Helpful Points on The Somali Culture &amp; Customs Past &amp; Present</b> H. Warren Modricker .....	1
<b>2. A Life of Forgiveness</b> Si Fry .....	23
<b>3. The Joy of Christian Worship</b> John Risbridger .....	31
<b>4. Romans 1: The Context For The Gospel: The Fall of Satan &amp; Adam, Sin &amp; Evil</b> Russell Cross .....	38
<b>5. Somali Christian Census, 2023</b> Bureau of Statistics, Somali Bible Society .....	49
<b>6. A Call for Papers (CFP) .....</b>	62
<b>7. Advertise in the SBS Journal .....</b>	63

## Somali Culture & Customs

### Some Helpful Points on The Somali Culture & Customs Past & Present

H. Warren Modricker<sup>1</sup>

---

#### Introduction

Before we relate some of our experiences regarding the customs and culture of the Somali people with whom we have lived, it would be proper to state two important points. Customs and culture may differ a bit among different tribes from North to South and from East to West; also, changes take place as time goes on. Many of the old customs have been dropped as communications and contact with the other peoples of the world are taking place. We will mention some of the old customs first, then present customs.

#### Old Customs

When we left our home country as “faith missionaries,” a dear friend gave us a diamond ring and said, “You may have this ring and sell it to help you on your way.” We did not succeed in selling it, but we wrapped it up carefully and put it into our briefcase. As we left the ship at Djibouti to go to shore on a small row boat rowed by Somalis, the ring was removed and stolen. Before we had stepped on the shore, we discovered that thieving was a common part of the life of the people.

This we found to be true with our house “servants.” Sugar and tea had to be kept under lock and key lest they be stolen. Shortly after we arrived in Aden to work among the Somalis, we were given a bottle of odor cologne. One day while we were outside the home, the Somali girl who was helping to care for our first child found the bottle and daubed herself with it. When we entered the house, the whole house was fragrant with a beautiful smell. We asked the girl who was beautifully scented with the odor if she had touched the bottle but she denied strongly that she knew anything about it.

During our initial days, we had a cook who was around twenty years old. His father used to cook for the Royal Air Force. The cook was eager to improve his English, just like many other Somalis. So, we opened a night school in the town about three miles from our home. One night, as we all set out to get a taxi to go to the school, this young “cook” asked to be excused from night school. He said, “Saab,<sup>2</sup> may I be excused tonight; my father is dying in the hospital, and I want to visit him.” I doubted

---

<sup>1</sup> H. Warren Modricker (1907 - 1998) was a long-time director of SIM Somalia who, for over fifty years, devoted his life to ministering to Somalis. He is considered the most effective Protestant missionary to have ever served among Somalis. Modricker began writing this article in the 1970s as a book chapter but unfortunately passed away before he could complete the book. The editorial board of the SBS Journal proofread this article who corrected a few typos and included all the footnotes. Please note that the article is dated both in terms of its language and its concepts.

<sup>2</sup> “Saab” or “sahab” means Sir in Hindi. Similarly, the Persian word “saheb”, or the Urdu pronunciation “saheb” mean the same. “Saab” is the casual form of sahab or saheb. “Saab” is therefore used to honor any man.

very much the truth of his reason for wanting to be excused, but he vigorously affirmed that his father was dying in the hospital. So, I excused him from going to school but decided that I would phone the hospital where his father was “dying.” As soon as I reached the telephone, I phoned the hospital but was told that there was no one by this father’s name there. Then I called another hospital and received the same answer, “No one here by that name.”

Finally, I called the Royal Air Force (RAF) Mess Hall. And asked for my man. A few minutes later, my man answered the phone. Knowing who I was, he said, “What has Omar done?” I asked him to come to see me the following day at 3:00 PM, which he agreed to do. Then, we proceeded to go to night school to teach our classes. When we returned home, we waited for Omar to come to his room. At about 10:00 PM, he came to the house strutting along with his walking stick.

In those days, many Somalis carried a “walking stick,” which they usually put across their shoulder and held with their hands at either end. I called Omar to the door and asked him about his father. He replied, “Oh! Saab, he is suffering terribly. He was hit by a big club across the neck, but there isn’t any mark there.” Then he continued, “The men like my father very much. They brought him oranges and ...so on.”

I invited Omar into the house to sit down and tell me more about his “dying father.” He came in, and as he sat, he continued to tell me lie after lie for nearly an hour. I wanted to see what a Somali looked like when telling a lie. He did not know I had been talking with his father on the phone. At the class of the conversation, he asked for 4 rupees (an advance on his pay) to give to the man who was substituting as a cook at the RAF for his father.

This substitute had to get another man to substitute for himself while he went to substitute for Omar’s father. (You can see how the mind becomes confused as one lie leads to another). I promised Omar that I would give him my answer the next day in the afternoon. The next afternoon I called Omar to sit down while I read scripture about “lying lips.”

Finally, when our little Bible lesson on lying was finished, and his father had not arrived yet, I told Omar, “Omar, last night I talked with your father on the phone, and he is coming right now.” Omar said, “Is that all, Saab?” I replied, “Yes, but don’t leave; your father will be here soon.” Omar excused himself and went to his little servant’s quarter next to the cook house. Then he asked permission to go to town for a few minutes. He was given permission, and when he returned, he had a tall, slender young man with him. Both went into Omar’s room.

A few minutes later, Omar’s father came along. He looked like he was on the warpath. He came into the house, and Omar joined him. Mrs. Modricker, Omar, his father, and I sat around the table. His father asked what was the matter. As I explained how Omar had deliberately lied to me, Omar interrupted and said, “I have a right to visit my father dying in the hospital.” I rapped the table with my knuckles and said, “Omar, your father was not dying in the hospital!” at this, his father leaped

to his feet, swinging at Omar with his stick, and both went round and round the table, the father trying to catch his son and to beat him with his stick.

Dorothy and I dodged the stick as it swung again at the son but without landing on him. Finally, the son ran out the door to his cook house (his room) and fled into his room, his father hot on his heels. Just as the father reached the room entrance, the tall, slender fellow blocked the doorway so the father could not enter.

A son will never fight his father or strike him. Omar got his friend to defend him! The father pushed and tasseled without any effect. Ultimately, he shouted to me, saying, "Throw his baggage out. Arrest him! Arrest him!" Then he went on his way. We waited for several days before deciding what to do. Cooling down before deciding on a significant issue like this is always best.

We finally wrote in full in Omar's Servants' Work Book, which was issued by the British Government to all house servants, and described in full the reason for Omar's dismissal. We were always sorry for having written in such detail about Omar's discharge. We were always sad for having written in such detail the matter about his constant lying. We probably should have written: Character: usual, normal. Please write us for any further information.

By writing in detail about his lying, we could have ruined all chances for this young man to obtain future work. However, he probably tore that page out of his book.

One thing we did not mention is that Omar had "accepted" Jesus and was bringing fellows to the house to hear about the gospel. This also happened after Omar had lied to me for an hour at the table the night before his father came to test him by asking him to pray for his "dying" father.

We both got down on our knees, and Omar prayed and begged God to heal his father, who was "dying" in the hospital. He lied not only to me but to God. This was our first experience with Somali employees.

Lying seems to be one of the most significant habits of our Somali people, and it will take much prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit to deliver them from a "lying tongue," but God is able. Amen.

### **Bravery**

The Somalis have many fine, outstanding qualities. They are likable people and very brave. When the Italians were about to bomb us at Aden in 1940, the government advised us to get all our families out of our section of the town (where the oil tanks were located) to the Scottish Mission, ten miles away. This left me alone with our Somali cook, a young man about 18 years of age.

I advised him to go across the Gulf of Aden to British Somaliland, but he firmly refused to. He said that as long as I would stay, he would stay. He would risk his life and stay by me.

And this is what he did. Even when the bombs began to fall, he helped sound the air raid signal and send the warning up the line. The Sheikh of the mosque next door to us asked me what he and his people could do to help me. I advised him to get his people into the mosque whenever the siren was heard.

Another Somali while in Connecticut, USA, another Somali was sitting by the radio while his friend watched his two children sliding down the little hill onto the frozen pond. As the 2 little boys slid onto the ice, the ice gave way, and both went down into the ice water 15 feet below. The father cried out, and the Somali leaped to his feet, ran down to the pond, ran out on the ice, threw his coat off, dove down, and got one of the boys. But he lost the hole in the ice when he came up. He banged the ice with his elbows and head finally cracked a hole in the ice, and laid the boy on the ice.

Then, knowing that he might not find the holes if he went down a second time, he dove down, got the second boy, and brought him up safely to the surface of the ice. The first boy was revived, but the second one died. Yes, the Somalis are very brave. The Somali bravery and courage are seen in this modern world as they venture out to travel to foreign countries without a cent in their pocket, trusting to land a job and to find some Somali of their own clan who will help them. And this brings us to the Somali custom of helping other members of their clan.

It is an unwritten law among the Somalis that if one of their clan members shows up at the home of another member of their clan penniless, hungry, and with no place to sleep, the Somali, the better-off one, is obliged to help the destitute one. This is a good custom. Then, when the impoverished Somali finds work and is established, he, in turn, will help other needy ones of his clan. However, this practice has been known to be abused by some.

### **The “*Maqdarad*”**

Next door to us in Aden lived Somali people. Very often, at the end of the month, when payday came around, we would see Somali ladies carrying beautiful tapestries and colored pillows and mats into the home. The house was being prepared for a “charity party” called *maqdarad* (give what you can). Men would come at night and listen to a Somali singer while the women would remain outside and, occasionally, yodel. The men inside would be sitting around listening to the singer.

Each man would drop his contribution into a vessel while the women served tea and yodeled. Often a hubble-bubble would be brought to these parties for any of the men to take a smoke.<sup>3</sup> Then, after the party was over, the poor brother would be given the gift and sent across the Gulf to his country. Somalis are famous for helping their own needy people. However, as far as we know, this is based on clan relationships being restricted to the person of the same clan. When the government institutes a “welfare system,” this practice will probably discontinue.

---

<sup>3</sup> A hookah, shisha.

### **Wine, Liquor, Smoking & “Khat”<sup>4</sup>**

One of the questions asked by the Somalis of Westerners is, “Do you smoke?” This was widespread years ago, but since many Somalis have learned this bad habit, it is not heard very much. However, it is rather understood by Somalis that all “Christians” drink liquor. Islamic teaching seems to warn Muslims against drinking, and in some countries, it is not permitted to sell or buy liquor. Some Somalis tell us that many of their people nowadays drink, but this seems an exaggeration.

Many of them chew khat each afternoon at about 4:00 PM. Groups get together for their Khat party. Khat is green leaves that tend to whip up the heart and make the chewer feel that he can conquer the world, but after it wears off, it leaves the eater very irritable. It has been said that it also causes sexual impotence if one becomes a regular and heavy chewer.

### **Pork, Ham & Bacon**

Islam, like Judaism, forbids the eating of pigs in any form. Somalis are very strong on their stand against all forms of pig. While we were in the United Arab Emirates (1978-1980), laws were passed forbidding the sale of soap that had any form of lard from the fat of pigs. Also, tooth brushes or shaving brushes made from the bristles of pigs were forbidden. It is wise to refrain from serving bacon or ham to any Somali guest at your home. Moreover, in order to avoid casting a stumbling block in the pathway of the Somali who works for you, it is best to refrain from eating port in any form while he is around. Like Paul, said, “If meat causes my brother to stumble, I will eat no meat as long as the world lasts.”

### **Toilet Habits**

Muslims, in general, seem to adhere to the practice of washing their hands after making calls of nature. This is one of the things that makes Muslims feel better than non-Muslims since they are careful to wash their hands and bottoms after using restrooms. Among many Muslims and Easterners, a tin can with water is used to wash oneself after a movement. Arabs very often scrape themselves with stones or sticks. Most people not oriented to the western flush toilets prefer to use the squat system, but even then, the squat system toilets have been plugged up with stones and sticks in some places.

Arabs and even Somalis have been known to stand on the flush toilet, squat, and relieve themselves. If you happen to have a Somali visiting your home who needs to make a call of nature, giving such guest instructions on how the flush toilets are used is no offense. And, of course, you will supply them with a hand towel and show them where to wash their hands.

---

<sup>4</sup> Khat, also known as qat, is a flowering plant that is native to eastern and southern Africa. In Arabic, it is called القات al-qāt. The plant contains a stimulant called cathinone, which can cause an increase in sociability, excitement, mild euphoria, and loss of appetite. Khat is widely used as a stimulant in many parts of Africa and Yemen. However, it can produce psychological dependence and cause persistent sleeplessness.

## Dogs & Camels

Somalis are very much like the Jews in this respect in that they consider the dog an unclean animal. Although some Somalis are beginning to see the value of dogs for protecting their flocks or as watchdogs, most Somalis consider dogs unclean. To be touched by a dog is horrible. And to touch a dog when you have your “holy Book” in your hands is sinful. On the other hand, the camel is clean to the Somalis, although it is included with the unclean animals in the Old Testament. This they cannot understand. Somalis love camel milk and camel meat. And talking about camel milk, it has been known to have medicinal value.

When our Somali help in Aden became sick, they asked permission to go across the Gulf to Somaliland to get camel milk. They claimed that it would heal them. Of course, we smiled and doubted that camel milk could heal them. But when they returned, well, not one person, but many, we began to believe it was true. When Governor Fisher’s wife could not be healed with medicines from Britain, Somali camel milk (boiled) was tried.<sup>5</sup> She became well.

## Raw Meat, Fish, Vegetables, Tail Fat & Porridge

On one of the anniversaries of the return of Haile Selassie to Ethiopia, it was my privilege to be in Jigjiga, where we had established a station for reaching the Somalis of the area with the gospel. Some of us were invited to the big celebration of the return of the Emperor.

Hundreds of Ethiopians and Somalis and a handful of foreigners were present. Tables were laden with rice and meat piled up in great mounds. There were mountains of cooked and uncooked meat alongside the mountains of rice. The Somalis did not partake of any of the raw meat but only of the cooked meat.

One thing that the Somalis are now beginning to learn to eat is fish. For many years, fish was not eaten by most Somalis, but now that the fisheries have been established, Somalis are being educated to eat this wonderful dish. They are also exporting fish to foreign countries today.

But another thing that Somalis as a whole have been slow to eat is vegetables. Some years ago, when we asked our Somali boys why they did not eat vegetables, they replied, “We give them to our goats, and we drink the milk.” However, today the modern Somali, or should we call them, the new Somali, is learning the value of vegetables and are eating them. Nevertheless, most of the Somalis have a diet of camel milk, goat meat or sheep meat, or camel meat, and rice or spaghetti. They also eat a porridge called *badar*, *galley*, or *meseo*.

Tail fat of sheep is a favorite drink also for Somalis. In addition to the above, the Somalis like to fry the fatty tail of sheep until it is well browned and eat it. They call this fat “*barruur*.”

---

<sup>5</sup> Brigadier Sir Gerald Thomas Fisher, KBE, CSI, CIE (27 August 1887 – 6 September 1965) was the Military Governor of British Somaliland from 1943 to 1948.



It is interesting to know that “*barruur*” is used in Somali proverbs like the “apple” is used in the English language. We say, “One bad apple spoils the whole barrel.” They say, “*Barruur keliya barruur oo dhan qudhmisa.*”

### **Dress**

Being Muslim in religion, the Somali women are usually well covered and look with disgust upon the scantily dressed Westerner. They usually wear skirts that come down to the ankle and a gown that hangs from the shoulders to their knees. The dress style is a bit different as one travels from the north to the southern part of Somalia, but in all cases, the body is well covered.

However, Somali women do not veil as a rule unless they marry Arabs. Today, in Nairobi, Somali women can be seen (a few) who are adopting a new darkish colored head covering that drops down over the shoulders. They consider that this is an indication of “holiness.” But most Somali women wear a cloth over their heads of various colors. The men today are adopting the western style of suit and trousers. Although in the interior, Somalis still wear the “skirt” with a sheet thrown over the shoulder or a shirt with a shirrtail worn outside. Some wear a little cap on the head or even a turban. However, many women who are businesswomen or have office jobs have adopted the Western style of dress, even slacks!

A word to the wise. It has been advisable for our missionary ladies to be cautious in their dress when living mainly in the “bush” where white women have not been seen very much or at all. Our ladies are strongly recommended to wear long dresses like a maxi down to the feet. Also, it is in line with the custom of the Somali women that our women wear a scarf on their heads; otherwise, they may be thought to be prostitutes. That is because prostitutes leave their hair uncovered and usually adopt Western dress to attract men into their brothels.

It seems that the womenfolk are called upon to make the greater surrender on the mission field in this regard than the menfolk, but God blesses and uses those women beautifully.

### **If God Wills**

One of the expressions that is heard very often is, “If God wills”, or, “If God says it.” When we would tell our cook to bring some charcoal when he comes in the morning, he would invariably reply, “If God wills.” In Somalis, “*Haddii Ilaah yidhaahdo.*” Or, “*Haddii Ilaah idmo.*” No matter what was involved, i.e. “I will see you tomorrow” or, “I will do it tomorrow,” etc. it was invariably concluded with, “If God wills.” This is much like it says in the Book of James, which mentions the need to say, “If God wills.”<sup>6</sup> But sometimes it seems as if the thought in the mind of the Somali or Muslim is if God “makes” me do it, and it seems to be used as an excuse for not intending to do the

---

<sup>6</sup> Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you *ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” (James 4:13-15).

thing mentioned.

### **Don't You Touch My Qur'an**

Some Somalis of the unlearned type are very particular that the hands of the “infidel” do not touch their Qur'an. When we asked to see a fellow's Qur'an, he drew it away to his other side, refusing us to touch it. They would never think of carrying their Qur'an into the toilet, placing it on the floor, or placing something else on top of it. I happened to put my Bible on top of my English translation of the Qur'an when I was confronted by a group of about twenty-five leaders of Bulo Burti district regarding our teaching the boys the Bible in our boys' school.

I had planned to prevent this, but when it happened, a fanatical Somali exclaimed, “He put his book on top of the Qur'an!” Muslims revere their Qur'an deeply, and it behooves the missionary to carry his Bible most respectfully. Another thing we have observed is that Muslims never make any underscoring or writing in the “holy” Book.

### **More on Predestination & “If God Wills**

Somalis, like other Muslims, believe that God wrote everything down before the world was created. Therefore, nothing can happen except that which was “written down” before the world was created. We call this fatalism. Maybe a few examples of this warped view of predestination will help to make clear how Muslims think. Personal responsibility seems to be lacking in Islamic predestination.

When a Somali university student in Addis Ababa received his examination paperback and discovered he had flunked the exam, he went up to his professor, who was a Christian, threw his exam paper down on the desk of the professor with anger, and said, “You flunked me because you don't like me.” The Christian professor answered, “No. I grade everyone according to what he knows.” The student replied, “No. You don't like me, and for that reason, you flunked me.”

