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04/11/2017

C.S. 404

Reading Summary 4: What We Are

What the author C.Terry Warner writes about in this article is how we as human engage in self-deception. This self-deception comes not from our own deliberate action, but from going against our own values and honest inclinations. In this way we rationalize our behavior and our morals are compromised. These rationalizations can come in the form of placing the blame for the situation elsewhere, thinking in a self-righteous manner, or in a myriad of other ways. In such times when we get inklings from our conscience, Warner argues, we are in that moment obligated to do what it prescribes and unless it is outside of our powers to carry it out was are sinning.

Warner continues that paper by going further into the self-deception techniques we engage in when he discusses how we accuse others and make ourselves out to be their victim. At such times, he writes, we accuse others of victimizing us and it makes them seem like the guilty ones. What we need to learn is that if we do this, we are only seeking to justify our own wrongdoing. This spurs a descending cycle of self-betrayal, blaming, being provoked, and more blaming he other till neither can stand it any longer and the relationship ends in bitterness. This behavior pattern is referred by Warner as collusion.

The next self-deception pattern listed is false morality, which focuses on the lie that we are not responsible for our emotions. We think that we must either be genuine and mean or wear a mask of niceties. Either way, we’ll be wrong because we are being accusatory with a flawed view of the situation. But we think that if we can blame others, either one we choose will not bring us fault. But thankfully, duty isn’t burdensome emotionally for those who aren’t betraying themselves, even though it may be burdensome in another way. Thus, conscience usually isn’t a major issue for people who don’t betray themselves because they aren’t fighting it.

The rest of the article was filled with numerous ways in which we deceive ourselves, such of which include carrying emotional bondage and then discussing methods behind recovery. After reading these things it’s sad to say that all of these methods hit home in some degree or another. I see myself engaging in these methods from time to time as I reflect back upon my actions and the consequences that followed. What’s worse is those actions I took that were done to only make me prove to myself that I was in the right, deceiving myself, and becoming more self-centered! Reading the accounts presented here have made me realize these things and have motivated me to purge myself of these self-deceptive and self-destructive tendencies.

Thankfully, Warner wrote a couple sections on how to do this and there is hope for the future. He even makes Christian references near the end of his work, even though he knew that saying such things wasn’t in good taste in an academic writing. He does so by describing how we can turn away from these tendencies prompted by the devil of alienation and depict towards positive actions through accessing the Savior’s atonement.

At the end of Warner’s paper, he ends on a positive note that though difficult to correct, such self-deceptive tendencies do not come because we are of a despicable nature, but from sin. He says that we can choose love and can get better at being true to ourselves and others.