

To Globally Sow His Word, Did God Use Vikings?

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How was God preparing to bless billions of people with His Word, all over the world, as He providentially guided the lively life and colorful career of Somerled, a Viking king?

Consider this simple yet unexpected chronicle of our Creator-God's procreative providences, providences blessing the whole world. **Psalm 139:16** teaches us that God has a "book" (*sepher*) about each of our lives, something like a blueprint or a script to guide our pre-birth development (and our lives after birth). And as God pre-writes our lives, as part of His sovereignty over human history, God does so with an infinite and omniscient awareness of how our lives will affect others, including others whom He will not create until after our earthly lives are concluded. This fact is seen in how Viking lives still impact our world today. *One example is Somerled, a Viking who unknowingly contributed to Bible literacy.*

This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created (\aleph) shall praise the LORD. (Psalm 102:18, 102:19 in the Hebrew Bible)

Somerled Gillebridesson ([Old Norse](#): *Sumarliðr*, [Scottish Gaelic](#): *Somhairle*,) was a Viking who lived during the 1100s A.D., and who at various times ruled what today are called the Isle of Man, the Hebrides, and Scotland's western coastland. Providentially, Somerled married **Ragnhild Olafsdottir**.



I. NORSE VIKING ANCESTRY OF KING SOMERLED AND HIS QUEEN

Biogenetically speaking, Somerled's ancestry was a "Gall-Gaidheal" (literally "foreign-Gael") mix of **Norse** Viking and Scotch-Irish **Celtic** bloodlines, with his patrilineal (father-to-father) lineage being Norse. This may surprise some Scottish clans who are descended from Somerled, but that fact is well

established both historically and biogenetically. The forensic evidence confirming this history includes serious research involving Y-DNA R1a1 Haplogroup verifications.¹

Part of the historical verification of Somerled's Norse ancestry includes documenting how he is a direct descendant -- specifically an **F5** (i.e., great-great-great-grandson) of Norway's famous Viking king **Harald "Hardrada"**, through King Harald's Norwegian wife, **Thora Thorbergsdottir**. Specifically, Somerled's descent from Harald Hardrada follows this lineage:

P1 Harald Hardrada and wife Thora Thorbergsdottir *begat* Olaf III Haraldsson (F1);

F1 Olaf III Haraldsson & wife Thora Ragnvaldsdottir *begat* Magnus III "Bare-legs" Olafsson (F2);

F2 Magnus III "Bare-legs" Olafsson & wife Tora of Norway *begat* Sigurd Magnusson (F3);

F3 Sigurd Magnusson & wife Blathmin of Ireland *begat* "Sigurdsdottir" (F4, whose name is lost);

F4 Sigurdsdottir & husband Gillebride of Argyll *begat* Somerled (F5);

F5 Somerled & wife Ragnhild (F3) *begat* Rognvald Somerledsson (F6 paternally; F4 maternally).

In fact, King Somerled married "inside the family". Somerled's royal wife (**Ragnhild Olafsdottir**) was also a direct descendant of Harald "Hardrada", through Harald's Norwegian wife, Thora Thorbergsdottir. Ironically, Ragnhild was only an **F3** (i.e., great-granddaughter) of Hardrada and Thora, whereas her husband (Somerled) was an **F5** (i.e., great-great-great-grandson) of Hardrada and Thora.² The descent from Harald Hardrada to Somerled's wife (Ragnhild Olafsdottir) follows this lineage:

P1 Harald Hardrada and wife Thora *begat* Ragnhild Haraldsdottir (F1);

F1 Ragnhild Haraldsdottir & husband Godred Crovan *begat* Olaf "the Red" Godredsson (F2);

F2 Olaf the Red Godredsson & wife Ingibjorg Håkonsdottir *begat* Ragnhild Olafsdottir (F3);

F3 Ragnhild Olafsdottir & husband Somerled (F5) *begat* Rognvald (F6 paternally; F4 maternally).

