

Try as you might, you just can't hide where you come from.

Yes, you can put lipstick on a pig. And follow it with blusher, rouge, mascara; eye shadow, eye liner and lip gloss. Then a little sprinkle of glitter and perhaps a beauty spot. Finish it off with a fascinator, and a fetching Liberty print summer frock. And you know what? You might just get away with it. For a while, that pig will pass. But then something will give your porky-pie away: perhaps a particularly bright light, perhaps caught at just the wrong angle; most likely an escapee 'oink!' at the time of peak potential for embarrassment.

You can hug a whole host of hoodies and huskies, pose for photos with PG Tips and pasties, get pumped up and down with the street, but all it takes is a slight slip of the mask and your back being the podgy privileged prefect at Eton College, ra, ra, ra.

The rain in Spain may fall mainly on the plain, but it just takes a waft of jellied eel when you're tired and emotional and cor blimey, Eliza is back hoiking her wares behind the fruit & veg stalls.

You can clamber all the way up the slippery pole, have more cash in the bank than your entire extended family put together and then some, buy your way into polite society move yourself into the finest country mansion and then install the gold taps in the bathroom which will blithely betray your backstory.

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Not long after I first became Rector of this parish I experienced this principle live and personal only when I inadvertently, unintentionally and entirely unconsciously said 'ey up' in a sermon from this very pulpit. Worst of all for me, when I said it, I didn't even notice. It wasn't on my script, I had no memory of the words- if that's what they are- passing my lips and yet the entire congregation, bar an ever loyal or possibly momentarily inattentive churchwarden, assure me I said it. To be honest, I might say it every week and you no longer notice. Thirty-five years of living down south, scrupulous avoidance of anywhere north of the Watford gap, night-classes in rhyming slang and received pronunciation, even Church of England vicar finishing school at Oxford. All a complete waste of time and energy. I may as well just give in, wear a flat cap and stick a ferret down my trousers or if I'm going to be truly authentically back to my roots, down my kecks.

These are perhaps all negative examples of your roots showing through; there are no doubt positive ones too though I have to say after a good few minutes of hard cogitation none would spring to mind, at least not related to the North, Eton or the nouveau riche. I'm sure they're there. Suffice to say, the truth will out. You can't hide your origins. Blood and breeding will tell and so will drip butties, black pudding and the smell of carbolic soap in a tin bath. Sorry baarf.

Try as you might, you can't hide where you come from.

In the book of Genesis the tale is told of when God creates the first human. He takes some clay, fashions it into a human, and breaths into it, that is, gives it His Spirit.

And so for us, that proto human's descendants, daughters and sons of Adam, each and every one, for us our origins are in God, that is where we came from, *God* is our roots.

Just like the northerner making a new life in London it seems that most of the time we are doing our best to hide this.

*Fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these*

It could be the contents page of any random issue of Heat magazine or a newspaper report of the Tory party leadership contest: it sounds pretty much like a neat- if partial- summary of modern life: in fact it's St Paul's litany of the works of the flesh. Two millennia of Christianity on and life is still selfish, self-centred and brutal.

On the other hand, the fruits of the Spirit, the apostle insists, are:

*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*

And you know what, despite our best efforts to pretend otherwise, sometimes, ey up, that fruit just pops out unbidden.

Despite the seemingly endless legacy of Eighties greed, our origins still sneak through in small but not really random acts of kindness, uncharacteristic gentleness, previously unknown reserves of patience, unselfish expressions of love. It does happen.

God's Holy Spirit was breathed into you. And try as you might, you can't hide where you come from.

In St John's gospel, the resurrected Jesus appears in the upper room, breathes on his disciples, and says 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. Even after the terrible crime of Calvary, once again God's life enters into humanity, this time to animate and guide the apostles, and their successors- in other words, the Church.

Of course we try to hide this as well.

And so the history of Christianity has been one of strife, schism and sell-out; faction and fission; pride, prejudice and persecution. In 21st century England, though it galls me to say so, it can sometimes seem that the workings of the Holy Spirit are far more evident in secular legislation than in an established church in thrall to imperialist fantasies and Calvinist codswallop.

And still, we can't help it, sometimes our origins sneak through and away from synods and Archbishop's councils, Lambeth conferences and consistory courts, local churches up and down the country faithfully and patiently pepper their communities with small acts of kindness, gentleness and generosity, small flickering flames of love lighting small corners of contemporary darkness.

Try as hard as you can, you can't hide where you come from.

Holy Spirit or not, Adam, up to the usual human antics, ends up expelled from Eden with harsh words ringing in his ears: "you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Yes, even redeemed by the second Adam, dust we remain. But God has put his breathed his Spirit into that dust. Never forget that. And don't ever try to hide where you come from.