

30<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## Apprentice

**“The apprentice did precisely what he *thought* he’d been told.”**

*Anthony de Mello, One Minute Nonsense*

Anthony de Mello was a 20<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit priest, psychotherapist and writer who became widely known for his books on spirituality. He was a collector and teller of stories. When I was watching *The Apprentice* on BBC TV recently, one of his stories came to mind.

De Mello is touching on the themes of communication and meaning, and the importance of making sure that the reality of what we mean is well communicated and properly understood. He puts his message into the mouth of *The Master*.

“When you speak about reality,” said the Master, “you are attempting to put the Inexpressible into words, so that your words are certain to be misunderstood. So, people who read that expression of Reality called The Scriptures become stupid and cruel, for they follow, not their common sense, but what they *think* the Scriptures say.” He had the perfect parable to show this.

*A village blacksmith found an apprentice willing to work hard at low pay. The smith immediately began his instructions to the lad: ‘When I take the metal out of the fire, I’ll lay it on the anvil; and when I nod my head you hit it with the hammer.’ The apprentice did precisely what he thought he was told. Next day he was the village blacksmith.*

I’ll leave you to cogitate on the story and how it relates to the meaning of Scripture. For myself, I have concerns not only about folk who *think* they know what Scripture says but who find a meaning within it that chimes with their own agenda and preconceptions.

We’re all apprentices. We should take time to listen, get into the “hermeneutic” of Scripture and listen hard. It’s not about what we *think* is being said, but discerning the real meaning that’s being communicated.

### **A prayer for today**

*Thanks to God whose word was written in the Bible’s sacred page,  
record of the revelation showing God to every age.  
God has spoken: praise him for his open word.*

*Thanks to God whose word is answered by the Spirit’s voice within.  
Here we drink of joy unmeasured, life redeemed from death and sin.  
God is speaking: praise him for his open word.*

Reginald Thomas Brooks