As shown above, both husband (Somerled) and wife (Ragnhild Olafsdottir) were direct descendants of Norway's famous Viking-king **Harald "Hardrada" Sigurdsson**, the world-traveling Viking³ who died tried to invade and conquer England (at Stamford Bridge, dying 25 September of AD1066) just a few weeks

¹ James J. S. Johnson, "DNA Says Manx King, Somerled, the Celebrated Founding Father of Scottish Clans, had a 'Norse' Patrilinial Ancestry!" (Viking history paper presented at the October 2nd, AD2010 *Midnattssolen Rekefest* of the Norwegian Society of Texas, in Arlington; now posted on the website of the Norwegian Society of Texas, at <http://www.norwegiansocietyoftexas.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Somerled-family-history.JJSJ-pdf.pdf>).

² James J. S. Johnson, "Impact of Norway's King Harald Hardrada on the British Isles", *Norfolk Heritage Review* (Nordtex Sons of Norway) Short Paper # AD2007-03-25; now posted on the Norwegian Society of Texas website (at <http://www.norwegiansocietyoftexas.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Hardrada-Somerled.JJSJ-family-tree-CHART.pdf>).

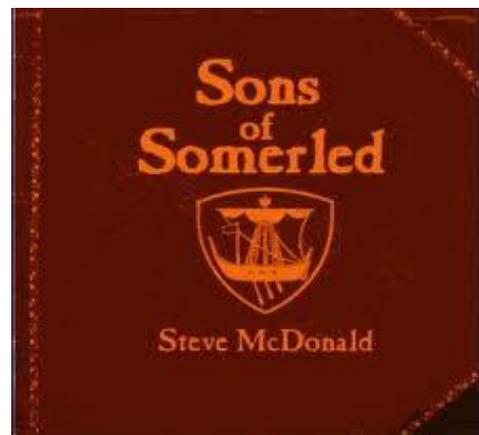
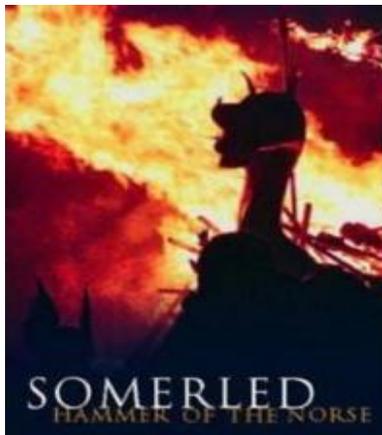
³ James J. S. Johnson, "The Viking 'Air Force': How Norway's King Harald [Hardrada] Copied Russia's Queen Olga", *Norfolk Heritage Review* (Nordtex Sons of Norway) Short Paper # AD2007-01-14; now posted on the NST website at <http://www.norwegiansocietyoftexas.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Harald-Hardrada.pdf>).

before Normandy's duke **William "the Conqueror"** succeeded in conquering England at the Battle of Hastings, thus becoming England's King William I.

Because Somerled was an **F5** (i.e., great-great-great-grandson) of Hardrada, and his wife was Hardrada's **F3** (i.e., great-granddaughter), the royal couple (i.e., Somerled and Ragnhild) both traced back (through Hardrada) to Denmark's **Ragnar Lodbrock** (but that colorful ancestry is beyond the scope of this brief investigation!). Obviously, the family history of Harald Hardrada is complicated!⁴

Besides his ancestry from Hardrada, Somerled also had Norse blood from Hardrada's Norwegian wife (who was Somerled's P5 ancestress), Thora, who was herself an **F5** (i.e., great-great-great-granddaughter) of Norway's Viking king **Harald "Fairhair" Halfdansson** (who unified Norway into its present territory, and was the royal great-grandfather of Olaf Tryggvason, the colorful Christianizer of many Viking lands).⁵

