

Question

I've heard you say that one must not love oneself. However, The Urantia Book says to "love your neighbor as you love yourself". So, isn't your admonition at odds with the revelation?

Answer by Chris Halvorson

First of all, notice that the revelators usually directly parallel the Bible passage in Lev:19.18, namely, "love your neighbor as yourself" (in The Urantia Book, see 131:2.11; 142:1.4; 142:3.22; 159:5.4,9; 163:4.8; 164:1.1; 170:3.5-6; 174:4.2-3; 180:1.1; 180:5.7; and 193:1.2). Without the words "you love" (or the alternative, "he loves") in the mandate, the burning question that people have always asked about this idea is: Who is my neighbor, whom I consider to be like myself? In paragraph 159:5.9, the midwayers point out how Jesus lifted the exhortation out of the limiting context of the Hebrew scriptures; and then in paragraphs 103:5.2 and 164:1.2-4, the revelators describe the evolution of the "neighbor" concept and Jesus' contribution to its greater understanding (also, see paragraph 142:7.4).

Notice that in paragraph 164:1.4 the midwayers state that Jesus' story was designed to promote "brotherly love". In order to encourage reflection on the true meaning of this expression, and to lift the "love your neighbor" exhortation up to the philosophic level of the fifth epochal revelation, the revelators sometimes add the words "you love" or "he loves" to the mandate (see 16:9.8, 99:2.4, 131:10.2, 140:5.1, and 142:4.2). The first of these references is in the three-section essay that follows section 16:6 about the foundations of reflective thinking. And also notice that paragraphs 140:5.1, 142:1.4, and 180:5.7 refer to either the "golden rule" or the "rule of living".

In section 147:4 about the rule of living, where Jesus uses the golden rule to illustrate the levels of meaning, the fourth level of meaning is labeled "the level of brotherly love". This is the level of "kindness", which literally means "kin-likeness". In paragraph 140:5.1, the idea of the "brotherly love" in the "love your neighbor" mandate is contrasted with the meaning of "fatherly love"; and then in paragraph 140:8.11, the midwayers refer to the "neighbor" question and directly state that the kind of "love" in the "love your neighbor" mandate is "kindness". As the concept of "love" is moved up the levels of meaning, it evolves from

what is actually "justice", through "fairness", then "patience", then "kindness", and then "mercy" (see 28:6.8), until it finally reaches the sixth level of meaning--actual "love", fatherly love.

Thus, the "love you neighbor" mandate refers to treating your fellows as your kin, that is: be kind to your neighbor as you are kind to yourself. In paragraph 156:5.14, reflecting on "love your neighbor", the midwayers introduce the concept of "respect", which literally means "to look back at". From the initial objective vantage point of the fourth level of meaning, you can look back at your subjective self on the lower levels of meaning--"self-respect". From the fourth level of meaning, as a personalized self, you can be kind to your not-yet-personalized self. Each of us should cultivate true self-respect from the fourth level of meaning, but not self-admiration--self-love, love of self--from the sixth level of meaning (see 54:1.6), or even self-esteem from the fifth level of meaning (see 139:4.4,8). When Jesus speaks of "overmuch self-respect" in paragraph 159:3.3, reflect on the sequence from the third through the sixth levels of meaning: self-regard, self-respect, self-esteem, and self-admiration--paralleling recognition, realization, appreciation, and love (see 149:6.3).