

322 *How does God communicate?*

It doesn't seem a sensible plan to me but, despite knowing our propensity to get things wrong, God uses the Tutu principle: God works *with* humans to communicate his amazing love and his wonderful plan to rescue and restore the world through his son Jesus.

In pre-Jesus times, God inspired people, as they enacted that saving plan. Most significantly this included the Exodus, which became a central theme illustrating God's plan. God's people didn't always do things the way God hoped, but God never gave up.

God inspired people to remember – an important principle in our relationship with God – and so God inspired people to write stuff down. They had limited world knowledge and an un-Jesus-like view of God (not their fault!), but God inspired them.

The culmination of the Tutu principle was the ultimate human, through whom God fulfilled the OT scriptures. Then, after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, God inspired people to see that what had just happened was already there, as inspired predictions, in the OT.

As the good news of the story of Jesus spread, people remembered and passed on the story in the various languages of the time. Eventually, God inspired a few people to write it down in Greek – a good language to choose, I imagine, because of its wide use.

As in pre-Jesus times, people went off in various wrong directions, so God inspired people to write letters to help them remember and to apply the things Jesus taught.

As I've said before, it doesn't worry me that both OT and NT may contain factual errors – certainly pre-scientific ideas, but also geographical errors. And they also reflect the writers' cultural views – ideas that God might want to improve on, such as their acceptance of slavery and their strongly patriarchal attitudes. (Jesus tried to subvert the latter, but it's still a problem 2000 years on!)

For the past 2000 years, God has inspired people to communicate the story of Jesus and to lead people in the way of Jesus – despite our best, inventive ways of getting it wrong! Of course, we should do our best *not* to get it wrong, but one of the most destructive ploys has been to focus so strongly on what *we think is right* that we forget to be humble in our efforts at translation and interpretation.

Yes, God inspires those efforts, but we're still, like the authors of the biblical books, fallible human beings with limited knowledge. And we still need to accept that science – and these days, archaeology too – must be allowed to challenge our long-held views.

And again, with my editor's hat on, I'll put in a plea to remember that language changes, so the actual words we use *have to change*, otherwise we risk miscommunicating – and I've illustrated aspects of that in various articles. So, especially those of us in the older generation need to humbly check our use of language, and maybe avoid quoting 400-year-old language, especially on issues where we hold strong views.