Then the professor remembered some points about Islam that he had learned and said, “You believe that God wrote down everything before it would happen, don't you?” The student answered, “Yes.” “Well,” said the professor, “You see, God wrote down that you would be flunked so that I couldn't do anything else.” The student agreed and said, “But you can let me retake the exam.” Then the professor said, “No, no. I can't do that either.” The student replied, “Yes, you can.” The professor replied, “No. I can't. You see, that was also written down that I would not let you take the exam over again.” The student answered, “Yes, that's right. Thank you.” And he walked away satisfied.

One day, Mrs. Modricker stood on the upstairs verandah with our Somali cook, who was very strong on Islamic predestination. He used to say that if a car was coming down the street in front of you, it could not hit you if God had decreed that it couldn't. Our Somali girl who cared for our child was about to cross the main street with our little child in a pram. She did not see the car coming, and the cook shouted at her to watch out! Mrs. Modricker said to the cook, “Why are you shouting? It can't hit her unless God has said it would?” That may be a crude illustration, but one can see the

fallacy of such a warped view of predestination.

### **The Hand Shake**

Almost every country has its way of shaking hands. However, it is becoming customary today to shake hands as Westerners do. Nevertheless, the recognized Somali handshake for men is for each to take the other's right hand, grip it rather hard, and then take the thumb of each other's right hand, then the hand, and then the thumb. This is done two or three times. Then, to finalize the shake, the right hand is placed over the person's heart. Women often use this type of handshake, and although the Western handshake is being adopted, one must be prepared to use the unique Somali handshake.

### **Praying with Eyes Open**

The Muslim manner of prayer is adhered to by the Somalis who are Muslims. Their various positions of standing, kneeling, and facing Mecca can be obtained from books on Islam. Suffice it to say that Muslims never close their eyes but look toward Mecca. I would suggest that when praying before a strictly Muslim congregation, whether at a public celebration or in a Muslim home or yard, etc., the missionary lifts his eyes to heaven and prays with his eyes open and with outstretched hands.

However, after they become Christians, it would be for them to be taught to pray with their eyes closed. We always start them praying with their eyes closed from the time they kneel to accept the Lord. Regarding the closing of the eyes during prayer, nothing in the Bible indicates "the shut eyes" while praying. It does say, "Jesus lifted His eyes to heaven and said...." Nevertheless, to keep one's mind from thinking about what he is looking at while praying, it seems best to pray with closed eyes.

It may be helpful to note that during prayer, Muslims do not remove their headdress, but they do remove their shoes or sandals. Additionally, before praying, they wash their feet and hands up to their elbows, as well as their face. It is customary for Muslims to pray with their caps or turbans on.

The Somali word for washing before prayer is "weyso." The expression: "*Wuu weyseyanayaa*" means, "He's washing himself before saying his prayers." Incidentally, this can be elaborated on in dealing with Somalis, showing them the O.T. teaching of the washing by the priests at the laver before entering the Holy Place.<sup>7</sup> Water baptism can be used as an example. But all this should lead up to the internal washing that God now provides and demands through the blood of the Lamb of God as one comes before God in prayer.

### **Taking a "Smell" of Food, Etc**

We have learned that it is considered offensive to take a "smell" of food or milk or anything to be eaten. The Somali considers this as "breathing" on the food. For

---

<sup>7</sup> In the Old Testament, the laver is a big ablution basin that sits on a foot or pedestal in the courtyard of the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. It holds water that is used by the priests to ritually wash themselves for the Temple service.

example, when a Somali comes to your home and you serve him tea, if you are not sure if the milk is sour or not, and you should take a smell of it to make sure that it is alright, this would be offensive to the Somali.<sup>8</sup>

### **Eating Left – Overs**

One of our Somali believers was hungry one day and came to the missionaries' home. They proceeded to give him some of the food that had been left over. We don't know whether he thought it had been left over from the plate of the missionaries, or whether it was the balance of the food left over in the kitchen.

When he was told that it was food that was "left over," he was deeply offended and became very indignant and refused it. Maybe we should have omitted the phrase "leftover food" since that might have been decoded by him as food left over on the people's plates.

### **Separation of Husband & Wife at Meals**

The Somali custom is for the men to be served by the wife, and then whatever is left over in the cookhouse goes to the wife. I was visiting the district commissioner and stayed overnight in his home. When the meals were served, he and his sons joined me, but his wife did not come to the table. But even this custom is changing now to our Western style.

### **Masters of Psychology**

One of the things that a newcomer quickly learns is that the Somalis are master psychologists in reading your character. The first thing the Somali does when meeting a person is to give him a psychoanalysis; he reads the person's character. And in this connection, the Somali is a master at ingratiating himself upon the other person. He readily understands what will please his employer and agrees that whatever he knows will give him a better standing with his boss.

To use a poor illustration, for example, if the employer is dissatisfied with a particular worker, national or Westerner, and wishes to discredit that person, the Somali quickly senses this feeling and goes along with his employer in agreeing that person is undesirable, whether the criticism is honest or not.

Suppose an employer wants the Somali to agree that the other person and his work are unsatisfactory. In that case, the Somalis will agree to build their own position stronger with their employer. But this is not restricted to the Somali people; it is also found among Westerners, though not to such a great extent. The missionary must not let himself fall into this trap of deceptiveness.

### **Fasting During Ramadan**

We had learned the five pillars of Islam while we were in missionary training in our home country, but it was not until we arrived on the field that we found out how those five pillars operated. When Ramadan came around, we were faced with all our hired

---

<sup>8</sup> The act of publicly smelling food suggests it is bad. It is only acceptable to smell food when no one is looking.

help abstaining from all food and drinks from sunrise to sunset, regardless of how hot the season might be.

Our young cook would not swallow his saliva but spit all the time. In night school the students would go to the window and expectorate. We finally supplied the classrooms with kerosene cans filled with sand, a sort of “Islamic sputum cup.”

Then, too, because of the lack of sleep during the nights of Ramadan and the lack of food during working hours, it was not uncommon to see our hired helpers stretched out on the floor or on the ground sleeping. Some Muslim Governments are now legalizing the reduction of working hours but not any reduction of wages for Ramadan.

During Ramadan, the “fast” is broken at sunset, and people begin to eat and “come alive.” Tea Shops open, and in some, the Qur’an is read all night aloud. The womenfolk busy themselves preparing the big meal eaten between 2:00 and 3:00 AM. To ensure that those who have gone to rest do not miss their feast, a drummer travels through the streets pounding empty kerosene cans. This meal is called *Suhaar* and is the last meal or food touched until sunset, 13 hours later, more or less.

This is a tough month for most people. And of course, it is a significant strain on the nerves of everyone. Many become very irritable, and most missionary workers in strictly Muslim lands try to arrange their annual holiday during this period if possible.

### **Somali Men & Women**

Years ago, it was not considered necessary to educate girls, but today, it has become an established institution, and the girls are educated along with the boys. Classes are held with both sexes in them. This practice started while the Italian Trusteeship prepared the Somalis for independence between 1950 and 1960. In one class that we visited in those old days (a class on mechanical drawing and architecture), there were three young ladies at draft boards alongside the male students.

The Somalis today have no objection to the womenfolk being mixed with the men. Dramas, plays, etc., are carried on even as they are carried on in Western countries. Indeed, weddings have been performed that resemble our Western type of marriages in that both the bridegroom and the bride are together for the ceremony.

Since the “glorious revolution” in 1969, the government has given women equal status as men, especially regarding inheritance. This created a great commotion among the ulema (religious teachers), who claimed that women were not equal to men. The result was that some of the dissenting *ulemas* were arrested and shot dead in public. And today mosques are being built for women to worship in. Hitherto men only attended mosques.

Thus, as time passes, the Somalis, especially in the towns, depart from old customs and adopt new ones that appear more up-to-date and balanced. Many eat together now, attend classes together, and occasionally accompany their husbands on political trips.

In the “bush,” old Somali customs seem to hang on. Men milk the camels and women milk the goats. Women erect and dismantle the little huts and pack them onto the camels. Men usually lead the camels while the women follow on in the rear. And this powerful custom is now beginning to disappear a little.

### Female Circumcision

It has been the practice among Somalis to try to protect their women’s virginity by the following practice. I will relate how a Somali Christian described the act to us. When the girl is very young, several “outcast” women are called to “operate” on the child. A slice of the flesh is cut out of the labia minor or lips of the female organs and cast away.

Then about five long thorns are pushed through the flesh from one side to the other until the entire labial area is tightly closed. These thorns are inserted into the labia crisscrossed, leaving a little area free for urination. Then, the knees of the child are tied with a rope, and the “patient” is left in a little hut for about a month while the healing of the labial section takes place. A little hole is dug in the hut for calls of nature.<sup>9</sup>

After one month, the rope is untied, and the “patient” is free to go about. Then, when the girl gets married, “outcast” women are called, and they use razor blades to slice her open. Of course, there is much pain. That night, her husband has a relationship with his wife for two reasons. One, to prevent the two sides from healing together, and secondly, to prove that he is a man.”<sup>10</sup>

Some of the young ladies who came to the hospital in Al Ain, the United Arab Emirates, to deliver their babies with the help of Western nurses had been so mutilated that it was difficult to deliver their babies. Again, newlyweds were beginning to come to the hospital with the husbands requesting that the doctor would “cut open” their new brides. Somalis are resorting more and more to highly trained doctors today to perform this “operation.”

Moreover, the custom of “cutting and thorn-stitching” Somali girls is beginning to disappear, especially in the cities. But we are told that it is not disappearing very fast outside the towns. About 40 years ago, a Somali who had been in the U.S.A. for ten years returned to Aden. One night, as I was walking with him through the village, I

---

<sup>9</sup> Based on the description provided, it is evident that the source who shared the information about circumcision hailed from British Somaliland. The Modrickers moved to Mogadishu, Italian Somaliland in 1954 and mainly interacted with Somalis from British Somaliland before that. It was rare for Somalis from Italian Somaliland to visit Yemen prior to the 1970s, which was long after the Modrickers had left.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

remarked, “Why do the Somalis cut their girls and stitch them?” He immediately became upset and said, “If you try to stop this, the Somalis will kill you!” He was entirely in favor of the custom even though he had spent many years in the U.S.A. But today, some 40 years later, we see this custom slowly disappearing. Praise the Lord.

### **Blood Money**

One day a Somali friend came to us very sad and disturbed. When he was asked the reason why he was sad, he said, “My uncle, who is a businessman, was traveling from Mogadishu to Hargeisa. He had never left Mogadishu before to go to Hargeisa. When the truck on which he was traveling was halfway to Hargeisa, a lot of men came out of the bush, stopped the truck, and commanded all the passengers to get out of the truck.

Then they looked for a man who was of the same clan as the man who had killed one of their clansmen. It so happened that my uncle was of the clan of the murderer.

And although he had nothing whatsoever to do with the homicide, he was shot dead by the members of the other clan.” Some young people playing volleyball sometimes get a scratch that would bleed a little. They would then point to the blood and ask for money. Fortunately, they were not very serious about it. Along this line, it is wise for hospitals to use precautions and to get agreements from patients or relatives of patients to protect the hospital from being “sued” in case the patient should die.

### **Touching Their Money**

When we hired help for the house, we discovered many dishes were broken while being washed or dried. We tried to teach these “new” workers how to hold the dishes, but invariably, they would let another dish fall and be broken. Of course, they always replied that they didn’t break the dish but that it fell and broke itself. Dishes continued to be broken until we applied a small fee for the breakage of each dish.

We noticed that fewer dishes were being broken. To compensate for the fine, we would offer something to the person responsible, but not money. It is risky to withhold someone’s pay as it may lead to serious consequences, even death.

One Sunday morning a big crowd was gathered around our neighbor’s house. The man of the house who worked for the government had been holding back the pay of an old messenger boy of the government. It took time to process his pay since it concerned leaving pay, etc.

When this old messenger “boy” was put off time after time, he finally came into the government office with a dagger and killed the government worker. Similarly, one of the professing believers went into a rage in the mission office when money to which he was not entitled was being withheld. He became so enraged and furious that it was advisable to give him the money even though he had no right to it.

## Some Customs That Are Disappearing

Drinking tea by unmarried girls in the northern area (British Somaliland) used to be barred.<sup>11</sup> In the southern area, this custom, as far as we could learn, was not observed, and it seems to be disappearing from the northern area now.<sup>12</sup>

Another custom that used to be observed by unmarried girls in the north was the non-eating of eggs. Somali girls have been known to vomit when told that they had just eaten eggs from which cakes or ice cream were made. No reason was ever learned for this custom.<sup>13</sup> Somali men used to insist that anyone who was in the process of drinking water should squat while drinking.<sup>14</sup> However, this custom has yet to be seen these days.

Somalis in the olden days used to think that if they had their hair cut like the Westerners, this was a sign that they had become Christians. In the old days, a real haircut for the Somalis was to have all the hair shaved off the head, thus making their heads nice and shiny like a billiard ball. We had a young Somali man who became a believer while helping us. We invited him to a party one night and suggested he get all dressed up. When he came to the party, he had his head completely shaved. This, to him, was a part of “getting all dressed up.”

Other customs have passed away during these recent years. As the world has become smaller and smaller, and as Somalis have traveled to the West, they have dropped many old customs and adopted new ones. Two of the unfortunate customs adopted are that of smoking and drinking. These two practices were hardly heard of among Somalis.

Leaving one’s sandals at the doorway of a house that is being visited is a widespread practice. If one of the sandals is taken off and left upside down, it is considered a bad sign. Thus, one should ensure that one’s sandals are left upright and not upside down.

---

<sup>11</sup> Girls were once discouraged in British Somaliland and its environs from drinking tea due to its association with causing a larger waistline, which was considered undesirable for women.

<sup>12</sup> In the south (Italian Somaliland) and its surrounding areas, there was no ban on girls drinking tea. However, boys were not allowed to drink tea or *qahwa* (also spelled as *kahwa*), which is a light coffee made from the husk of roasted coffee beans. The belief was that consuming tea leaves and the broken-down husk would block the boys’ urethral meatus, which in turn would prevent the urine from passing through. This practice reflects the poor knowledge of human physiology and the digestive system among people. Nevertheless, this custom of prohibiting boys from drinking tea and *qahwa* is rapidly fading away.

<sup>13</sup> In many Somali villages and towns, eggs are not popular. This is because many people find the way eggs are delivered by the mother hen disgusting. To these villagers, eggs resemble chicken poop. Additionally, many of them do not consume any poultry, as they consider it a diet for outcasts.

<sup>14</sup> The act of squatting (sitting) while drinking or eating is an Islamic culture still observed by many pious Muslims. There are authentic Hadith that narrate that the Prophet Muhammad forbade drinking while standing. For instance, Muslim (2024, 2025) narrated from Anas and Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri that the Prophet forbade drinking while standing. When Anas was asked about eating while standing up, he replied, “That is much worse.”



### **Sitting Cross-Legged**

While we were in the United Arab Emirates, we found that the Muslims in the Emirates considered it a breach of etiquette if a man would sit with his knees crossed. Therefore, we made a special effort to ensure our knees never crossed. Therefore, we made a special effort to make sure that our knees were not crossed while sitting with the Arabs. We have yet to notice a custom like this among the Somalis, but some of them may observe this custom.

### **Sole of Foot Point Toward Others**

The Somalis seem to consider it an offense to sit with the sole pointing toward anyone. Thus, it is wise to sit with both feet on the ground or floor.

### **Gifts**

Very often, gifts are brought to the missionary by the nationals. However, in our experience, the person offering the gift would return a few days later, asking for a special favor. Another point about gifts is that when a gift is given to the Somali (a gift wrapped up in paper, etc.), the gift is opened later on the spot. The Somali will open such gifts once the giver has left him.

One of our missionaries wrapped up several new Somali Testaments and presented them as gifts as she was about to leave on furlough. This was one way she managed to get the Word of God to them. And it is not uncommon to give gifts when leaving and even when returning.

### **The Somali Tooth Brush**

One of the things that amused us a great deal upon our arrival in Djibouti in 1933 was to see men walking along the street with a stick in their mouths. Then we observed that they would take this small stick measuring about 4 to 6 inches long and rub their teeth with the softening end in their mouths. They were “brushing” their teeth. This seems to be a constant practice throughout the day, and their teeth are usually clean and white. The name of this stick or branch is “*rumay*” or, “*caday*”. When we tried using the “Somali toothbrush,” we began to lose fillings.

### **Morality & Cleanliness**

Generally speaking, the Somalis are moral and clean people. Fornication is reduced by having unmarried girls sewed up when young, thus making it very difficult for relationships. However, men will carry on with prostitutes and think nothing of it. It does not seem to carry any shame to visit prostitutes.

When we were interpreting for the doctor in Al Ain, UAE, several young Somali men came for medical help. The doctor asked, “Do you masturbate yourself?” One of the Somalis immediately replied that according to their religion, it was unlawful to masturbate oneself. Then he laughed and replied, “We go and get a girl.” You can see the fallacy in their thinking. It was wrong to masturbate oneself; it was lawful and right to deflower a girl. In this particular case, it would have been an Indian girl who would be the victim. Somalis are known to be very clean. We have known our Somali helpers to stand under the shower often during the day and for long periods. They

are very careful about keeping their clothes washed and clean. Somalis value nice clothes and would prefer to die of hunger than to be lacking in nice clothes. In Aden, it was not uncommon to hear the Somalis make remarks about the “dirty Ethiopians.”

Some of our missionaries have said that the cleanest teashops in Ethiopia were the Somali ones.

Nevertheless, when we made a trip deep into Ethiopia, we stopped at a Somali teashop, and it proved to be a foul shop, but this was the exception to the rule. One would pray that people who go to great effort to keep a good, clean outward appearance would become more concerned about keeping, or finding, the beauty of holiness for the inward man. Amen.

### **Avariciousness**

In every nation, avarice can be observed. However, in the Somali northeast Horn this unlovely expression is seen at its height. As I walked through the pathways to the government offices morning after morning in Hargeisa, nearly everyone I met, man, woman, and child, were greeted by me. I greeted them with, “*Ma nabad baa?*” Invariably, the reply would be, “*Lacag isii.*” (Give me money).

Wherever one would go, it was the same answer, “Give me money.” However, it must be remembered that Somalis in the N.E. Horn are very, very poor, and this may account for the universal cry by the Somalis, “Give me money.” The book *The Tree for Poverty*, written by Margaret Laurence, a British woman, helps one understand the calamity of the Somalis.

