

January the 5th,  
Year of Our Lord 1635

Dear Master Clemons,

Upon receipt of thy letter, I must say thou return address puzzled me greatly! Why would someone I do not know from a place I have never heard of be writing to me? I know no one by thy name, nor a place with such a strange name as Arizona. Very disturbing and I must say I am perplexed?!

Reading further, I learned that thou are a future relative whose surname changed from Clement to Clemons in the 18th century and that thou seek information from me that only I can give. The question thou pose is, "Why the Clement family is moving from England to the New World?" Deserving of an answer, I will attempt to enlighten thou, Master Clemons.

But before proceeding, how did thou know we are moving to New England in April, on the barque *James* out of Southhampton? As of yet, we have not been assigned a ship to carry us. Thou did mention in passing that thoust had gotten this information from the Internet. I am not familiar with this information source. Is it a means to lure unsuspecting souls? A tool of the devil? I can only be hopeful that thou are careful from whom thou seek Master Clemons.

Now to answer thy question....

First, being careful not to appear blasphemous in my explanation, I must begin by stating that the Church of England has been less than Christian in dealing with our Puritan beliefs. While still a part of the Protestant church, we are treated as outsiders. King James as head of the Church of England ignored our Puritan beliefs by his actions and inactions. In addition to having authorized and issued a revised edition of the bible, calling it the King James Version, he also rejected our Millenary Petition requesting the elimination of confirmation, wedding rings, and the use of the "priest" designation. To make matters worse, he denied the submission of any further petitions, declared that he did not want to listen further to our concerns! In effect, we were no longer considered to be part of the Church of England.....his way, or the highway to Ireland so to speak. A sect of our Puritan brethren, the Separatists, chose to live for 10 years in the Netherlands before recently migrating in 1620 to the New World. They called themselves Pilgrims and landed on a rocky shore they named Plymouth, but that is a whole different story. Fortunate to our hopes, King James died in 1625.

However, if all this that preceded wasn't enough to make one mad, the succession of King Charles in 1625 made matters even worse! The new king quickly made his royal intentions known with his declaration of a return to Catholic religious doctrine (Please note that his French wife is Catholic). This was very upsetting to say the least! One would assume that he understood England to be Protestant, not Catholic. He blatantly scorned the beliefs of his many subjects! I can only predict that having lost his mind, his head will soon follow! Time will tell I submit.

As thy might begin to surmise, religious belief is a strongly divisive issue in our time and persecution

runs rampant across the English countryside. Changing dictates are proclaimed with each change of royalty. The people are leaving England en masse.

We considered moving to Ireland, the Caribbean, and other colonies in the New World before we chose The Massachusetts Bay Colony in the New World. Whole families of our Puritan brethren are already living in harmony there. It is a land with neither rich, nor poor, all hard working artisans, craftsman, merchants and clergy looking to build a new life with Puritan ideals. I hear too that land is still available just outside of Boston proper in the city of Dorchester. A new church is being built there as we speak and this is where we have decided to settle.

While the decision to leave England is not an easy one, it is still the right one. It will secure for us and our descendants the freedom to worship as we choose. Do you not agree that it is intolerable to bear the constant burden of religious persecution? Religious choice lies in the New World!

And, while thou must agree Master Clemons that religious freedom of choice is important, making a living to provide for thy family is equally important. Correctly so? This is of concern, but not an overwhelming care. The answer is very simple. I am confident that we will prosper with God's help! I know my skills as a painter will carry us forward in the new colony. I made a good living in England, I can do so again in the New World! New opportunities will avail themselves to us. Maybe I shall serve on community committees, be a constable, or even be a fenceviewer. Serving God's needs, our family will survive and prosper. I am sure of it! And, of course I am sure thoust knows, God helps those whom help themselves.

But then again, thy being from the future, thou already knows what happens to us. Do we make good choices? Do our children prosper? Do we find peace? It would seem only reasonable that we must survive, otherwise, thou would not exist. True? And, while I would be relieved to know how things turn out for my immediate family, if God wants me to know, He will tell me.....not thou Master Clemons. The mystery of life is God's domain.

In conclusion, I hope thy question has been answered satisfactorily. I am available for thy future inquiry.

God's blessings to our family. And, for our family, be assured that I will do my best to set a firm foundation of pious faith.

Praise always be to God.

Respectful Servant,  
Augustine Clement  
Reading, Berkshire, England 1635

PS. If thou would be so kind, I would greatly appreciate thou finding and telling me how and when our family name was changed from Clement to Clemons. Was it a conscious change, or a misspelling carried forward? Might thou consider changing thy name back to Clement?