However, Somerled's Norse Viking ancestry was not limited to his maternal descent from Norway's king Harald Hardrada and his wife Thora. Somerled's father was **Gillebride**, the son of **Gilleadamnan**, the son of **Margad Ragnallsson** (a/k/a Echmarcach; king of Dublin, Man, and Galloway), the son of **Ragnall Ragnallson** (king of Waterford), the son of **Ragnall Ivarsson**, the son of **Ivar Ivarsson** (king of Dublin), the son of **Ivar Ragnallson**, the son of **Ragnall** (king of Man and York [Jorvik]), and grandson of **Ivar "the Boneless"** of Denmark, founder of Dublin's 200-year Norse dynasty).⁶



⁴ To make matters more complicated, Harald Hardrada married twice, a *Norwegian* (**Thora Thorbergsdottir**) and a *Russian* (Ellisif Jaroslavna, a/k/a "Elizabeth", who was F2 [granddaughter] of Russia's Viking king Vladimir "the Holy" Svyatoslavsson. Russia's King Vladimir's life, and his continuing impact on the world as a direct result of his conversion to Christianity, is an amazing epoch in history. For an introduction to Vladimir's impact, see James J. S. Johnson, "Biblical Apologetics for a Russian Viking King: How Genesis Truth Changed the Course of World History", *Acts & Facts* 39(5): 8-9 (May AD2010), posted at www.icr.org/article/5325. But it is through Harald Hardrada's Norwegian wife (**Thora**) that King Somerled and his wife (Queen Ragnhild) both descend.

⁵ In a sense, Harald "Fairhair" was the "father" of Norway's kingdom, i.e., Norway's version of **George Washington**.

⁶ Mike Ashley, *The Mammoth Book of British Kings and Queens: The Complete Biographical Encyclopedia of Kings and Queens of Britain* (NY: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1998), including genealogical charts showing descent from Somerled to King James, e.g., Chart 25 [page 420, showing descent from Ragnall [king of Man & York] to Somerled, king of Man and the Isles], & page 459 (regarding the Norse dynasty of Ivar the Boneless).

In sum, the ancestry of Somerled was dominated by Norse (Norwegian with Danish) Viking bloodlines. The same is true of Somerled's wife (Ragnhild Olafsdottir). Thus, the progeny of Somerled would receive Viking genes, in accordance with God's specific biogenetic procreation specifications.

But what about Somerled's descendants? Did Somerled's progeny somehow contribute to the Great Commission, by propagating the holy Scriptures, worldwide? If so, how?



II. FOLLOWING A LINE OF DESCENT FROM MANX KING SOMERLED TO BRITISH KING JAMES

Consider the following descent from King Somerled and Queen Ragnhild. Then try to imagine the big-picture providence of God, interacting through space and time --- as documented below⁷ --- producing uncountable effects from the resultant galaxies of Great Commission "destiny dominoes", all around the world, especially from AD1066 to AD1611 and beyond.

⁷ Mike Ashley, *The Mammoth Book of British Kings and Queens: The Complete Biographical Encyclopedia of Kings and Queens of Britain* (NY: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1998), including genealogical charts showing descent from Somerled to King James, e.g., Chart 26 [page 433, showing descent from Somerled to Scotland's House of Stewart, via Jean's marriage to Alexander 4th High Stewart]; Chart 41 [page 548, showing descent from Scotland's Alexander 4th High Stewart to Scotland's James I]; Chart 42 [page 557, showing descent from Scotland's James I to James IV, a/k/a "King James" of the King James Bible]; Chart 43 [page 578, showing descent from Scotland's James IV to James VI (who later became England's James I), a/k/a "King James" of the King James Bible].

