

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 7, Section IX

The Extension of the Kingdom

Legend:

blue text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)
bold blue text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext
red text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext
light blue text = editorial comments
~~striketrough blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

This section, as its title states, deals with “The Extension of the Kingdom.” The emphasis here is on extension and the essential part it plays in God’s Will for us. Another term for *extension* is *creation*, although the *Course* reserves the latter term for our heavenly activity, as opposed to earthly activity. Strictly speaking, extension also belongs to the realm of Heaven, but in several places the *Course* at least implies that extension has an earthly form in forgiveness and miracles (see T-29.III.4:1–2 and W-pI.159.4:1–3).

The gist of this section is that extension is an essential part of our very nature and our only function, so that withholding gifts from our brothers constitutes a denial of our own true being, which must be extended to retain knowledge of itself (2:6–7). Failure to extend is, in fact, the root of most of our sense of lack and deprivation. Only when we consent to fulfill our function of extension (through extending forgiveness to our brothers and including them in God’s Kingdom) will we find peace.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹Only you can limit your creative power, but God wills to release it. ²He no more wills you to deprive yourself of **your** creations [the product of your creative power] than He wills to deprive Himself of His. ³Do not withhold your gifts to the Sonship or you withhold yourself from God! ⁴Selfishness is of the ego, but Self-fullness is of spirit [the Soul] because that is how God [He] created it. ⁵The Holy Spirit is in the part of the mind that lies between the ego and the spirit [the Soul], mediating between them **always in favor of the spirit** [the Soul]. ⁶To the ego this is partiality, and it responds as if it were [the part that is] being sided **against**. ⁷To spirit [the Soul] this is truth, because it knows its fullness and cannot conceive of **any** part from which it is excluded.

• Study Question •

1. The term “Self-fullness” occurs only in this section of the Text, in paragraphs 1, 4, and 6. It is contrasted with “selfishness.” Read over the

three paragraphs to determine the meaning of this word as the Course uses it, and try to define it, comparing it to selfishness.

God's intention is that the creative power within us be released to bless the universe. We can place limits on that power, but limiting it is not His will (1:1–2). As God created us, we are givers, creators, and extenders. Creation was designed to flow from God, through us, out to the universe. “God created you to create” (T-6.II.8:4, also T-8.VI.6:9).

If I fail to extend blessing to those around me I am going counter to the will of God and, more important to our immediate experience, I am going counter to *my own nature* as God created me. To refuse to bless my brothers and sisters actually interferes with my communion with God (1:3). By my denial of *what I am* I am denying *what God made me to be*, and thus denying my Creator. God created my spirit in “Self-fullness” (1:4), a term that I understand to mean an awareness of inner abundance that overflows spontaneously to others. The ego is selfish, which means that it is centered on its own interests, and believes in getting rather than giving. The spirit is Self-full; it cannot refrain from bubbling up and out to others. Although the words are close in form they are worlds apart in meaning.

The ego is (no surprise) egoistic; the spirit is altruistic. They pull in opposite directions, and the Holy Spirit mediates the two opposing tendencies (1:5). Of course, He encourages us to follow our spirit rather than our ego. The Holy Spirit is a Presence in our minds, a gift from God pointing out the way back home. Our own spirit, as created by God, already *by nature* desires to extend, to bless, to love, and to give. The Holy Spirit is something more than our own spirit; He is an added influence on the spirit's side of the fence. This added influence is the reason we cannot fail to find our way home (W-pI.131.14:1–2), the guarantee of eventual success in our quest.