From 1978 to 1980, Dorothy and I had a new experience. We met hundreds of Somalis who had gone to the United Arab Emirates. Most of them had found good-paying jobs and were making salaries that were staggering to the mind. We were pleasantly surprised when the Somalis offered us rides in taxis, took us to the market, bought us food and vegetables, and brought us gifts without any expectations of reciprocation.

They even paid the round-trip airfare for one of us when we went for our month’s holiday to see our daughter in Pakistan, a cost of nearly USD 500.<sup>15</sup> How we praise God that he permitted us to see this beautiful, generous expression exhibited by our dear Somali people. It would have been tragic if we had not returned to the Somalis during these last final years of our missionary service.

When the Somalis have the wherewithal, they are generous in sharing it, even more generous than many affluent people of the Western world.

---

<sup>15</sup> After adjusting for inflation, the value of USD 500 in 1978 is equivalent to USD 2,307.06 in 2023. The average inflation rate of the US dollar between 1978 and 2023 was 1.07% per year, resulting in a cumulative price increase of 361.41%.

## Pride

This unlovely “thorn” has invaded the hearts of all men, some more than others. Many foreigners have remarked that the Somalis have inherited this characteristic to a high degree. We found that it was considered by most Somalis a disgrace for their men to sweep the house, carry a grocery basket through the streets to the market, wash clothes, or shine the shoes that are on the feet of a woman or man.

To do agricultural work is their least loved occupation. However, to dirty their hands in automobile mechanics is relished by them. The Hawiye tribe differs along this line. In Aden, during the colonial days, the Hawiye were the sweepers who came into the homes and swept them clean from one end to the other. It was the Hawiye who emptied the toilet buckets, etc. Thus, the other Somalis disowned them as “Somalis.”<sup>16</sup>

In Djibouti, the Somalis would wash clothes, and in the north and south agricultural belts, Somalis have learned the value of farming. As of this year, 1980, the culture of the Somalis is fast changing regarding the eating of fish.

The Russians introduced tuna factories; today, tuna fish is shipped abroad as canned goods. Famines that have swept the N.E. Horn in recent years have forced the government to seek other means of livelihood for the nomadic people, and farms and fisheries have increased.

## Religion

Religiously, there can be found among the Somalis some who are very fanatical and who believe that the Qur’an gives them permission to kill anyone who propagates any religion other than “the true religion of God”, that is, Islam.

This was true in the case of Merlin Grove, who was stabbed to death in his office while registering children for his mission school.<sup>17</sup> It was confirmed with Dr. Doug Hill, who was also stabbed to death as he stepped from his mobile clinic car. This martyrdom happened in a remote part of the Ogaden area just a few years ago in 1975.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> During their time in Yemen, the Modrickers had mostly relied on informants from British Somaliland. However, historically, people from this region could not differentiate between Somali clans from the South (Italian Somaliland) and would refer to all of them as Hawiye, including the marginalized clans and the Somali Bantus. There is currently no evidence to support the identification of the individuals referred to as Hawiye as actual members of the Hawiye tribe.

<sup>17</sup> A Somali Muslim fanatic martyred the Somalia Mennonite Mission missionary in Mogadishu in 1962. Merlin Grove was only 33 years old. Merlin’s wife sustained stab wounds but miraculously recovered.

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Douglas Hill (1948 – 1975), born in Tamworth NSW, was a talented Australian doctor who served in Ethiopia as short-term medical doctor with SIM. He was stabbed to death by a Somali Muslim man in the Somali Region of Ethiopia.

Converts, especially witnessing converts, find it very difficult to exist and to find employment among their people unless they recant or at least stop witnessing or refrain from taking any part in the activities of the Christian services.

This raises a problem for the missionaries, who, in turn, feel their responsibility to keep the convert from starving. And in turn, when others learn that the “mission” is feeding, housing, and clothing the convert, others feign themselves to become believers and add to the “hand-out.” Much prayer is required, and guidance, in regard to “hand-outs.”

Our principle from the beginning has been to have anyone receiving “hand-outs” do a little work for what they receive. But there is even a saturation point in finding something for the recipients to do. It is reported that every time a specific missionary returns to his station, all “his converts” show up from “nowhere” and receive “their hand-outs.” After their “hand-out missionary” leaves town, the “converts” disappear and never show themselves up at the station for Bible teaching. It behooves us to lay a solid foundation and teach “hand-outers” to work for their “hand-out” and to attend Bible classes regularly.

### **Marriage**

In Islamic law, the wife does not have very much to say when it comes to divorce. If the husband is unsatisfied with one of his 4 wives, all he needs to say is, “I divorce you” three times, and the wife is automatically divorced. The Muslim judge grants the divorce, and she is let go. The husband is allowed to have up to 4 wives at a time.

### **Opinionated**

The Somalis are highly opinionated, and this is seen in a wildly exaggerated form when it comes to their religious opinions. Thus, the task of reaching them for Christ is significantly complicated. Even in discussing the Somali language and vocabulary with a group or class of Somalis, each one will firmly stand up for what he feels is the correct word or translation for the English word.

Years ago, when the British were trying to get the Somali language written in the former British Colony of Somaliland, a British language expert was called from Nigeria by the government. A group of Somalis gathered to discuss the alphabet used for writing Somali. The Englishman was for the Latin script, but the Somalis were for another script, probably the Arabic. The result was that a hot argument took place, and it is said that the British officer was cut in the back of the head, police were called, and a Somali was shot.

I do not recall that the Somali died, but the fact is that opinions run high. All this shows that the Somali thinks for himself, which is a good characteristic, especially if it becomes sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

## **The Somali is a Man's Man, not a Woman's Man**

It has been difficult for female missionaries to supervise Somali household "servants," especially in the past. And for this reason, many lady missionaries preferred to hire Somali girls to do their housework and cooking. This difficulty, we believe, is beginning to disappear in recent years. The Somali is a man's man.

### **"Shameful" Tasks for Somali Men**

During our experience in Aden, Yemen, for about 20 years, we found that it was a "disgrace" for most Somali men or boys to do specific tasks. One of these was the sweeping of the floor of the home. Usually, a Somali of the Hawiye clan swept the homes and were the sweepers of the town.<sup>19</sup> And it must be said that these Hawiye men were excellent workers and very honest.

Another task that fell to the Hawiye was emptying and cleaning the commode bucket. Other Somalis would not touch the buckets at all. When a doctor in the government hospital in Hargeisa asked the Somali nurse standing by him at a patient's bedside to take the bedpan, he refused, saying, "That is not my job." The doctor insisted that the nurse (male) take it.

The result was that the male nurse called all the other nurses to go on strike. All walked out. Finally, Governor Fisher's wife was cabled to return from England to settle the problem.<sup>20</sup> She had opened the hospital. Mrs. Fisher flew back to Hargeisa from England and had the dispute settled in a couple of days. She agreed that the nurse should have been prevented from assisting with the bedpan.

Another thing that Somali men who came to Aden disliked very much was washing their clothes. The women had no objection, but the men felt this was not the man's job.

One Somali Christian who went to England wrote to us and remarked that he was doing something that he would never do in his country. He was washing the laundry of the Christian man in whose home he was staying.<sup>21</sup>

As Somalis travel around the world today and become acquainted with the way things are done in other countries, they are beginning to change, and many of these above customs and habits are changing.

We recall how one of our Somali house youths refused to shine the shoes of a lady missionary because she wanted him to polish them while they were on her feet.

---

<sup>19</sup> See footnote #16.

<sup>20</sup> Evelyn Brooks Knowles Fisher.

<sup>21</sup> Professor Da'ud Hassan Ali (1944 - 2008) was educated in Somalia, Lebanon and the United Kingdom. Da'ud moved to Britain in 1967 after completing his course of study in Beirut, Lebanon. He worked for the Birmingham City Council as an educational psychologist. He returned to Somalia in 2004 after early retirement to rebuild the educational system of the country. He was martyred for his Christian faith in Beledweyn alongside Rehana Ahmed (1975-2008) and two Kenyan colleagues.

Later he came to us and said, “I can’t work for that missionary!” He was furious and ready to explode. When asked why he couldn’t work for her, he replied, “She wants me to empty her waste basket.” I replied, “You empty my wastebasket; why can’t you empty hers?” He answered, “She throws her hair into the waste basket!”<sup>22</sup>

Little things like this, which the missionary would never think of, often disturb the Somali and rouse his anger.

It must be remembered that all people are not the same. Somalis in another area may differ entirely from those in another section of the Somali N.E. Horn. For example, in Djibouti, Somali men came to the homes asking to do the laundry. It was a means of livelihood, and they had no objection.<sup>23</sup> One of our Somali professing believers in Mogadishu told us how his friends did not understand why he helped his mother make the tea and assisted her in the cooking. This was considered a woman’s job, not a man’s job, to help his mother in the kitchen.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Raalli Iga Ahoow***

This is a very powerful expression. It can be said in two ways, “*Raalli iga ahoow*”, or, “*Iga raalli ahoow*”, and means “excuse me” or “Sorry!” When a Somali is offended, he is usually restored to your friendship by your telling him that you are sorry, by this expression: “*Raalli iga ahow.*” Thus, it is good to remember this expression.

### **High IQ**

Somalis are a very intelligent people, and now that they are receiving formal education, they are progressing and climbing up the ladder of success.

One Somali with just a junior high education was sent to the USA. He finished his high school and university education and finally earned his PhD. All this he did in eight years. He was asked to accept a chair of a professorship at Princeton University but chose to return to his country and help his people. And we are convinced that the world will hear from them as the Somalis turn to Christ and make Him the Lord of their lives.

Pray for these unique people.

---

<sup>22</sup> For some strange reasons, many Somalis still abhor being around loose human (mainly female) hair and nail clippings. They consider them defiling.

<sup>23</sup> The probability that these men were from one of the marginalized clans is very high. Comparing men from despised clans to men from “noble” clans would be comparing apples to oranges.

<sup>24</sup> In Somali culture, the kitchen is the woman’s domain. Any man seen in the kitchen is assumed not to trust the female’s cooking ability. Such a man is derogatively called “*qorqode*”, a dirt digger.

## About the Author



H. Warren Modricker (1907-1998) dedicated over fifty years of his life to ministering to Somalis, serving as a long-time director of SIM Somalia. He is widely regarded as the most effective Protestant missionary to have ever served among Somalis. Modricker had started writing this article in the 1970s as a book chapter, but unfortunately, he passed away before completing the book. The Editorial Board of the SBS Journal proofread this article, corrected a few typos, and included all the footnotes. Please note that this article is dated in terms of its language and concepts. It is a useful resource for anyone interested in the Somali culture.

## A Life of Forgiveness

Si Fry

---

### Introduction

From the outset, let me be clear that this is not an in-depth study on forgiveness, but just a short article with some practical pastoral advice on helping the church “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”<sup>25</sup> when there are relational tensions and genuine grievances that occur within it. Much more could be added on this subject, but this is a little guide to help the growing Somali community of Christians deal with the inevitable fallouts and wrongs that will occur from time to time within the church of Jesus Christ.

### Forgiven in Jesus

While the Christian, thanks to Jesus, is forgiven by God<sup>26</sup> and clothed in Christ’s perfect righteousness;<sup>27</sup> this side of eternity, despite the all-sufficient help of the Holy Spirit, believers will struggle with and commit sins against God and others. The Apostle John is crystal clear that:

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10.

So even with the Spirit’s sanctifying work within Christians,<sup>28</sup> as we live as a community together,<sup>29</sup> people will do things unintentionally and intentionally that wrong, hurt, and even damage others – requiring forgiveness to be sought and given. The New Testament encourages unity to be maintained within the Church despite these grievances.

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” Colossians 3:13–14 (NIV).

### Forgiveness is a Way of Life in Christ,

“Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Forgiveness should be a way of life for Christians because of the forgiveness they have received through Jesus. “Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”<sup>30</sup> It is not an optional extra, but the fruit of true

---

<sup>25</sup> Ephesians 4:3.

<sup>26</sup> Romans 5:9, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrew 8:12, 1 John 2:12.

<sup>27</sup> Hebrews 10:14, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Romans 10:4.

<sup>28</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Corinthians 6:11.

<sup>29</sup> Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Hebrews 10:24-25, John 13:34-35, Acts 2:42-47.

<sup>30</sup> Ephesians 4:32.



salvation. John Stott writes, “Forgiveness is as indispensable to the life and health of the soul, as food is for the body.”<sup>31</sup>

Our daily Christian walk with God is worked out by imitating our Lord in extending forgiveness to those who have wronged us. Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”<sup>32</sup> Mark 11:25 says, “And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” Luke 6:37 puts it bluntly, “Forgive and you will be forgiven.” John Calvin writes, “The forgiveness which we ask that God would give us, does not depend on the forgiveness which we grant others: but *this* ... is put down simply as a mark, to distinguish the children of God from strangers.”<sup>33</sup>

John Chrysostom said, “Nothing makes us so like God, as being ready to forgive the wicked and wrongdoers.”<sup>34</sup> William Hendriksen comments, “The power to believe and the power to forgive are from God. At every step, beginning, middle and end, all along the way God is both present and active.”<sup>35</sup> Our Lord and Savior commands his disciples to forgive, and through the power of his Spirit at work in them enables all true believers to extend forgiveness to all; this not just a sign of them copying his example, but proof they are true children of their heavenly Father.

In Matthew 6:14-15 just after the Lord’s prayer, Jesus gives an even stronger warning to his followers, “If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Stott explains, “This does not mean that our forgiveness of others earns us the right to be forgiven. It is rather that God forgives only the penitent and that one of the chief evidence of true penitence is a forgiving spirit.”<sup>36</sup> Martyn Lloyd Jones says plainly, “If you are hard and unforgiving, there is no evidence that you have been forgiven.”<sup>37</sup>

The disciples wrestled with the practical outworking of forgiveness resulting in Peter seeking clarity. “Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”<sup>38</sup> Jesus then goes on over the next 12 verses to tell a parable of a servant who had been forgiven a huge debt by the king, but rather than emulate the kindness he had been shown to someone who owes him a tiny debt in comparison, he brings punishment to the one in debt to him ensuring he will get back what he is owed. When the King hears he is most displeased and says, “Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you.” Then the King delivers his servant over to be punished until

---

<sup>31</sup> Stott 2008:, 149.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew, 6:12.

<sup>33</sup> Calvin 2007: Part 2, 303.

<sup>34</sup> Nicols 2023:1423.

<sup>35</sup> Hendriksen 1982, 335.

<sup>36</sup> Stott 2008, 149.

<sup>37</sup> Nicols 2023, 1794.

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 18:21-22.

the debt is paid. Jesus concludes in Matthew 18:35 with, “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” Hendriksen, commenting on this, says, “The one and only main lesson of the parable is this: prompted by gratitude, the forgiven sinner must always yearn to forgive whoever has trespassed against him.”<sup>39</sup> Richard France notes, “If the church is the community of the forgiven, then all its relationships will be marked by a forgiveness which is not a mere form of words, but an essential characteristic.”<sup>40</sup> J.C. Ryle warns, “Do we want to give proof that we are at peace with God, washed in Christ’s blood, born of the Spirit, and made children of God by adoption and grace? Let us remember this passage.... Do we want to grow in grace ourselves and become more holy in all our ways, words and works? Let us remember this passage. Nothing so grieves the Holy Spirit and brings spiritual darkness over the soul as giving way to a quarrelsome and unforgiving temper”<sup>41</sup> (Ephesians 4:30-32).

Part of the evidence of the sanctifying work of God’s grace in someone’s life is that they allow the Holy Spirit to produce forgiveness within their heart towards others who have wronged them, even in the most extreme ways.<sup>42</sup> In reality by staying united as the Church of Jesus Christ then other people’s sins, unintentional and deliberate, from time to time will end up negatively impacting our life and vice versa. Therefore, we have no right but to forgive as we have been forgiven in Christ. However, how this forgiveness is worked out practically day by day, is what we will focus on now based on some principles one can see in scripture.

### **Let Love Cover a Multitude of Sins**

If we do a true evaluation of our own life, it becomes obvious that we are not always consistent. There are days where sometimes we are just grumpier than others and this may in turn lead us to be oversensitive to what people do or say, or, say/do things we on a better day would not say/do. There are days that we are so focused on one thing that we may unintentionally ignore or appear rude to others, and of course, what is true for us is also true for others.

Therefore, as we live in community, we should be generous hearted towards one another and freely forgive these types of grievances. Reminding ourselves of the Apostle Peter’s words to, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:8. Wayne Grudem writes, “Where love abounds in a fellowship of Christians, many small offences, and even some large ones, are readily overlooked and forgotten. But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion, every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflicts abound - to Satan’s perverse delight.”<sup>43</sup>

In fact, 1 Peter 4:8 is quoting Proverbs 10:12 which makes clear that it is hatred that loves to stir up strife between people, love does the opposite. So, as we give

---

<sup>39</sup> Hendriksen 1982, 709.

<sup>40</sup> France 1992, 278.

<sup>41</sup> Ryle 1993, 166-167.

<sup>42</sup> Acts 7:60.

<sup>43</sup> Grudem 1999, 173-174.

ourselves to love one another in this way we play our part in fulfilling Romans 12:16 encouragement to, “Live in harmony with one another.”

### **Don’t Assume People’s Motives, Choose to Think & Speak Well of Them**

In addition to letting love cover a multitude of sins, we must allow love to transform our heart and mind so that we aren’t looking for another’s faults or presuming that they are deliberately acting with wrong motives.

Philippians 2:3 says, “Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.” NLT. Ralph Martin notes, “True biblical humility was frowned upon in the ancient world as despicable. . .it was through the teaching of Jesus that it came to be seen as a virtue.”<sup>44</sup> Gordon Fee adds, “Humility is a uniquely Christian virtue, which as with the message of a crucified Messiah, stands in utter contradiction to the values of the Greco-Roman world,”<sup>45</sup> and in truth our own sinful nature.

Paul is also encouraging us to choose to think well of people, to look for the best in them, not focus just on their faults. Too often, we think better of ourselves than we should and are far harder on others than we are on ourselves. Calvin wisely writes on this verse that the Godly person should, “Employ himself in correcting and detecting his own faults and he will have abundant cause for humility. In others, on the other hand, he will in honor regard whatever there is of excellence, and in love bury their faults. The man who observes this rule will have no difficulty in preferring others before himself.”<sup>46</sup> God calls us to humble ourselves and think better of others. Hendrickson concludes, “It is a happy condition which arises when in a church each member counts the other to be better than himself.”<sup>47</sup>

The truth is God has made us very complex beings and we don’t know what is going on in another person’s heart and mind. We may be able to have a good guess, and of course the Holy Spirit may reveal things to us from time to time. However, the Apostle Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 4:3-4 it is hard for us to be truly sure about what is going on in our own heart, let alone someone else’s. “Therefore, do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.”<sup>48</sup> So guard your heart and mind around negative thoughts about other people’s motives and intentions. God knows and sees all, you do not. Charles Hodge comments on this verse, “God alone can bring to light people’s secret acts and motives. . . . He will exercise the prerogative of judging the heart and conscience – a prerogative that none but an omniscient being can rightfully claim or possibly exercise.”<sup>49</sup> It is better to be wrong because we were being obedient in trying to think well of another believer and yet they were in fact concealing something, than be wrong because we were thinking less well of them

---

<sup>44</sup> Martin 1993, 97.