- P1** Somerled & wife Ragnhild *begat* Angus Somerledsson (F1);
- F1 Angus Somerledsson & wife Ragnhild of the Isles *begat* James (F2);
- F2 James & wife (whose name is lost) *begat* Jean (F3);
- F3 Jean & husband Alexander 4th High Steward *begat* James 5th High Steward (F4);
- F4 James 5th High Steward & wife Cecilia *begat* Walter 6th High Steward (F5);
- F5 Walter 6th High Steward & wife Marjorie *begat* Scotland's king Robert II (F6);
- F6 Robert II & first wife Elizabeth Mure *begat* John I/k/a Scotland's king Robert III (F7);
- F7 Robert III & wife Annabella Drummond *begat* Scotland's king James I (F8);
- F8 James I & wife Joan Beaufort⁸ *begat* Scotland's king James II (F9);
- F9 James II & wife Mary of Gueldres *begat* Scotland's king James III (F10);
- F10 James III & wife Margaret of Denmark *begat* Scotland's king James IV (F11);
- F11 James IV & wife Margaret Tudor *begat* Scotland's king James V (F12);
- F12 James V & wife Mary of Guise *begat* Scottish queen Mary Queen of Scots (F13);
- F13 Mary Queen of Scots & Henry (Lord Darnley) *begat* James VI (**F14**, of the **"King James" Bible**)!

Thus, the "King James" of Great Britain (simultaneously "James VI" as Scotland's king, and "James I" as England's king), **who authorized what became famous as the "King James Bible", was an F14 descendant of Viking King Somerled and his wife, Queen Ragnhild.** (This impacts the whole world!)

- The Holy Bible is the most-published and most-sold book of all time, with more than 6,000,000,000 copies (excluding mere portions, which in aggregate would further increase the statistics).
- Of the 6 billion copies of the Holy Bible, the most-published and most-sold version of the Bible is the English translation known as the "King James Bible" (a/k/a "King James Version" and the "Authorized Version").
- The largest amount of Bible-based missionary work, missionary literature, and Biblical education around the world, since the time of Christ, has been provided in English (e.g., from British missionaries, American missionaries, etc.), and the King James Bible is the most popular version of the English Bible around the world.
- Ironically, the English language of the King James Bible resulted from Viking demographics.

⁸ Because Joan Beaufort is a direct descendant of John of Gaunt, all descendants of Joan of Beaufort can claim a huge choir of noble ancestors (from virtually all of Europe's royal families), as is thoroughly documented in Roderick W. Stuart's classic *Royalty for Commoners: The Complete Known Lineage of John of Gaunt, Son of Edward III, King of England, and Queen Philippa* (Genealogical Publishing Company, 2010, 4th ed.).

As shown above, this means that Great Britain's **King James** was doubly descended (through Somerled and Somerled's wife) from Harald Hadrada, the world-travelling Viking king of Norway. And, as shown above, Somerled and his wife both came from family lineages that were dominated by Norse Vikings. Thus, the King James who sponsored the English Bible that we call the "King James Bible" was, biogenetically speaking, of Norse Viking stock (among other ancestral contributions).

III. CONSIDERING CONTINGENCIES: WHAT IF KING JAMES' VIKING LINES HAD SNAPPED?

Hardrada's progeny lived through risky times (such as the Gunpowder Plot aimed to assassinate King James), and due to Viking lifestyles it would have been very easy for Hardrada's lineage to have become broken before it successfully stretched to King James. For example, during the latter part of the Viking Era, Hardrada's son **Olaf III** (a Norwegian king himself), providentially survived the Battle of Stamford Bridge (where Hardrada himself died of an arrow in his throat).⁹ About 7 years later, through his wife **Thora Ragnvaldsdottir**, Olaf III begat his successor-son **Magnus III "Bare-Legs"** (who later became a king of Norway known for the Irish habit of kilt-wearing).



So what does all this show, and why is it important? What does this biogenetic history prove about God's sovereign interventions in Viking times? What if some of this Viking history had occurred differently, such as if Hardrada's son Olaf (III) had been killed (like his royal father) at Stamford Bridge?

If Olaf had died in AD1066 he would never have become Norway's King Olaf III. Yet more importantly, if Olaf had died in AD1066, he could not have become the father of Magnus "Bare-Legs", and the lineage to Somerled would have snapped.

