

Advent, Adventure and Adventurers

On the fourth Sunday before Christmas, the church encourages us to begin meditating on the Coming of Jesus. Commercial barons might prefer the Going of cash on ephemera. Our rusty Latin explains that 'Advent' means 'coming'. Our vigorous English language developed this root to describe other notions. An unexpected arrival is 'adventitious'. A risky undertaking of unknown outcome is an 'adventure'. An 'adventurer' embarks upon an exciting series of events. A 'venture capitalist' invests in a hazardous financial operation.

Our ancestors - of every tribe, warband, and religious light – certainly delighted in adventures. We are the legacy of diverse Comings into our places of residence. Our genetic and cultural baggage is a vigorous and pragmatic mixture that embodies courage to undertake risky adventures. Our family history of survival equips us to face our futures with equanimity and hope. That robustly offsets the despair and fear which contemporary warlords and commercial 'influencers' seek to instil and exploit. Therefore our genealogical research and story-telling has positive effects on our physical and psychological welfare. Hallelujah for ABCFHA!

A vital part of my career travels and my family's socio-cultural inheritance is a Holy Book – the Bible, the collection of writings attributed to Moses and the Prophets (honoured in Judaism and Islam), and the New Testament (honoured by Christians). An archive of treasured wisdom that transcends tribal cultures. Among many other features, it expresses much sound advice for how to conduct oneself when adventuring and residing in a new land. Here are a few of the extracts that guided me in my peregrinations, and surely guided our ancestors in day-to-day living with other people. I intuit that the Bible's perspective influenced our ancestors both externally (eg in choice of names, social institutions, power structures) and internally (self-awareness, nurturing relationships in family and community, healing).

Joshua 4: Joshua set up a monument with the twelve stones, which the wanderers had taken out of the channel of the River Jordan. When your children shall ask their fathers tomorrow, and shall say to them: **What mean these stones?** You shall teach them ... that you also may revere the Lord your God for ever.

Psalms 102: As for man, his days are like grass... but the steadfast love of the Lord is everlasting on those who revere him, and his justice and mercy to their children's children, to those who keep his precepts.

Exodus 20: Honour your father and mother, so that your days may be long on the land God is giving you. Do not murder... commit adultery... steal... testify falsely... covet anything that belongs to your neighbour.

Romans 13:9: Love your neighbour as yourself. 14:7: None of us lives for himself.

Jeremiah 29 advises the exiles: Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat their produce. Marry and have children... grandchildren. **Work for the good of the communities where I have placed you. Pray to God on their behalf**, because if they prosper you will prosper also.

Twenty years ago at a niece's wedding in Markethill I noticed the date carved in the Meeting House doorway's capstone. *What meant that stone?* It reminded me of the publication in 1611 of King James' Authorised Version of the Bible. It serves as a memorial to the nineteen Scottish families whom adventurer Henry Acheson had brought over the water and planted on his estate newly purchased in 1610. I imagined those courageous folk assembling to covenant their mutual support under God and their adoption of the holy book's advice for their personal, family and neighbourly conduct. So be it still.

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