<sup>45</sup> Fee 1995, 189.

<sup>46</sup> Calvin 1996, 246.

<sup>47</sup> Hendrickson 2007, 101.

<sup>48</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:5.

<sup>49</sup> Hodge 1995, 78-79.

when in fact their heart and motives were in a much more Godly place. The former will not result in you being rewarded by God, whereas the later will result in your discipline!

Please note I am not saying we naively just view everyone as doing everything out of a good heart, we have to make judgements and set appropriate boundaries in place to protect ourselves, our family and if we are a leader the believers God has made us responsible for. What I am addressing is a judgmental and critical heart attitude which so readily seeps into our lives, especially with people who think differently or are different from us.

In addition to our internal state, we must be careful about how we speak of others too. Titus 3:2 “Remind them...to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.” Calvin writes about this verse, “Paul now lays down the way in which they can promote peace and friendship with all.”<sup>50</sup> If here Paul is applying this more generally to those outside of the church, how much more relevant should this be for us to apply to those we call brothers and sisters.

If the Church of Jesus Christ did this with its thoughts and words towards other Christians, so many conflicts, causes of offence and fall outs would be avoided; and thus, the need for forgiveness to be extended to others would be massively reduced. This is something that through the power of the Holy Spirit we can all do better in, as we strive to be obedient to Romans 12:18: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

### **The Matthew 18 Principle for Those Within the Church**

Even with more people thinking and speaking well of others, this side of eternity we all fall into sin,<sup>51</sup> therefore there will be times due to the seriousness of the sin or it being frequently repeated, that whilst we continue to extend forgiveness personally, scripture also makes it clear that certain corrective measures should take place. Additionally, we must not be ignorant to the fact that within the church are those who Jesus described as “Wolves in sheep clothing.”<sup>52</sup> The Apostle Paul writes about them, “for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.”<sup>53</sup> Jude verse 4 says, “For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” The Apostle John notes, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”<sup>54</sup> So some people are amongst us claiming to belong to Christ but they are there for their own ends, or due to the

---

<sup>50</sup> Calvin 1996, 377.

<sup>51</sup> 1 John 1:8-10.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew 7:15.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:19.

<sup>54</sup> 1 John 2:19.

devil's schemes, or a mixture of both; and thus, their behavior must be dealt with not ignored for the protection of the Church.

Matthew 18:15-17 tells us how to live a life of forgiveness, whilst not allowing people to continue unwillingly or willingly to treat you badly.

If your brother sins against you, go, and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

This process of dealing with the issue between you and another, in reality should be enough for two people whose heart desire is to please God, to resolve the problem and it often is. It also as Calvin points out, "Prevents shame being brought on the brethren."<sup>55</sup> Robert Leighton adds, "Love does not delight in the undue disclosing of a brother's failings,"<sup>56</sup> thus this is also part of letting love cover a multitude of sins. However, if this still does not resolve the issue then raise the matter before others, most appropriately those in leadership within the church who have the authority to bring the issue to the whole church if things continue to be a problem. Then you get the wisdom and input of others into the situation. On a personal level forgiveness is still to be extended, but on a practical level, things have to change.

If they don't change it needs to be brought to the church's attention and may result in the person causing the offence being put out of the church. This discipline is of course done in the hope that they come to their senses, repent, and would seek to be restored back into the fellowship.<sup>57</sup>

### **Forgiveness to Those Outside the Church, Boundaries & the Ongoing Relationship**

For those outside of the church the issue is slightly more nuanced and not really within the focus of this article, other than to say the Lord's prayer and his instructions on how to deal with our enemies shows clearly that forgiveness from the heart must be extended to them. However, this does not mean that appropriate boundaries are not put in place to protect us from their mistreatment where possible. If unlawful or criminal activity is being conducted by them towards us, then the appropriate authorities should be informed. In fact, as good citizens we have a duty to inform the authorities not only for ourselves but for the future protection of others too. However, our heart attitude and prayer for them should be one that extends forgiveness and desires that they too come to a saving knowledge of Jesus, so that they can be forgiven and transformed by the redeeming love of Christ.

---

<sup>55</sup> Calvin, 2007, Part 2, 317.

<sup>56</sup> Leighton, 1999, 201.

<sup>57</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.

Refocusing on the church: as we live this life of being forgiven by God and offering forgiveness to others, there are those because of their weaknesses (or yours) that this side of eternity that we may have to have certain relational boundaries in place for a time. These boundaries can help prevent the continual cycle of conflict over issues that are not serious enough to require church discipline. These situations are not ideal and are best discussed with the leadership of a church for their input, but sadly they are the reality we must sometimes face before Christ returns. To maintain unity with some, there may need to be some healthy boundaries between you for a season. However, in these cases, it is essential that we watch our hearts, minds, and mouths as stated above, and our prayer should be for increased unity and God's blessing on that person you struggle with. For in God's sovereignty, he may be allowing their weakness to produce greater Christ-like character in you!

### Conclusion

Having been forgiven so much by God through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, we are once and for all forgiven of our outstanding debt of sin by God and instructed by him to forgive everyone who has sinned against us. Jesus encourages all who follow him to pray "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."<sup>58</sup> The Holy Spirit's power is at work in all Christ's followers to transform us to become more like Jesus<sup>59</sup>, and a key part of becoming Christ-like is to offer forgiveness to all who wrong us.

Therefore, a life of forgiveness is just part of the Spirit's sanctifying work in Christ's disciples and is a genuine sign that God's grace is at work in one's life.

### Bibliography

*All bible quotes are from the ESV unless stated otherwise.*

Barclay W. *The Gospel of Matthew Vol 1*, Saint Andrew Press, 1979

Barclay W. *The Gospel of Matthew Vol 2*, Saint Andrew Press, 1977

Barclays W. *The Letters of the Philippians, Colossians & Thessalonians*, Saint Andrew Press, 1993

Calvin J. *Commentaries: Matthew, Mark, Luke, Part 1*, Forgotten Books, 2007

Calvin J. *Commentaries: Matthew, Mark, Luke, Part 2*, Forgotten Books, 2007

Calvin J. *2 Corinthians and Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, Eerdmans, 1996

Calvin J. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, Eerdmans, 1996

Calvin J. *Hebrews and 1 & 2 Peter*, Eerdmans, 1994

Dauids P. *The first epistle of Peter – NICNT*, Eerdmans, 1990

Fee G. *Paul's letter to the Philippians – NICNT*, Eerdmans 1995

France R. *Matthew -Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, IVP, 1992

France R. *The Gospel of Matthew NICNT*, Eerdmans, 2007

Grudem W. *1 Peter – Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, IVP, 1999,

Guthrie D. *The Pastoral Epistles – Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, IVP, 1989

Hendriksen W. *The Gospel of Matthew*, Banner of Truth, 1982

Hendriksen W. *The Gospel of Luke*, Banner of Truth, 1979

---

<sup>58</sup> Luke 11:4 NLT.

<sup>59</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

- Hendriksen W. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon*, Baker Academic, 2007
- Hendriksen W. & Kistemaker S. *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, Baker Academic, 2004
- Hodge C. *1 Corinthians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries, 1995
- Kistemaker S. *James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*, Baker Academic, 2007
- Leighton R. & Thomas G. *1 and 2 Peter*, Crossway Classic Commentaries, 1999
- Lightfoot J.B. *Philippians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries, 1994
- Martin R. *Philippians – Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, IVP, 1993
- Nichols S. *ESV Church History Study Bible*, Crossway, 2023
- Ryle J.C. *Matthew*, Crossway Classic Commentaries, 1993
- Ryle J.C. *Luke*, Crossway Classic Commentaries, 1997
- Stott J. *The Sermon on the Mount BST*, IVP, 2008
- Stott J. *The message of 1 Timothy and Titus BST*, IVP, 2002
- Towner P. *The letters to Timothy and Titus – NICNT*, Eerdmans, 2006
- Wilcock M. *The Message of Luke BST*, IVP, 1979

---

### About the Author



Simon Fry is the Lead Pastor of ChristChurch in Hailsham and the Founder and Chairman of Life Bridging Works, a UK based charity working to help local churches reach the unreached in the Horn of Africa. Simon has been involved in church leadership for over 15 years; and has been working in the Horn of Africa since 1998 providing biblical teaching, training leaders, helping set up schools, sponsorship schemes, microfinance projects and various health works. Simon is married to Anna, his best friend and helper in the ministry; they have 4 children. The author can be reached at [Simon@christchurchhailsham.org](mailto:Simon@christchurchhailsham.org).

## The Joy of Christian Worship

John Risbridger

---

*'Delight yourself in the LORD' (Psa. 37:4, ESV)*

*'Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!' (Psa. 32:11).*

*'God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in.'*  
(Jonathan Edwards).<sup>60</sup>

The heart of truly Christian worship is neither the mere fulfillment of duty nor the decision to submit to the inscrutable will of an unknowable God, but the feasting of our souls on 'the glorious perfections of God in Christ'.<sup>61</sup> God reveals himself (in Christ and the Scriptures by the Spirit) that we may know him, which is the essence of that which is genuine 'life' (John 17:3). To know him truly is to find our most profound joy in him, and so to bring him glory, for as the great 18<sup>th</sup> Century theologian Jonathan Edwards says, 'God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in.'<sup>62</sup>

### **Worship & the Joy of the Trinity**

The parallelism of Psalm 100 links together the invitation to joy and the call to worship and explicitly grounds both in the affirmation that JHWH is God:

*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. (Psa. 100:1-3).*

But exactly what does it mean that JHWH is God?

The 'opening of the heavens' (Matt. 3:16) at the baptism of Jesus, provides a window into the eternal life of God as a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That life is one of eternal joy, as the Father delights unceasingly in his 'well-pleasing' and 'beloved' Son (Matt. 3:17). The same picture emerges from the lips of Jesus himself in his prayer in John 17, affirming the eternity of the Father's love for him (John 17:24), while in John 14:31 he underlines the full reciprocity of this love. In Luke 10:21, 'Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit' overflows in praise of his Father. There is, then, a strong basis for Michael Reeves' assertion that '...in the triune God is the love behind all love, the life behind all life, the music behind all music, the beauty behind all beauty and the joy behind all joy.'<sup>63</sup> The God of the Bible is not a lonely monad, an eternal impassible 'metaphysical iceberg',<sup>64</sup> devoid of emotion and

---

<sup>60</sup> Edwards 1994, 495.

<sup>61</sup> Piper, 2001, 48.

<sup>62</sup> Edwards, 1994, 495.

<sup>63</sup> Reeves, 2012, 44.

<sup>64</sup> Pinnock, 2001: 118.



undifferentiated in his relation to good and evil. On the contrary, he is an eternal community of endless delight, mutual self-giving and infinite love; the God who is love in his very being (1 John 4:8), who 'love(s) righteousness and hate(s) wickedness' (Psa. 45:7) and who, the scriptures testify, is 'good' (e.g., 1 Chron. 16:34; Psa. 110:5).

With such an understanding of God, the repeated biblical invitation to delight/rejoice *in the LORD* (Psa. 37:4; 32:11) becomes nothing less than an invitation to join in the joy of the Holy Trinity. This is the heart of genuinely Christian worship. The God whose 'glory is uppermost in his own affections'<sup>65</sup> has, in his most generous love, 'chosen freely to share this infinite joy, by creating us in his image to be worshippers who delight in what he delights in and reflect his glory in creation.'<sup>66</sup> Christian worship is a participation in the joy of the Trinity.

### **Worship & the Story of Salvation**

Psalm 8 begins and ends with an exclamation of the glory of JHWH, revealed in all of creation (Psa. 8:1 & 9). The majesty of these words leaves us unprepared for the shocking affirmation that follows, that it is *in the mouths of lowly 'children and infants'* that his praise is to be found, serving as a stronghold against all the destructive and dehumanizing forces unleashed into the world by human sin (Psa. 8:2, NIV). Human beings – though apparently so small in the vastness of the cosmos (Psa. 8:3-4) – are invested with the deepest significance: we exist for the glory of God (Psa. 8:5), both in the praise of our lips (Psa. 8:2, NIV) and in the obedience of our lives as we rule in creation on his behalf (Psa. 8:6-8). We are created for worship.

Rather than fulfil this highest of callings, however, we have replaced the worship of God with multiple idolatries (Rom. 1:21-25), and so incurred God's wrath (Rom 1:18). We would therefore expect the story of salvation to be a story in which *both* divine wrath is turned aside *and* in which the calling to worship is restored. This is precisely what we find in the story of the Exodus where the blood of the Passover Lamb diverts divine wrath away from Israel (Exod. 12:13) and releases them from the slavery of Egypt to obey the call to become the worshipping community of JHWH (Exod. 3:12; 4:23; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 7, 24; 12:31). 'Let my people go, so *they can worship me*' (Exod. 10:3) JHWH's repeated to Pharaoh, through his servant Moses.

Since the early chapters of Exodus narrate the story of God's intervention to save a worshipping community for himself, it follows that the later chapters of the book provide one of the clearest and earliest models in scripture of what such worship entails. The model clusters around two key elements: *first*, God reveals his *word* to his people (the giving of the law - Exod. 19-24), calling the worshipers to respond with grateful obedience (Exod. 19:5, 8; 24:3); *second*, God makes his *dwelling* among his people (the Tabernacle – see Exod. 25-40, see especially 25:8) so that they become defined as 'the people of the *Presence*.'<sup>67</sup> The problem as to how a

<sup>65</sup> Piper, 1986, 31.

<sup>66</sup> Risbridger, 2015, 33.

<sup>67</sup> Fee, 1996, 10.

holy God can dwell among a sinful people is resolved (Exod. 29:44-46) through the provision of the sacrificial system unfolded in the book of Leviticus and centered on the Tabernacle (later the Temple).

This was, however, a prophetic foreshadowing of the ultimate story of salvation, rather than the story itself. For it is in Jesus that the divine Word was made flesh and 'made his dwelling among us' (John 1:14). He is the true 'tabernacle', in whom the Father finds 'the true worshippers' he seeks (John 4:23). As Jesus explained to the woman from Samaria, these 'true worshippers' are those who 'worship in the Spirit and in truth' (John 4:24). All that was anticipated in the two key elements of ancient Israel's model of worship, is, therefore, to be found and fulfilled in Jesus. He is the anointed giver of the Spirit (John 1:33; 7:37-9), the living *presence* of God who comes to *dwell* in and among his people (1 Cor 6:19 and 3:16), and the locus (John 14:6) and teacher (John 3:2) of truth, as the incarnate *word* of God (John 1:14). The ultimate joy of worship, therefore, is found in Christ, whose self-sacrifice on the cross has turned aside God's wrath once and for all (Rom 3:25), whose gospel calls us to the 'obedience of faith' (Rom 1:5, ESV) and whose gift of the Spirit seals us to be the people of his *presence* for all eternity (Eph. 1:13-14; Rev 21:3).

Christian worship is *Christocentric* because his grace has made it possible and because he is the focus of its joy (Phil 4:4; Rev. 5:12).

### **Worship & the Supremacy of Christ**

It is, therefore, of the nature of Christian worship that it is not content to speak only of God-in-general but is always concerned to *make much of Jesus*, 'so that in everything he might have the supremacy' (Col 1:18). The New Testament unpacks what this means in at least two dimensions.

*First* Christian worship rests on *all that has been fulfilled* through his death and resurrection. This is expounded most fully in Hebrews 9-10, in an extended contrast between the 'shadows' of the old covenant and the corresponding new covenant 'realities' (Heb. 10:1) found in Christ. Christ's offering of himself on the cross is a better sacrifice (Heb. 9:6-7; 12), in a better Tabernacle (Heb. 9:1-5; 11) which brings about a better cleansing (Heb. 9:8-10; 13-14) – a cleansing of the human conscience (Heb. 9:14a), which leads to a better worship/service (Heb. 9:14b). On this basis a new covenant is established between God and his people (Heb. 9:15-18), based on the completed, once-for-all sacrifice of the cross (Heb. 10:1-18). The glorious conclusion speaks to the very heart of Christian worship as an intimate and joyful experience of the *presence* of God, made possible through faith in the finished work of Christ revealed in the *word* of his gospel:

*Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from*

*a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.* (Heb. 10:19-22).

*Second*, Christian worship expands to seek his glory in *all of life*. This is the inevitable result of the exposition of the person and work of Christ in Colossians 1:15-20. He is the ‘firstborn’ over all creation (Col. 1:15) and over the new creation (Col. 1:18), and so has supremacy ‘in everything’ (Col. 1:18b). His atonement has achieved not only the reconciliation of sinners to God (Col. 1:23) but also the reconciliation of ‘all things’ (Col. 1:20) in an alienated and broken world. Such a comprehensive vision of the scope of the gospel demands a complete response in worship, as explained by Douglas Moo:

This intention [the reconciliation of all things] will be finally accomplished only when Christ returns in glory to establish the kingdom in its final form (cf 1:22b; 3:4). But God invites human beings in the present time both to participate in this reconciliation and to be agents through whom God’s work of reconciliation can begin to be carried out.<sup>68</sup>

The same concept is worked out more fully in Romans 12:1, as Paul calls the believers in Rome to respond to the mercy of the gospel by offering their bodies as a ‘living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God,’ a response which he defines as their ‘true and proper worship’ (*logiken latreian*). This verse seems to serve as a heading for the rest of Romans, placing ‘the concluding chapters of the letter under the umbrella of worship.’<sup>69</sup> The masterpiece of truly Christian worship is, therefore, to be painted on the broadest possible canvas. As Luther wrote, ‘Even their seemingly secular works are a worship of God and an obedience well-pleasing to God.’<sup>70</sup> Jesus is supreme over all of life, so every sphere of human experience can be re-imagined as an opportunity to bring him glory, pleasure and praise.

### **Worship & The Joy of the Nations**

In both Old and New Testaments,<sup>71</sup> the link between worship and mission is strong. Psalm 67 is a particularly striking prayer that the nations will find their truest joy by celebrating the rule and reign of God and joining Israel in praising him. The Psalm is set out in a chiasmic structure which places the prayer for the joy of the nations at its thematic heart.<sup>72</sup>

- A. May God be gracious to us and bless us...so that your ways may be known on earth...(1-2)
- B. May the peoples praise you, God... (3)
- C. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the people...(4)
- B’. May the people praise you, God... (5)

---

<sup>68</sup> Moo, 2008, 138.