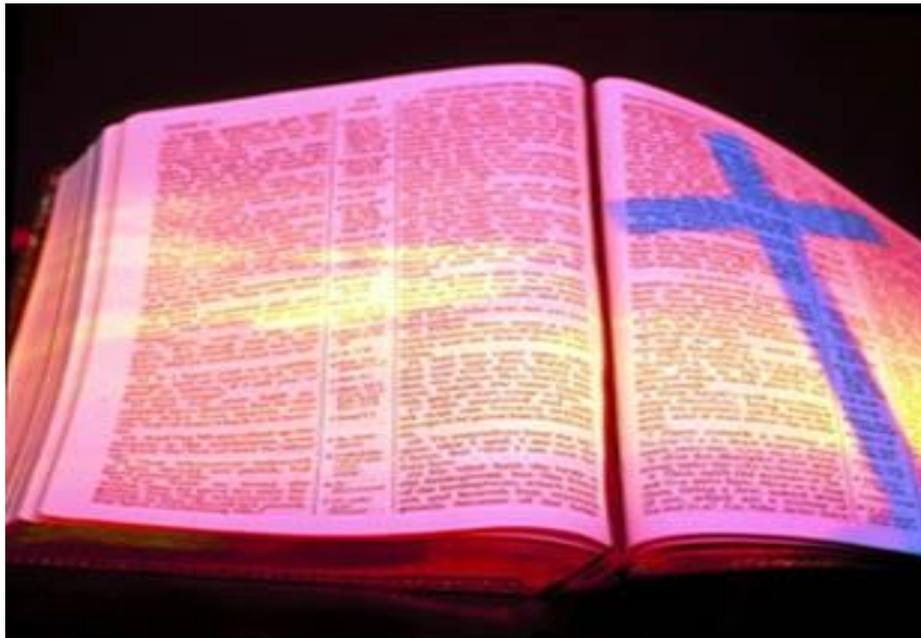
Since our every ancestor counts, and without all of our ancestors we don't arrive, the providential implications for all descendants are obvious! In a sense, all of our descendants who are "waiting" to be created. (God's providence in all of this directly pertains to Psalm 102:18 and Psalm 139:16.)

⁹ Consider the providential importance Harald Hadrada's son Olaf III surviving the Battle of Stamford Bridge (on September 25th, AD1066). Because Olaf III's son Magnus III "Bare-Legs" was not born till 7 years *after* that fateful battle in AD1066, there would be no "King James" in AD1611, if his ancestor "Bare-Legs" had never been created! Thankfully, Magnus III was born in AD1073, and later became a direct ancestor of the King James of our KJV Bible.

Thus, procreatively speaking, the Norse Viking king Harald Hardrada and his Norwegian wife, Thora Thorbergsdottir, *as well as their Viking ancestors*, left a huge footprint on future generations of the entire world, through their progeny, including one (King James of the Stuart dynasty) who would sponsor the King James Bible (which has been distributed, read, studied, and taken seriously in virtually all parts of the populated world).

Of course, the Battle of Stamford in AD1066 --- where Hardrada died yet his son Olaf survived -- is just one illustration of the procreative “unbroken chain” principle. More examples could be given.

For another example, Olaf’s son **Magnus (“Bare-Legs”) III**, with his wife **Tora**, begat his successor-son **Sigurd “Jerusalem-farer”**, who would eventually rule as king of Norway, Orkney, Man and the Isles. As a young teen (prior to his kingship), Sigurd married a very young Irish princess (**Blathmin**), a political marriage arranged by the young couple’s respective fathers. That marriage soon failed, yet (providentially!) not before the procreative success of another generation, in the person of a daughter (whose name is lost) who became the mother of Somerled. And from Somerled it took 14 generations to reach King James! The main point remains: King James needed every Viking ancestor he had, to be who he was. (Otherwise, what would have happened? Would we all be reading Geneva Bibles?)



Bottom line: try to imagine all of the procreative providences that stretch from Viking king Harald Hardrada, down to Viking king Somerled and his wife, and on to the “King James” who sponsored the Holy Bible’s translation (into English) --- which has become, since its first edition in AD1611, the most-published (and the most powerful) book since Christ came to Earth: the **KING JAMES BIBLE**. ><> JJSJ *

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