<sup>69</sup> Peterson, 1992, 178.

<sup>70</sup> See Keller 2012, 73.

<sup>71</sup> See for example Psalm 96 and 1 Peter 2:9.

<sup>72</sup> Bosma, 2016, 151-171.

C'. The land yields its harvest; God, our God blesses us...all the ends of the earth will fear him (6-7).

The means by which the nations are envisaged as coming to their truest joy, however, rest in the experience of Israel herself. It is precisely as they experience the blessing of God, that they become a blessing to the nations (1-2, 6-7), fulfilling the ancient promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:2-3). The worshipping community living in the blessing of God, thus becomes a missional community overflowing with blessing to the world, such the nations are glad and sing for joy. The joy of worship is a joy to be shared with the nations!

The same call echoes throughout Psalm 96 as the nations are invited to join in the song of praise to JHWH, making the ancient song 'new' as they add the distinctive riches of their cultures to the glorious symphony of praise arising from the earth.<sup>73</sup>

The content of the new song is essentially a remix of the old songs of Israel – the name, the salvation, the glory and the mighty acts of Yahweh. What makes it new is *where* it is to be sung (in all the earth) and *who* is going to be doing the singing (all peoples). What was an old song for Israel becomes a new song as it is taken up by new singers in ever expanding circles to the ends of the earth.<sup>74</sup>

Christian worship as global celebration is strongly picked up in the New Testament on the day of Pentecost, when 'the church was born in culturally diverse worship. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost sent the disciples out into the Jerusalem streets praising God in the particular languages of those gathered to celebrate from around the world (Acts 2:3-11).<sup>75</sup> For, in the words of Harold Best:

Pentecost tells us that one artistic tongue is only a start and a thousand will never suffice. There is not a single chosen language or artistic or musical style that, better than all others, can capture and repeat back the fullness of the glory of God. One culture has capabilities, nuances, and creative ways that others simply do not possess. This truism cannot be avoided. Cultures are not infinite. No single one can hold the wholeness of praise and worship or the fullness of the counsel of God.<sup>76</sup>

Christian worship is *missional*: it seeks the joy of the nations.

## Conclusion

Christian worship is not a mere duty; it is an invitation to joy: a global invitation to a Christ-centered joy which infuses every sphere of human experience with the transforming power of the gospel. Such joy is to be passionately pursued by the worshipper since, in the words of John Piper's great maxim, 'God is most glorified in

---

<sup>73</sup> See also Isaiah 42:10.

<sup>74</sup> Wright, 2006, 480.

<sup>75</sup> Perigo, 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies.

<sup>76</sup> Best, 1993, 67.

us when we are most satisfied in Him.<sup>77</sup> And when we find such joy, it exposes and eclipses every other joy, as C.S. Lewis pointed out so memorably:

We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.<sup>78</sup>

True worship is the pursuit of ultimate joy for the glory of God, until we meet the Master and 'enter into his joy' (Matt. 25:23), in the everlasting glory of the New Creation.

---

<sup>77</sup> Piper, 2001: 14.

<sup>78</sup> Lewis, 2000: 96.

## Bibliography

- Best, Harold. 1993. *Music Through the Eyes of Faith* (San Francisco: HarperCollins).
- Bosma, Carl J. 2016. 'A Missional Reading of Psalms 67 and 96', in *Reading the Bible Missionally*, ed. by Michael W. Goheen. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).
- Edwards, Jonathan 1994. 'The Miscellanies' in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. by Thomas Schafer, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), Volume 13.
- Fee, Gordon D. 1996 *Paul, the Spirit and the People of God* (Peabody: Hendrickson).
- Keller, Timothy. 2012. *Every Good Endeavour* (London: Hodder & Stoughton).
- Lewis, C.S. 2000. 'The weight of glory' in *C.S. Lewis Essay Collection and other Short Pieces* ed. by Lesley Walmsley (London: Harper Collins Publishers).
- Moo, Douglas J. 2008. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon PNTC* (Leicester: Apollos).
- Perigo, Jeremy *Getting Past the Western vs. Indigenous Hymnody Debate: Viewing Turkish Hymnody through a Pneumatological Framework* (Presented at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies).
- Peterson, David. 1992. *Engaging with God: a biblical theology of worship* (Leicester: Apollos).
- Pinnock, C.H. 2001. *Most Moved Mover* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press).
- Piper, John. 1986. *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press).
- Piper, John 2001. *The Dangerous Duty of Delight* (Colorado: Multnomah Books).
- Reeves, Michael. 2012. *The Good God: enjoying Father Son and Spirit* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster).
- Risbridger, John. 2015. 'The Message of Worship' *The Bible Speaks Today* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press).
- Wright, Christopher J.H. 2006. *The Mission of God*, (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press).

## About the Author



John Risbridger and his wife Alison are leaders of the Catalyst Leadership and Theology Training Course. They are responsible for training emerging leaders within the Catalyst network of churches. The couple are also members of King's Community Church in Southampton and have two young adult daughters. John has a wealth of experience in ministry, having spent 10 years in student ministry and 18 years as a Minister and Team Leader at Above Bar Church in Southampton. During this time, he focused on Bible teaching, leadership and integral mission. In addition to his church work, John is also the Chair of the Council of the UK Evangelical Alliance. He has authored a book titled "The Message of Worship" within the IVP Bible Speaks Today series. The author can be reached at [john@catalystnetwork.org](mailto:john@catalystnetwork.org)

## Romans 1: The Context For The Gospel: The Fall of Satan & Adam, Sin & Evil

Russell Cross

---

### Introduction

In these studies of Romans 1:1-7, I intend to show how Paul's presentation of the gospel message is redemptive-historical. He got his message from the risen Christ and tradition, as we saw in the first study, and he presents it in the context of the history of redemption. The Old Testament looked forward to the coming of the Messiah (Christ), and the New Testament tells us that Jesus Christ was that promised Messiah who came to redeem us and establish the Kingdom of God. In the previous studies of Romans 1:1-7, we looked at the first part, which says: "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh...." In this study, I want us to consider why we need the gospel. Paul devotes quite a bit of space in Romans to this question. The gospel is "Good News" for everyone. But why is it good news for us?

When Paul announces his theme for the letter in Romans 1:16-17, he says that he is: "Not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...."

Salvation is deliverance from something terrible to something good. For example, God's people were delivered from Egypt and led to a land flowing with milk and honey. The Old Testament prepared the people for the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the salvation He would bring. In the Gospel, Paul says that righteousness from God is revealed as being available for everyone who believes. That righteousness is needed because, as Paul tells us in the following verse: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...." Romans 1:18. And he then goes on to describe that ungodliness and unrighteousness.

### A Summary of Romans 1:18 – 3:20.

People are all, by nature, ungodly and unrighteous and stand under the wrath of God. Men suppress the truth about God, which is manifested in God's Creation, and do not honor him as God or show gratitude to Him. As a result, man can no longer think correctly or judge rightly and turns to idols to replace God.

So, because they have exchanged the truth about God for "the lie" and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator, God has given people up to their lusts and lets them bear the consequences of their wilful rebellion against Him. Ungodliness leads to unrighteousness, which leads to suppression of the truth, which leads to idolatry, which leads to perversion, and on to "evil, covetousness, malice, envy, murder,

strife, deceit, maliciousness” and all the rest. What Paul calls elsewhere “the works of the flesh.”

In all this, man is without excuse because nature “without” witnesses to God’s eternal power and divine nature while “within” our consciences inform us about what is right and what is wrong. We show this by judging others while we excuse ourselves for doing the same things. We presume that God will overlook our faults while we judge others and do not forgive them for doing what we do ourselves. God is patient and forbearing towards us, but Paul says that God’s patience and forbearance should lead us to repent. But if we do not repent, God will condemn us just as we have condemned others on the day of judgment.

The same standard will apply to the Jew as to the non-Jew. In Chapter 3, Paul shows that the Jew is in the same position as the non-Jew by quoting the Old Testament. All are under the power of sin.

“What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks God. All have turned aside; together, they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one....” Romans 3:10-12.

So, we can see that the Gospel is God’s answer to man’s greatest need. Salvation from the wrath of God and the guilt and the dominion of sin. It is also concerned with delivering us from the kind of society described in Romans chapter 1:18 – 32 and creating a new society where godliness and righteousness flourish, and all the fruits of the Spirit are perfected in each one.

### **Original Sin**

But what is the Bible’s explanation for man’s sinful nature?

In Romans 5, Paul traces the problem back to our first ancestors.

In Romans 5:12-21, Paul goes back to the origin of sin:

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned – for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.” Romans 5:12-14.

What does Paul mean here? We must read the rest of the chapter to understand him. We need first to go back to 5:1. “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God....” Rom 5:1-2.



From Romans 3:21 to 4:25, Paul has been showing that since “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” God’s way of salvation is to justify those who believe in Jesus Christ, who has made atonement for sin to redeem us, as a gift, and to impute a righteousness of (from) God to them. Chapter 4 is about Abraham as the supreme example of someone in the Old Testament justified by faith.

So, at the beginning of chapter 5, Paul is saying that, for those who are justified, the enmity between God and man has been removed, and there is now peace – peace with God. The wrath of God has been dealt with through the atonement and the resulting reconciliation achieved between God and man so that access into God’s presence based on grace has been obtained, and we rejoice in the hope of sharing in the glory of God.

God has taken the initiative in reconciling rebellious man to himself by sending His Son to die on the cross. If Christ died for us to redeem us while we were sinners, then how could God not carry on the work of salvation and complete it? Justification must lead to glorification (5: 6-11).

At this point, Paul brings in his teaching about Adam and Christ. Justification is a term from the Law Courts. A judge pronounced his verdict after a case had been heard. The defendant is either acquitted (justified) or condemned. For the rest of the chapter, Paul will be writing about the one sin of Adam that led to condemnation and death for all his descendants (who are described as being “in Adam”) and the one act of righteousness of Christ that leads to life for all those “in Christ.” Paul summarises his argument succinctly in 1 Corinthians 15:22.

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”

We saw in Romans 5:14 that Adam was a type of Christ. We are all born “in Adam,” We stand under the guilt and condemnation that came upon him and all his descendants, the whole human race. But when we believe the gospel, we are incorporated into Christ and justified (acquitted) of our guilt. Christ has taken our punishment and given us his righteousness. Thus, we are naturally “condemned” but by grace “justified.”

In Romans 5, there is a parallel between Adam and Christ, and there is a contrast. For the parallel, we need to note that what a person says on the one side, he will say the same on the other. Let us say that Adam only set a bad example. We must say that Christ set a good example that we must follow, or if we say that Adam is every man, then we have to say the same about Christ. If we deny original sin, we will deny the need for atonement, justification, etc.

But Paul is talking about two individual men. Adam, as the first man, or the first Adam, and Christ as the second man, or the second Adam. He is talking about the one sin committed by the first man and the one act of righteousness committed by the second man and their consequences for all who follow them. The second man

(Jesus Christ) came in the “likeness of sinful flesh.” That is, he shared our human nature, but not our sin.

Justification deals with our guilt and the sentence of condemnation. It restores us to a right standing and relationship with God. But Adam’s fall also led to the corruption of our human nature. Not only did the fall of Adam bring guilt and death upon the whole human race, but it also introduced sin into the whole human race that would descend from him. Paul will go on in the following chapters to tell us how the gospel completes the work of salvation by delivering us from that corruption through our union with Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit within us, leading us progressively to “put to death the deeds of the body” and become more like Jesus Christ. The goal is glorification, which will come in the age of the New Heavens and the New Earth.

### **The Sin of Adam**

At this stage, we need to consider the original sin of Adam.

When God placed the first couple in the Garden of Eden, they were without sin. They could keep the command of God.

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2: 16 & 17. But they disobeyed. It was an act of rebellion instigated by Satan. The essence of that sin was to doubt the goodness of God and think that he did not have their best interest at heart. It was the desire for autonomy: to be independent of God and his commands to be like God and to define good and evil for themselves.

That is still the essence of sin in the modern world: Man wants autonomy from God to live as he likes without fear of being held accountable and to redefine good and evil to suit his preferences. He wants to reign in place of God.

Philip Hughes says:

“The ungodly man, however, is in rebellion against God. He accepts the satanic invitation to question God’s goodness and ignore His word, and welcomes the assurance that in so doing he himself will become like God. He believes that in setting out along the road of the knowledge of good and evil, he will have before him the glorious vista of independence and self-determination.”<sup>79</sup> God had warned Adam:

“...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, *for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*” Genesis 2:17.

Leon Morris has written a helpful monograph titled:

“The Wages of Sin: An Examination of the New Testament Teaching on Death.” In it, he looks at the different ways the word “death” is used in the Bible. In his conclusion, he says:

---

<sup>79</sup> Hope for a Despairing World, 20.

“What emerges clearly from our study of the New Testament documents is the fact that death characteristically is regarded as something completely unnatural, an alien, a horror, an enemy. It is not simply an event, but a state, and it is connected very closely with sin. But the important teaching of the New Testament is not that death is an evil, or that man cannot overcome it, but that death has been decisively defeated in the atoning death of the Saviour, who ‘abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel’ (2 Tim 1:10). On this we rest our hope.”<sup>80</sup> So, “sin is not simply an event, but a state...connected closely with sin.” “The wages of sin is death...” Romans 6:23.

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...” Ephesians 2:1 - 2.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life.” John 5:24.

“Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 5:20-21.

### **The Origin of Sin and Evil**

But where do sin and evil come from? The Bible speaks of a rebellion in heaven before the fall of man. Satan had already fallen before he appeared in the garden of Eden. 2 Peter 2:4, Jude verse 6 and Revelation speak of this rebellion. But how did pride, jealousy, ambition, envy, and hatred and all the rest of the fruits of evil enter into a perfect heaven among beings that were created perfect? It seems that no one has ever been able to answer that question satisfactorily. But there are some things that we can take note of.

1. Only some of the angels rebelled and were eternally punished. The rest did not. So, there was no necessity for them to sin. They were not created in a way that made their fall necessary or even likely.
2. Those who did not fall were not created in such a way that sin and rebellion were impossible for them. They could have sinned like the other angels. They had the exact nature as the fallen angels and the same opportunity to join the rebellion and could have done so, but they did not. God could have created angels that were incapable of sin. But he did not. There was no necessity for the good angels not to sin.
3. God was justified in condemning those angels who sinned to an eternal punishment. There was no excuse for their rebellion. They lived in God’s presence and the light. Yet they sinned.

---

<sup>80</sup> Leon Morris. “The Wages of Sin.”

4. There is no prospect of forgiveness, redemption or peace for those fallen angels.

We could add that those angels who did not choose to join the rebellion with Satan must have had the opportunity to do so. Their allegiance to God would be all the stronger for passing that test. Most men do not want a woman to marry them simply because they have no other choice. It is more satisfying if she chooses to marry him because she prefers him above all others. In the same way, it must be more satisfying to God to have beings who willingly love him and submit to him when they could not have done so.

So, God was fully justified in condemning Satan and those angels who followed him to eternal punishment. Their sin was high treason by those who had absolutely no excuse. Nothing in their nature compelled them to do what they did. It was incomprehensible.

While we do not know how evil entered into a perfect heaven, we do know that God controls Satan and sets boundaries beyond which he is not allowed to go. The Book of Job makes that plain. Satan had to get permission to test Job. Twice, he tried to prove that Job's devotion to God was motivated by self-interest. But Job passed the tests (with difficulty).

Psalm 11:5 says: "The LORD tests the righteous."

James says:

"Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful." James 5:11.

Again, Satan had to ask God for permission to test the Apostle Peter. Luke 22:31-32.

### **The Fall of Adam and Eve**

The story of the fall of Adam and Eve leaves us with some questions.

1. Why did God put the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in the "midst of the garden" and then tell Adam that he must not eat of it?
2. Why did God allow the Serpent (Satan) access to the garden and particularly to Eve when the command not to eat from the fruit of the tree had been given to Adam (who must have communicated it to her)?

God was obviously testing Adam and Eve to see who they would listen to and give their allegiance to. They were on probation. They failed the test.

God had created Adam and Eve in his image and without sin. They had free will. There was no compulsion for them to sin by listening to Satan rather than to God. So, their sin was all the worse for that.

By sinning, they incurred the just judgment of God for their rebellion and brought condemnation to the whole human race. They also lost their free will, and so did we. Our sinful nature dominates our wills.

As Paul says in Romans 7 of his experience in the flesh, i.e., in Adam:  
“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very things I hate.... For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good that I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing...” Romans 7:14-15, 18-19.

So, evil entered this world as it had previously entered heaven. Death, suffering, and all kinds of evil followed.

### **Would We Be Better Off If Adam Had Not Sinned?**

The Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga has pictured God planning to create our world. And he suggests that God could have contemplated all the possible worlds he could create. Plantinga asks the question:

Would it be better:

1. to live in a world where there was no sin and no evil and no suffering and no death?
2. Or to live in a world where there is sin and evil and suffering and death, but where there has been an incarnation of the Son of God and atonement for sin?

Plantinga answers that the second option is surely the best. Paul intimates this in Romans 5 with his repeated: “How much more.” In Christ, we are far better off than Adam and Eve were. We have been redeemed to reign with Christ for all eternity in the New Heavens and the New Earth where there will be no more sin or suffering and no more pain and no more death and no more evil.

So, what will we have gained?

1. If Adam had passed the test our relationship with God would be based on merit. We would have been able to boast of our accomplishments. But now, our relationship with God is based on grace. We love Him and serve him out of gratitude for his grace and mercy to us. As Jesus said, “he who is forgiven much loves much.”
2. Jesus defeated evil by letting it defeat him.  
“For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.” (Hebrews 2:10).  
We are to follow his example.

“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

God is perfecting us through suffering. Hebrews 12:1-11 tells us that God disciplines all his children so that they will share his holiness and have the “peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

Paul says in Romans 5: 3-5:

“We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” And in 2 Corinthians 4:17: “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”

3. Our weakness and helplessness provide the occasion for God to demonstrate his power on behalf of his people for his glory. Romans 9:17:

“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that My Name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

What has happened to all the tyrannies that have arisen and dominated large parts of the world? They have mostly passed into oblivion while the Kingdom of God advances.

4. God is preparing a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. There will be no more sin or suffering or death or evil. Perfection and permanence will finally be attained. It will be immeasurably better than the world would have been if sin had never entered into the world.

### **But Why So Much Evil**

Alvin Plantinga’s paper also raises the question: Why is there so much evil? The Bible lays the blame for that on Satan and sinful men. Some years ago, I read Richard Wurmbrand’s book, “Karl Marx et Satan.” It was a French version of the book. When Marx and his friend, Friedrich Engels, were young men, they were professing Christians and both wrote in glowing terms about their wonderful Christian experiences. But something happened. Wurmbrand thought that Marx (and maybe Engels) had committed an unforgivable sin and knew he was eternally lost. Wurmbrand thinks that he became a Satanist (not an atheist) and was motivated by a burning desire to get revenge on God.

Whether or not Marx was motivated by such a desire, one gets the impression that that burning desire for revenge inspires Satan himself. Jesus tells us that Satan is a murderer, a liar and the father of lies. Revelation 12: 7-17 tells us of the defeat of Satan and his desire for revenge. He is the “ruler of this world” and “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.” He is the instigator of much of the evil that goes on in this world.

“...But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” Revelation 12:12b.

“Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” 12:17.

But we cannot simply blame Satan for all the evil in this world. Fallen man must accept responsibility for much that happens. As Romans 1 shows us, God gave mankind up to suffer the consequences of their sin. The tendency of sin is to get

worse and worse. God puts a restraint on it, but sometimes he takes away the restraints and lets us see where it leads. Germany under Hitler and The Soviet Union under Stalin are just two examples of what can happen. Hell will be the final and everlasting world where the works of the flesh will flourish unhindered and where love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, and hope will be banished forever.

### **Conclusion**

God could be compared to a writer of a book of fiction. The writer creates the characters, the good and the bad, the wise and the foolish, the great and the small. He conceives a plot for the story and he plans the crises and the climax and how the story will end. We know when we read the story that no matter how impossible it might seem, the story will end exactly where the author has planned. He has complete control over it. God has created this universe and our world. He made everything and everyone, including the good angels and those who fell and became evil. He even made Satan, who was originally good, before he rebelled. All of the characters in the story are subservient to the purposes of God. Jesus Christ has conquered sin and death and Satan and now reigns supreme over the Universe and over all of history. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. As we have already seen, God said of Pharaoh:

“For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my Name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Romans 9:17.

The same could be said of Satan and all those who oppose the purposes of God. God is Eternal, infinite, and all-powerful and able to do whatever He wants. He is outside of space and time. To make God subject to time is to have a pantheistic conception of God. He is then a god who is only a part of His creation. It would be like the author in our illustration being subject to his story and the characters he has created and not free to make the story go wherever he likes. When God created the universe, it added nothing to Him; if it ceased to exist, it would take nothing away from Him. But, being infinite, He is present at every point of His creation at every moment at once. Geerhardus Vos has pointed out that man cannot share God's eternity, even in the New Earth and the New Heaven, where God will be with us and where we will not be subject to death or corruption. However, we will still be subject to time in some way and living in God's new creation without decay.

How did God create the universe? And how will He make the New Heavens and the New Earth? We do not know. But there are at least two ways that modern man could conceive of God doing it. But there are better places to go into such speculations.

## Bibliography

- Augustine. City of God. Penguin Books. Translated by Henry Bettenson. 1972.
- Bavinck, Herman. The Doctrine of God. The Banner of Truth Trust. 1977.
- Blocher, Henri. Révélation Des Origins. (French)/ In The Beginning. (English Translation.) IVP 1984.
- Bruce, F.F. Jesus, Past, Present and Future. Kingsway Publications, Eastbourne. 1979/1998.
- Edwards, Jonathan. Charity and its Fruit. Banner of Truth. 1852, 1969, 1982.
- Expositions of Ephesians. Banner of Truth. Various dates
- Guinness, Os. Unspeakable: Facing Up To The Challenge Of Evil. Harper San Francisco. 2005.
- Hughes, Philip E. Hope For a Despairing World: The Christian Answer to the Problem Of Evil. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1977.
- Lloyd Jones. Martyn The Plight of Man and the Power of God. Pickering and Inglis. 1942/ Reprinted 1972. Expositions of Romans. Banner of Truth. Various dates.
- Morris, Leon, The Wages of Sin. TSF, De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7GP Produced and printed by Stanley L. Hunt (Printers) Ltd, Rushden, Northants, England. March 1955.
- Motyer, J.A. The Revelation of the Divine Name. The Tyndale Press. London. 1959. A defence of the unity of the Bible.
- Plantinga, Alvin. Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa.' In Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil. Edited by Peter Van Inwagen. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, UK. 2004.
- Ridderbos, H.N. Paul, An Outline of His Theology. Eerdmans. 1975/1992.
- Sproul, R.C. Before The Beginning: The Aseity of God. U Tube.
- The Apostolic Preaching Of The Cross. IVP. 1972.
- The End for which God Created The World. Banner of Truth.
- The Nature of True Virtue. Banner of Truth.
- Vos. Geerhardus The Pauline Eschatology. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1986.
- Wurmbrand, Richard. Karl Marx et Satan. (French) / Marx and Satan. Crossway 1986.



---

## About the Author



Russell Cross went to Kenya in 1983 with the Africa Inland Mission as a short term missionary for 4 years. He worked among the Turkana people in North East Kenya where he oversaw an irrigation scheme at Elelea. The scheme was under the Turkana Rehabilitation Project and the Kenyan Government. Russell also helped in planting a church in the new village of Elelea which came into being as people working on the scheme settled there. In 1990 he went to Chad as a full term missionary, after 1 year of French study. Again with AIM. In Chad he worked with the Evangelical Church of Chad in various towns.

In 1993 he married Mireille, a French nurse working in a Mission hospital. They were based at Kouno and Ba-Illi along the south side of the Chari River and lastly at Koutou in the South of Chad between 2006 and 2008. At Koutou Russell taught part time in a French language Bible School and helped in a Print Shop.

Russell and Mireille now live in Auckland, New Zealand. He has been involved in a Rest Home Ministry and teaching an ESOL class for immigrants. Russell has a B Sc and a Bible College diploma and has done some other Biblical Studies. He likes reading books and collecting useful quotes. The author can be reached at [rm.cross64@gmail.com](mailto:rm.cross64@gmail.com)

## Somali Christian Census, 2023

Bureau of Statistics, Somali Bible Society

---

### Dedication

This census is a tribute to the late Bishop Venanzio Francesco Filippini, OFM.

### introduction

Formal mission work started in British Somaliland in 1881. However, despite over 140 years since then, there has never been a nationwide census of Somali Christians until now. Counting the number of Somali Christians has been considered too complex due to security and logistical challenges. The absence of official statistics has led to widely varying estimates of the increasing number of Somali Christians. However, “according to Venanzio Francesco Filippini (1890 – 1973), the Roman Catholic Bishop of Mogadishu, there were 40,000 Somali Catholics in southern Somalia by 1940.”<sup>81</sup> The Somali population in Somalia was estimated to be about 1,150,000 in 1940 and 1,200,000 in 1950 by the Italian colonial authority. This means that Somali Catholics in Italian Somaliland made up about 3.5% of the population in 1940.<sup>82</sup>

According to Operation World, the Somali Church is the 7th fastest growing evangelical church in the world.<sup>83</sup> Despite not having any conventional church buildings, the Somali Christian community has shown remarkable resilience in the face of unspeakable atrocities committed by intolerant Muslims. The counting of Somali Christians began on August 22, 2022, and concluded on October 7, 2023. The Bureau of Statistics of the Somali Bible Society conducted this vital census without any loss of life or limb, and we are grateful to the Lord for His protection.

The majority of the professing Somali Christians in southern Somalia are the descendants of the Swedish Lutheran mission converts who became followers of Christ between 1896 and 1935. The second largest group of Somali Christians trace their heritage back to the Roman Catholic mission work, which began officially in Italian Somaliland on 21 January 1904 under the leadership of the Prefecture Apostolic of Benadir.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> “Catholic Hierarchy,” Diocese of Mogadiscio, 11 October 2023.

<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dmgds.html> (accessed 09 December 2023). Cited in Aweis A. Ali, *Understanding the Somali Church*. Nairobi, Kenya: KENPRO Publications, 2021, 89.

<https://www.somalibiblesociety.org/download/understanding-the-somali-church.pdf> (accessed 09 December 2023).

<sup>82</sup> Aweis A. Ali, *Understanding the Somali Church*. Nairobi, Kenya: KENPRO Publications, 2021, 89.

<https://www.somalibiblesociety.org/download/understanding-the-somali-church.pdf> (accessed 09 December 2023).

<sup>83</sup> *Evangelical Growth*, Operation World, 2021. Cited in Aweis A. Ali, *Understanding the Somali Church*. Nairobi, Kenya: KENPRO Publications, 2021, 89.

<https://www.somalibiblesociety.org/download/understanding-the-somali-church.pdf>

<sup>84</sup> Diocese of Mogadishu: Dioecesis Mogadiscensis, Catholic Hierarchy. 11 October 2023. <https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dmgds.html> (accessed 14 December 2023).

## Somalia in the Bible

It is interesting to note that Somalia is likely mentioned in the Bible due to its proximity to Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Yemen. In Saadia Gaon's translation of the Bible in the tenth century, Zeila, a coastal town in Somaliland, is used in place of Havilah.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, Benjamin Tudela, a well-known Jewish traveler in the twelfth century, believed that the Zeila region was the land of Havilah, which bordered Al-Habash (Abyssinia) on the West.<sup>86</sup>

Havilah (Heb. חַוִּילָה) is mentioned in the Bible five times, both as a personal and place name.<sup>87</sup> While scholars debate its exact location, northern Somalia is a strong contender given its strategic location and ancient records that identify it as Zeila.

Punt (also spelled as Put or Phut) is often translated as Libya in the Bible. However, some editions of the KJV and NIV mention in their footnotes that Punt is also identified as Somalia. The Puntland region of Somalia is named after Punt, an area that the ancient Egyptians knew as the Land of the gods.<sup>88</sup>

Although it is uncertain where the three wise men (Magi) originated from, it is highly probable that two of their gifts, frankincense and myrrh, were procured from Somalia. Somalia has a rich history of producing frankincense and myrrh, which were also used for worship and embalming by ancient Egyptians to preserve mummies.<sup>89</sup>

## The Census

This field-based census systematically recorded the population of Somali Christians residing in Somalia, Somaliland, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya. The National Assembly of the Somali Bible Society formed a 14-member census committee using their knowledge and experience. This committee then selected 241 Somali census takers, out of which 135 were Christians, and 106 were friendly and peaceful Muslims with Christian family members, relatives, and/or friends. When possible, the census takers met adult Christians face-to-face. However, most Christians were interviewed over the phone using encrypted social media platforms.

The census was conducted based on the profession of faith of individuals. The religion and the number of minor believers were listed based on the report from their Christian parent or parents. The census takers did not interact with any children. Minors under the age of 15 were considered as Christians if they met any of the following criteria:

---

<sup>85</sup> Eugene Arnaud, *La Palestine ancienne et moderne*. Berger-Levrault. 1868, 32. *avalite havilah*.

<sup>86</sup> Elkan, Adler, *Jewish Travelers*. Routledge. 4 April 2014), 61. ISBN 9781134286065. (accessed 16 December 2023).

<sup>87</sup> Genesis 2:10–11, Genesis 10:7, Genesis 25:18,

<sup>88</sup> "Puntland profile". *BBC News*. 11 July 2011. (accessed 12 December 2023).

<sup>89</sup> R. K. Sinha, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*. Vol. 44 (1983), 593-598. Published By: Indian History Congress.

1. The children reside in an intact household where at least one parent is Christian.
2. The children come from a family that has experienced separation but currently live with a Christian parent.
3. The children are under the care of a Christian guardian and are being raised in a Christian institution.

No one received payment for their involvement in the census. However, a local donor contributed USD 200 (two hundred) to cover essential expenses, such as meals, travel, communication, and internet connection.

Many Christians agreed to have their voices recorded during the census, which made the process easier to manage. However, for those who didn't want to be recorded, their information was taken in writing using encrypted and password-protected electronic devices. Several Somali Christian leaders either provided a written record of the Christians they served or sent a list to the census takers. After verifying the integrity of these leaders, most of the lists were accepted at face value. However, some lists were declined as they did not meet the requirements, and others were accepted only after being thoroughly rewritten to meet the census requirements.

This census had four significant limitations:

1. Firstly, some districts in southern Somalia where there are known local Christians could not be accessed due to the presence of a radical Islamist group that controls these areas. Census takers were even advised against calling these Christians to avoid putting their lives in danger. Additionally, public access to smartphones, tablets, laptops and internet connections is banned in these districts.
2. Secondly, there are Christians who live in small, isolated islands, far away villages and nomadic settlements who do not have access to modern communication. These Christians were not counted as they could not be reached.
3. Thirdly, some Christians preferred to avoid interacting with other Christians for security reasons and did not cooperate with the census takers; they were not counted.
4. Lastly, census takers in southern Somalia faced language barriers in some areas where people spoke different dialects or languages.<sup>90</sup> This led to confusion and difficulty in accurately recording the number of Christians in those areas.

---

<sup>90</sup> The minority languages spoken in Somalia include: Bravanese (Chimwiini or Chimbalazi), Kibajuni, Mushunguli, Tunni, Garre and Jiiddu.

The census takers collected information on the person's faith, Christian background, discipleship training, worship attendance, marital status, interfaith marriages, literacy, languages spoken, and employment. All the collected data was carefully analyzed overtime.

To ensure security, all the electronic equipment used for the census will be wiped clean, making data recovery impossible. Likewise, any paperwork related to the census will be burned at a designated time. However, specific authorized devices in safe foreign countries will retain critical census data.

### **Important Findings**

On average, only a small percentage of ethnic Somali Christians have been baptized, discipled, or attended regular worship services. Regular worship services are defined as weekly or monthly gatherings of local believers.

There are prominent ethnic Somali Roman Catholic families in Djibouti, Somaliland, and Ethiopia. Members of these families have held or still hold senior government positions, such as government ministers, members of parliament, and ambassadors. A recently published book provides a detailed list of these influential Somali Roman Catholics.<sup>91</sup>

It is important to note that most Somalia Christians live in the country itself, while the majority of ethnic Somali Christians from Djibouti, Somaliland and Ethiopia reside overseas.<sup>92</sup> In Kenya, the majority of ethnic Somali Christians are refugees from Somalia, Somaliland and Ethiopia. It is worth noting that about 50% of ethnic Somali Christians in Ethiopia are Ethiopian-born and hail from the Somali Region of Ethiopia. The rest are refugees from Somalia and Somaliland.

---

<sup>91</sup> Aweis A. Ali, *Understanding the Somali Church*. Nairobi, Kenya: KENPRO Publications, 2021, 43-49.

<https://www.somalibiblesociety.org/download/understanding-the-somali-church.pdf> (accessed 09 December 2023)

<sup>92</sup> It is worth noting that ethnic Somali Christians, who mostly have Roman Catholic roots and hail from Somaliland, Djibouti, and Ethiopia, are among the most affluent and highly educated populations in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is one of the reasons they can afford to live in the Western world. Despite being, on average, more educated than their Muslim counterparts, Somalia Christians, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, continue to face economic struggles due to the severe persecution they endure.

## **Somali Clans with the Highest Number of Christians**

### **Daarood**

Ogaadeen (mainly Maxamed Subeyr), Majeerteen (mainly Maxamuud Saleebaan) & Dhulbahante (mainly Cali Geri).

Honorable mention: Warsangeli & Mareexaan.

### **Digil & Mirifle**

Xarin (mainly Addimoole), Ayle (mainly Reer Xaajoow) & Geledi (mainly Maama Suubis).

Honorable mention: Eelaay & Laysaan.

### **Dir**

Isaaq (mainly Habar Awal, Habarjeclo & Arab), Gudabiirsi (mainly Aadan Yoonis) & Reer Agoon (mainly Reer Bayle).

Honorable mention: Akiisho & Biyo Maal.

### **Hawiye**

Abgaal (mainly Habar Hintiro), Habargidir (mainly Cayr & Sacad) & Murusade (mainly Habar Cayn).

Honorable mention: Xawaadle & Baadi Cadde.

### **Jareer (Somali Bantu)**

Mushunguli (mainly Mushambare), Shiidle (mainly Garmagalaay) & Reer Shabeelle (mainly Reer Geeddoow).

Honorable mention: Baajuun.

### **Marginalized Clans**

Madhibaan & Gabooye

## **Somali Clans with the Lowest Number of Christians**

### **Daarood**

Carab Saalax, Sawaaqroon & Dashiishle

### **Digil & Mirifle**

Garre, Bahoraat & Geledle

### **Dir**

Ciise, Gaadsan & Fiqi Muxumed

### Hawiye

Gaal Jecel, Sheekhaal & Jeele

### Jareer (Somali Bantu)

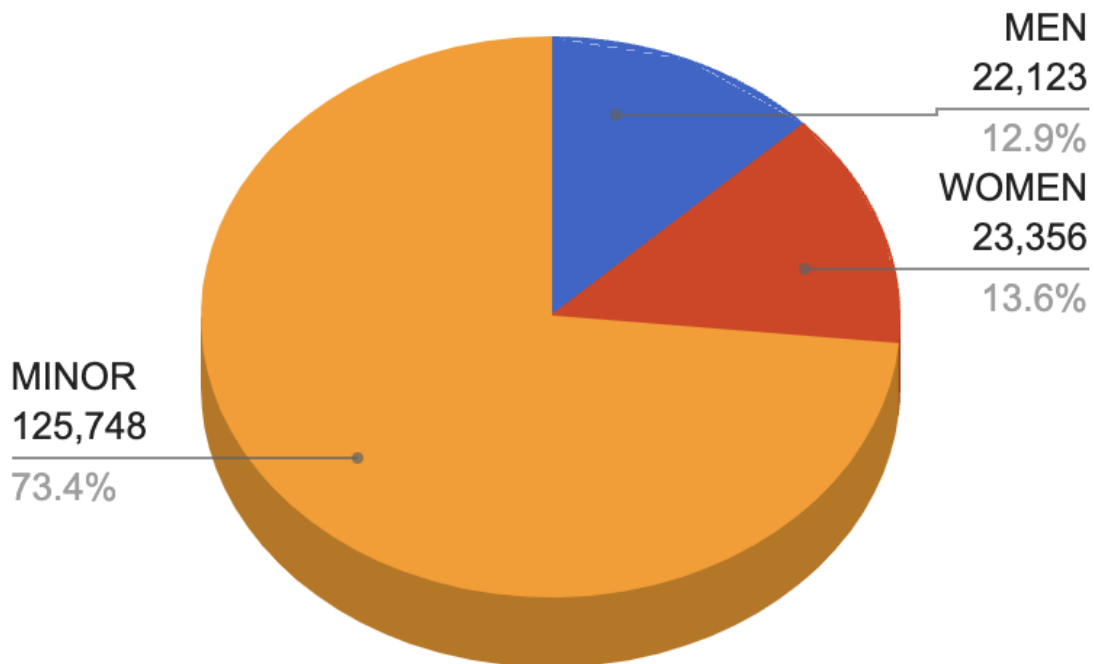
Moorshe, Bandhabow & Kaboole

### Marginalized Clans

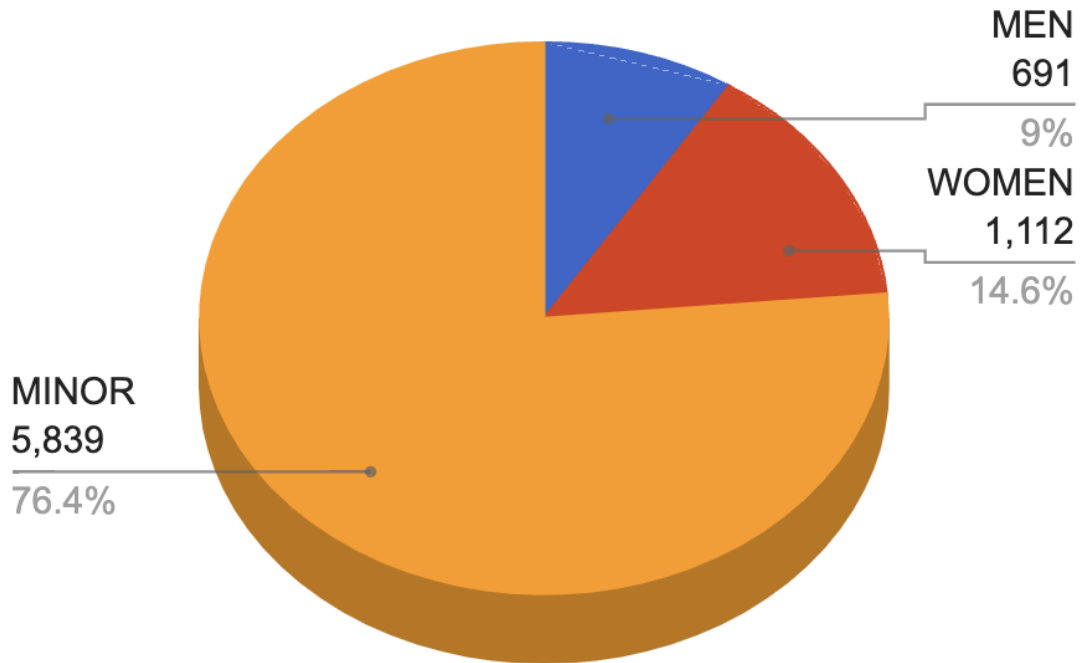
Yibir, Tumaal & Jaaji

### Statistics

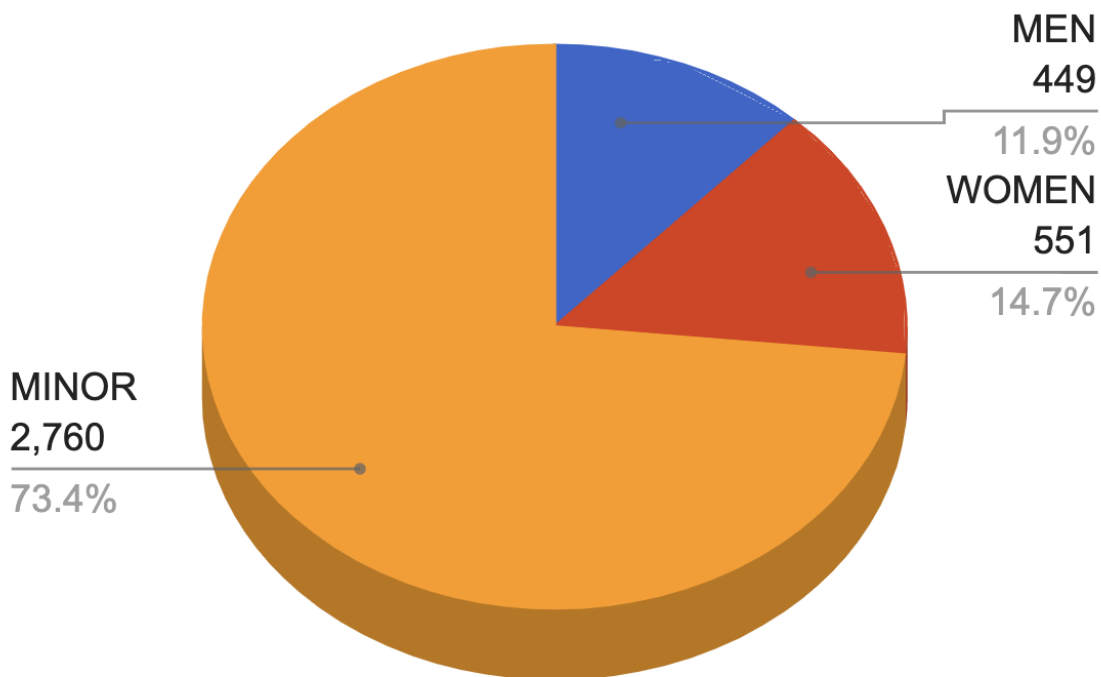
## SOMALIA CHRISTIAN POPULATION: 171,227 (2023 CENSUS)



### SOMALILAND CHRISTIAN POPULATION: 7,642 (2023 CENSUS)

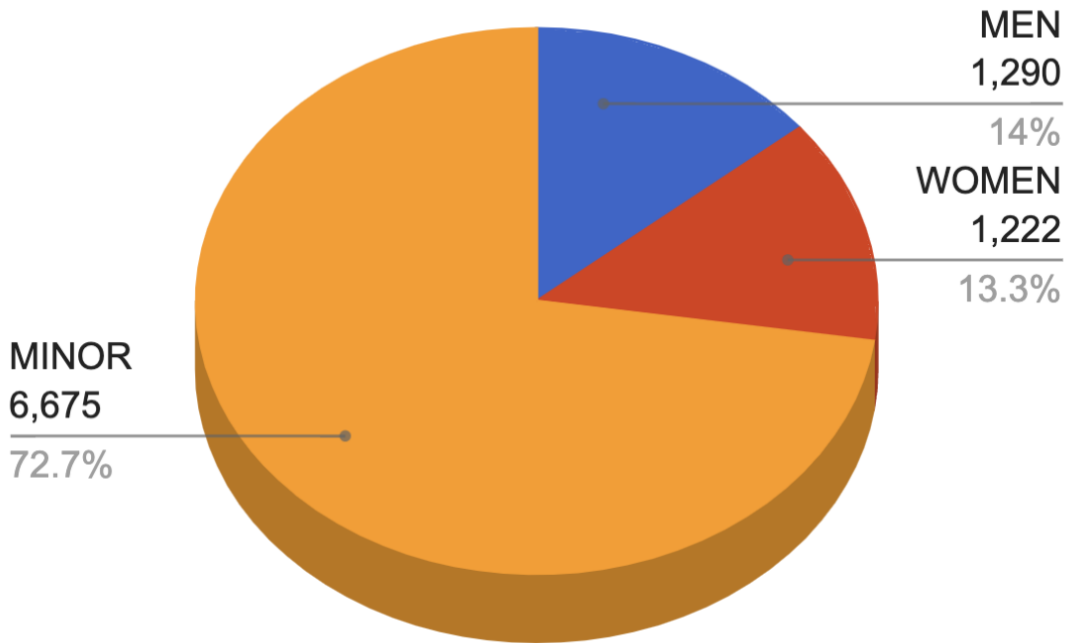


### ETHNIC SOMALI DJIBOUTIAN CHRISTIAN POPULATION: 3,760 (2023 CENSUS)

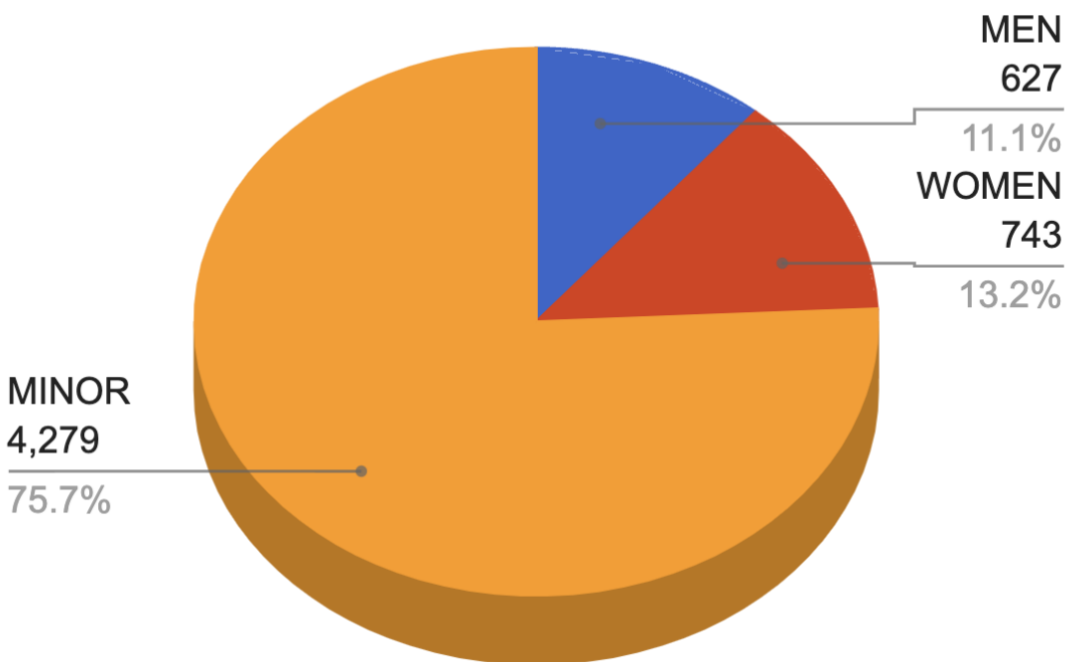




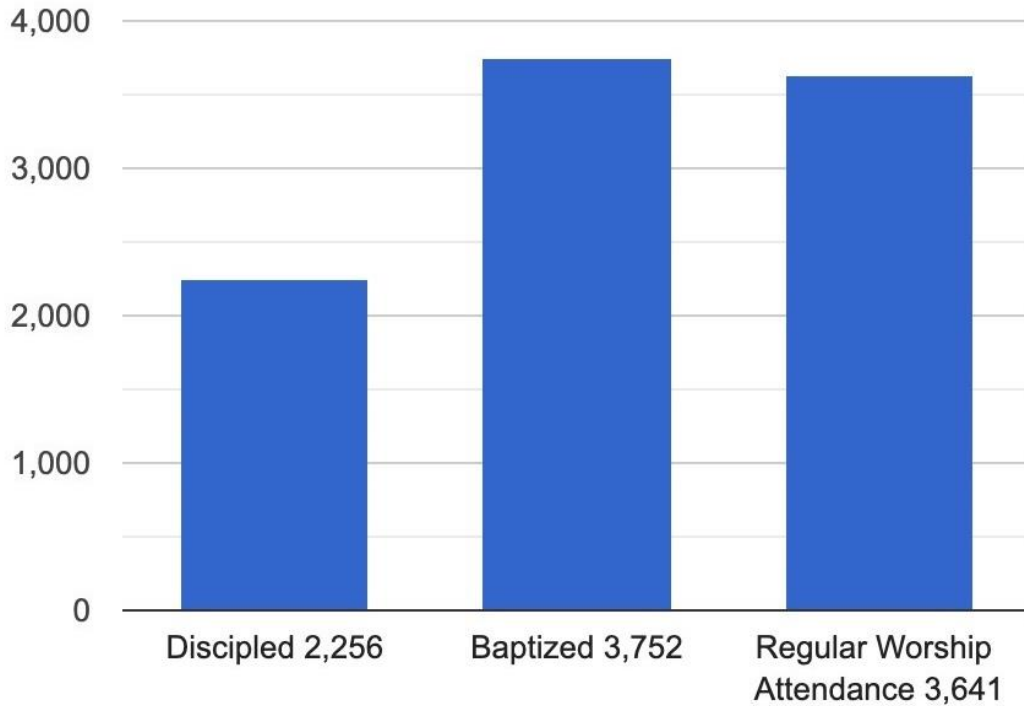
### ETHNIC SOMALI CHRISTIAN POPULATION IN ETHIOPIA: 8,917 (2023 CENSUS)



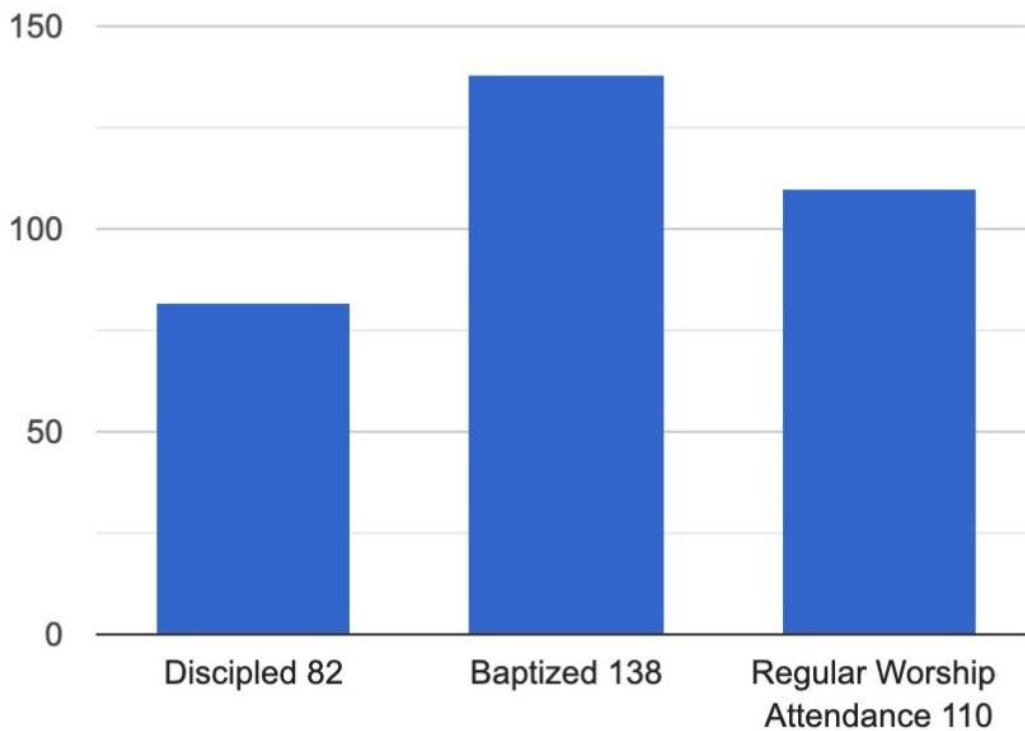
### ETHNIC SOMALI CHRISTIAN POPULATION IN KENYA: 5,649 (2023 CENSUS)



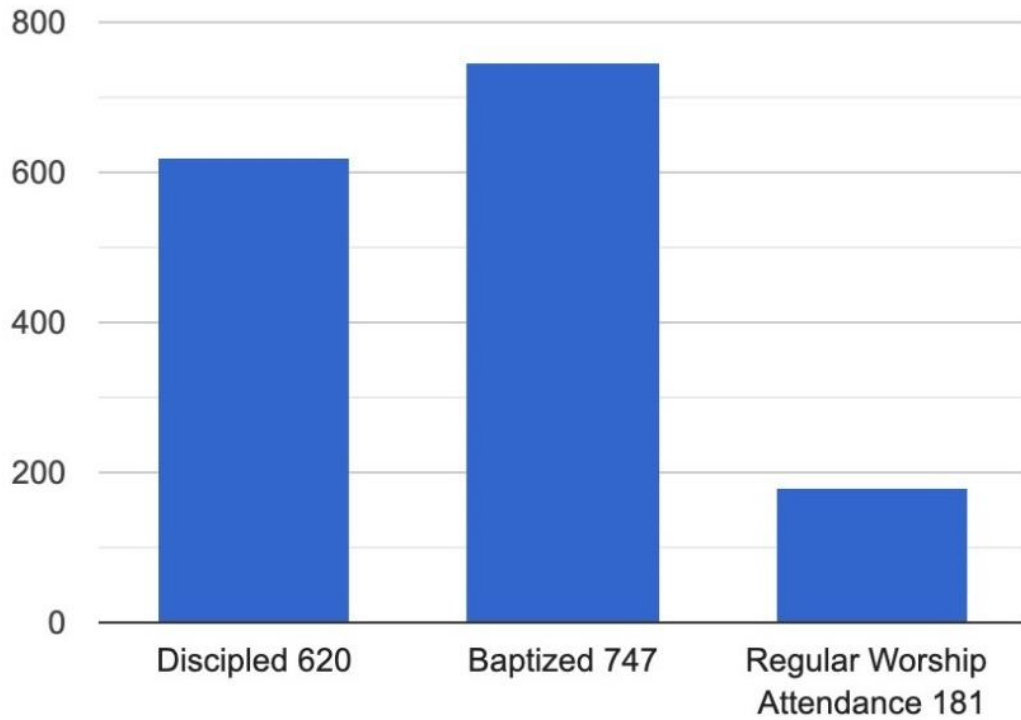
### SOMALIA: DISCIPLESHIP, BAPTISM & WORSHIP ATTENDANCE (2023 CENSUS)



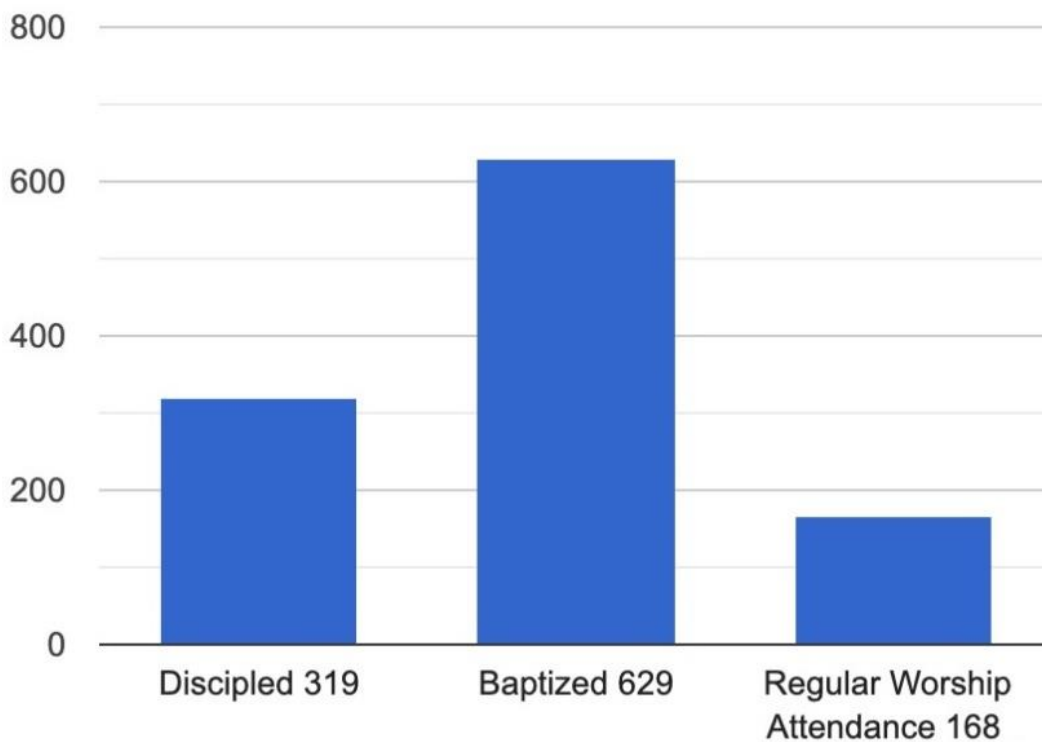
### SOMALILAND: DISCIPLESHIP, BAPTISM & WORSHIP ATTENDANCE (2023 CENSUS)



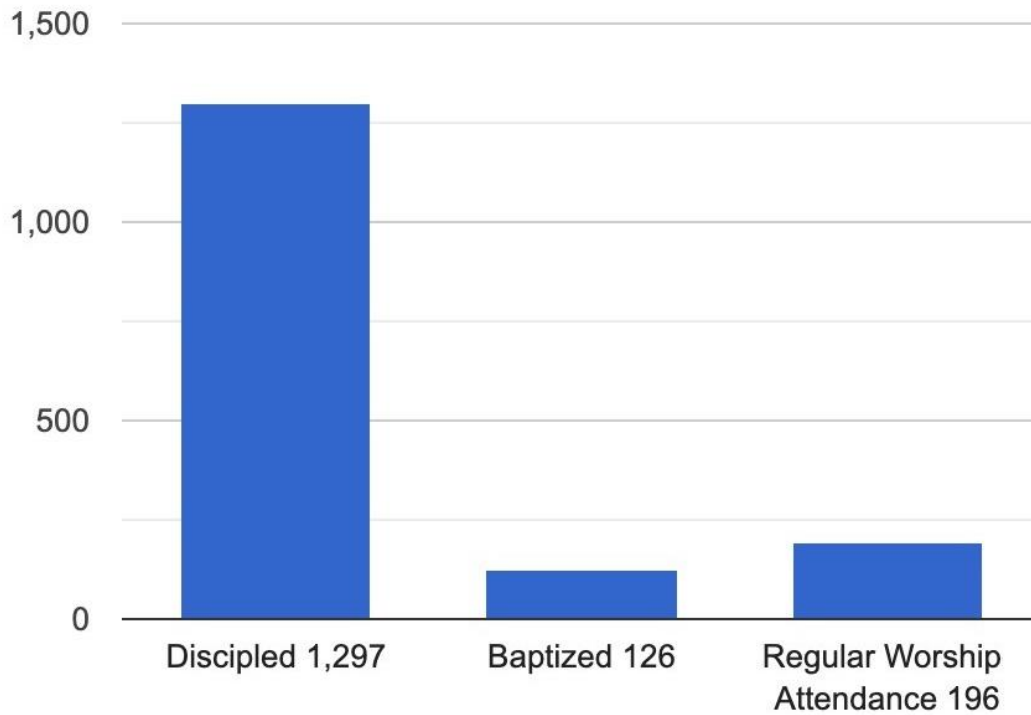
### ETHNIC SOMALI DJIBOUTIAN CHRISTIANS: DISCIPLESHIP, BAPTISM & WORSHIP ATTENDANCE (2023 CENSUS)



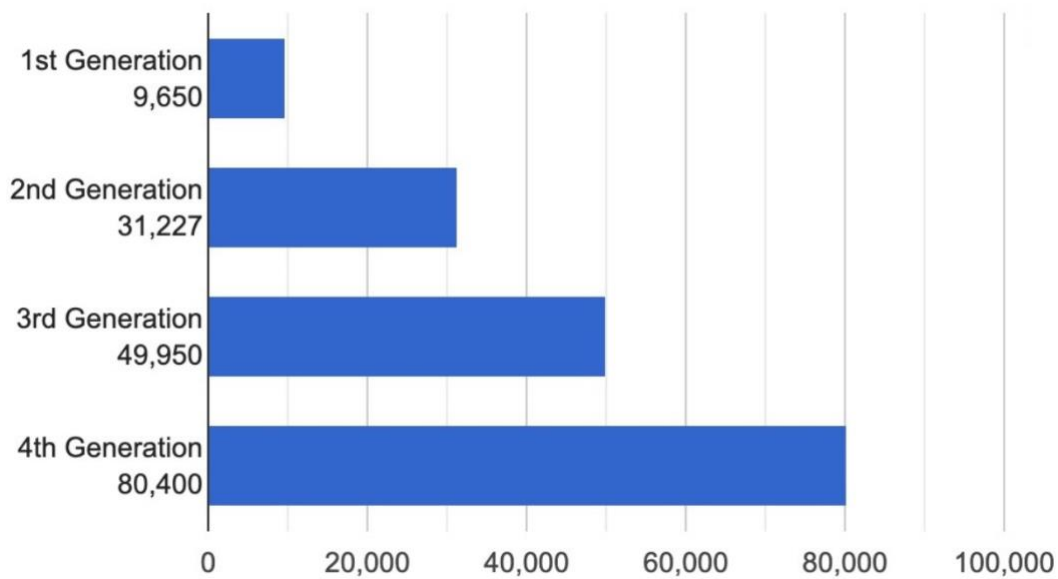
### ETHNIC SOMALI CHRISTIANS IN ETHIOPIA: DISCIPLESHIP, BAPTISM & WORSHIP ATTENDANCE (2023 CENSUS)



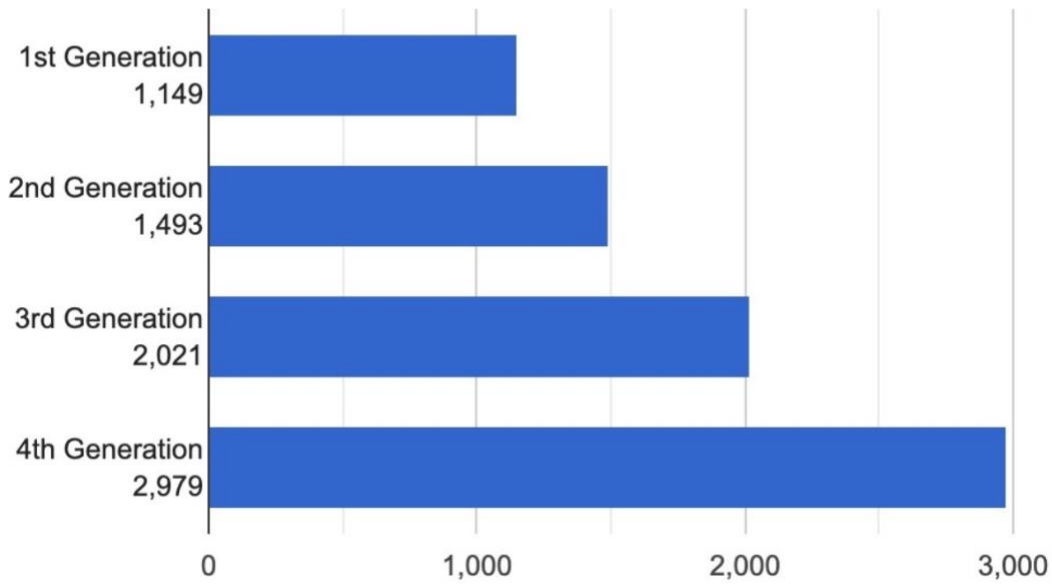
### ETHNIC SOMALI CHRISTIANS IN KENYA: DISCIPLESHIP, BAPTISM & WORSHIP ATTENDANCE (2023 CENSUS)



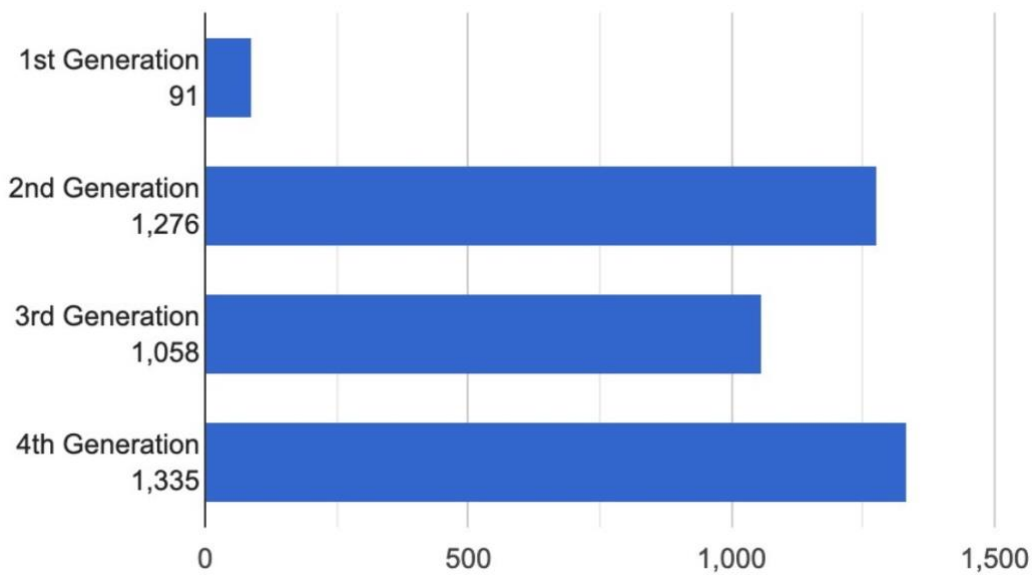
### SOMALIA: A CHRISTIAN HERITAGE (2023 CENSUS)



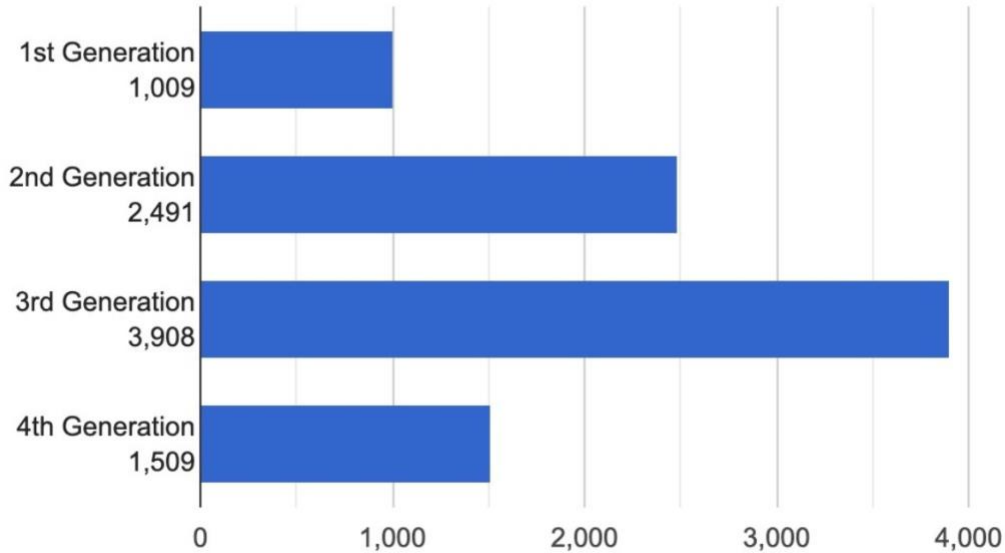
### SOMALILAND: A CHRISTIAN HERITAGE (2023 CENSUS)



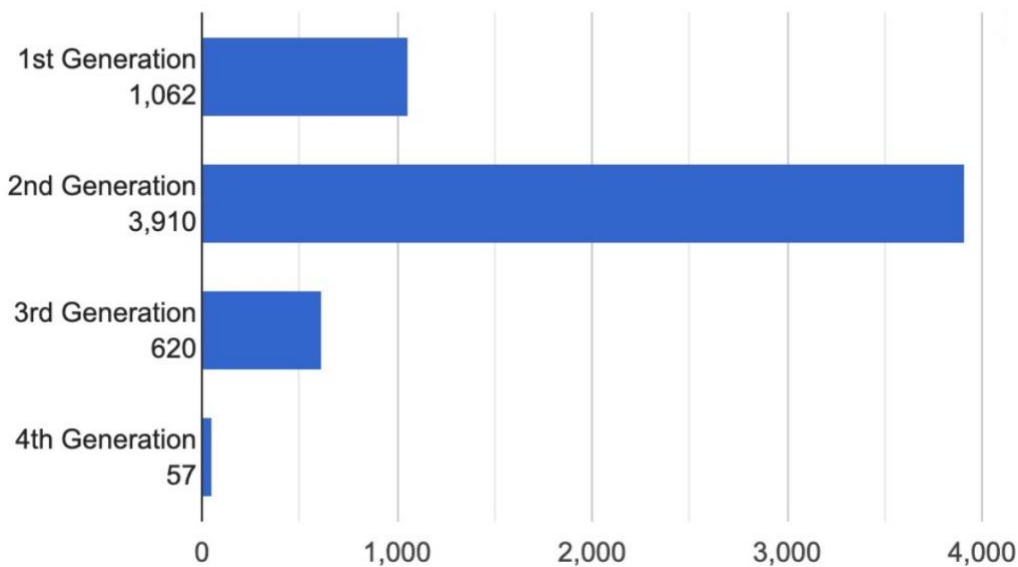
### ETHNIC SOMALI DJIBOUTIANS: A CHRISTIAN HERITAGE (2023 CENSUS)



**ETHNIC SOMALI CHRISTIANS IN ETHIOPIA: A CHRISTIAN HERITAGE (2023 CENSUS)**



**ETHNIC SOMALI CHRISTIANS IN KENYA: A CHRISTIAN HERITAGE (2023 CENSUS)**



**About the Bureau of Statistics**

The Somali Bible Society’s Bureau of Statistics is responsible for gathering and analyzing data for the Bible Society and its members, including churches, ministries, and mission organizations. The Bureau is responsible for censuses, statistics, and forecasts. The bureau can be reached at [info@somalibiblesociety.org](mailto:info@somalibiblesociety.org)

## A Call for Papers (CFP)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

The *Somali Bible Society Journal* is a biannual online publication that accepts any papers that contribute to the understanding of the Somali Church, its history, mission, and ministry. The *SBS Journal* also publishes interviews, book reviews, and poetry. No particular footnoting or bibliography style is required as long as the author is consistent in their chosen writing style. Because of the Somali ministry's nature, authors can use their real names if they wish or pen names when there is a security concern.

The length of the papers is negotiable but a minimum of 2,500 words are recommended. Longer papers are appreciated. Papers must be single-spaced, and Microsoft Word. Papers are accepted throughout the year. The authors are encouraged to send an abstract of about 250 words before sending a complete paper. If your paper is already completed, we would still consider it for publication. The author should send a brief biography with their abstract or completed paper and a photo unless there is a security concern. The author's email address is included in the published brief bio unless requested otherwise.

The *SBS Journal* does not republish already published papers. Please do not send any paper that is being considered by another publication. The *SBS Journal* contributes to the literature development of the Somali Church. Your paper could inspire, strengthen, and encourage the persecuted but growing Somali community of faith worldwide. Your sacrifice of submitting quality papers to the *SBS Journal* will become the Somali Church's everlasting heritage.

The SBSJ is the official Journal of the *Somali Bible Society* (SBS). SBS is fully registered and represents Somali Christians in the Somali peninsula and beyond. The SBS is a non-denominational and not for profit parachurch organization. Please email your abstract or complete paper to any of the below email addresses.

---

The Editorial Board of the SBS Journal consists of 5 members who include missionaries and other workers in the Somali ministry. The *SBS Journal* Editor in Chief is Aweis A. Ali, PhD, a missiologist and an authority on the persecuted church in the Muslim world with special expertise on the Somali Church. Aweis earned a Bachelor of Theology degree from the Evangelical Theological College in Addis Ababa, a Master of Divinity degree from Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, and a PhD from Africa Nazarene University in Nairobi. The Editorial Board can be reached at [info@SomaliBibleSociety.org](mailto:info@SomaliBibleSociety.org) or [amazingwisdom@gmail.com](mailto:amazingwisdom@gmail.com)

## Advertise in the SBS Journal



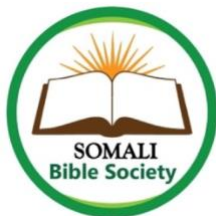
The Somali Bible Society Journal (SBSJ) is an open access online publication of the Somali Bible Society. Contact us if you wish to advertise your ministry in our journal.



Somali Christian Forum (SCF) is a coalition of Christians devoted to making Christ-like disciples, planting churches, and empowering church leaders to promote peace, healing and transformation among the Somali people in the Horn of Africa.



Life Bridging Works exists to bring the fullness of life that Jesus offers to those most at need if it in the Horn of Africa. We have been working with the Somali Believer Ministries Network since 2013 and want to help the good news of Jesus Christ be spread to all people. More can be found out about us at [www.lifebridgingworks.org](http://www.lifebridgingworks.org)



Please consider supporting the ministry of the Somali Bible Society (SBS). The Somali Bible Society will soon start the translation of the Old Testament into Somali. Consider sponsoring the translation of one Old Testament book, chapter or even a verse into the Somali language. The newly translated New Testament has already been published. Contact SBS for more information. [www.somaliBiblesociety.org](http://www.somaliBiblesociety.org). [info@somaliBiblesociety.org](mailto:info@somaliBiblesociety.org)

## Disclaimer

The views expressed in the articles published in this journal are those of the authors and they may not necessarily represent the views of the Somali Bible Society Journal or its publisher, the Somali Bible Society.

## Copyright Notice

©Somali Bible Society Journal







ISSN: 2709-4332 (online)

Somali Bible Society Journal  
Volume IV, Issue 2, December 2023  
Published by the Somali Bible Society  
Mecca al Mukarama St  
Mogadishu, Somalia  
[www.somalibiblesociety.org/sbs-journal/](http://www.somalibiblesociety.org/sbs-journal/)  
[Info@SomaliBibleSociety.org](mailto:Info@SomaliBibleSociety.org)

Editor-in-Chief: Rev. Aweis A. Ali, PhD  
Twitter: @DrAweisAli  
<https://aliaweis.academia.edu/>