The ego senses this “alien” Presence in our minds and interprets it as an attack (1:6). To the ego, the Holy Spirit isn't being “fair.” By favoring the spirit, the Holy Spirit is taking sides. But our spirit recognizes the creative thrust of the Holy Spirit as simply the truth about itself. Spirit “knows its fullness” (1:7). The agreement of the Holy Spirit with spirit is only natural because in reality *there is nothing else* for the Holy Spirit to side with! (1:7). There is no “part” of anything that is not spirit.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Spirit [The soul] **knows** that the awareness [consciousness] of all its brothers is included in its own, as **it** is included in God. ²The power of the whole Sonship **and of its Creator** is therefore spirit's **own** fullness, rendering [its Creation and] its creations [its creating] equally whole and equal in perfection. ³The ego cannot prevail against a totality that includes God, and any totality *must* include God. ⁴Everything He created is given **all** His power, because it is part of Him and shares His Being **with** Him. ⁵Creating is the **opposite** of loss, as blessing is the opposite of sacrifice. ⁶Being *must* be extended. ⁷That is how it retains the knowledge of **itself**. ⁸Spirit [The Soul] yearns to share **its** being as **its** Creator did. ⁹Created **by** sharing, its will is to create. ¹⁰It does **not** wish to **contain** God, but **wills** to **extend His Being**.

• Study Question •

2. *This paragraph, in at least three sentences, speaks about the desire or will of the spirit. What is that desire or will?*

The entire Sonship is in spirit. What is at the core of my nature—spirit—is something that includes the awareness of all my brothers (2:1). That does not mean just that I am aware of all my brothers; it means that their awareness, their *consciousness*, is literally included in my own, just as my awareness is “included in God” (2:1). Spirit possesses a creative power that derives not just from my individual consciousness, but from the entire Sonship and God Himself (2:2).

Frankly, my mind balks at these ideas, not objecting to them, but unable to open wide enough to contain them. I’m not certain I understand them entirely, although I do understand the abstract concept. It’s rather similar to being in love. You can hear people talk about being in love and describing the experience, but until you actually fall in love yourself you don’t really “understand” what they are talking about. That’s similar to how I feel when I am told that my spirit somehow includes your awareness and everyone’s awareness. What is the experience of that like? I’m not sure I know. However, the *Course* isn’t saying here that you and I, in our current mental capacity, are supposed to understand this. It says that *spirit* knows it. Spirit knows it *already*. This is not something spirit must learn; it is already part of its permanent knowledge. There is that within me and within you that *knows* we are inextricably joined in mind and awareness, and which is guiding our minds back to the recognition and full experience of that union with all the power of God and His entire creation. That’s all I need to know right now.

Given the totality of the spiritual power within us all, the ego cannot win! (2:3). Each of us has all the power of God (2:4). In creation, God’s power is not diminished or dissipated as He shares it with all of us; it is *increased*. By extending Himself as us, God knows Himself; likewise, as we extend, we know ourselves (2:6–7). “Being must be extended” (2:6).

We share the same creative nature as God. We *have to* create; it is our nature. Spirit was “created by sharing” (2:9) and shares the nature of its Creator as a result; spirit too must “share its being” (2:8). The ego, if it could, would “contain God” (2:10)—put bounds around God, and shut Him into its ego self, hoarding the riches and keeping them from everyone else. Spirit, by contrast, longs only “to extend His Being” (2:10), which means, in this world, to see God in everyone and everywhere, to recognize His Being in every person we encounter.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The extension of God’s Being is spirit’s only function. **2**Its fullness cannot be contained, any more than can the fullness of its Creator. ³Fullness is extension. ⁴The ego’s whole thought system **blocks** extension, and thus blocks **your only function**. ⁵It therefore blocks your joy, so that [*and this is why*] you perceive yourself as unfulfilled. ⁶Unless you create you *are* unfulfilled, but God does **not** know unfulfillment and therefore you **must** create. **7**You may not know your own creations, but this can no more interfere with their reality than your unawareness of your spirit [*Soul*] can interfere with its being.

• Study Question •

3. *Not extending affects you. What is the primary negative effect discussed in this paragraph?*

The opposite of *extension* is *contraction*. “Contraction” is the word used by one spiritual teacher to describe the ego. He calls this aspect of mind “the self-contraction.” By juxtaposing the two words, extension and contraction, I hope to make the difference between ego and spirit more apparent. The spirit extends; the ego contracts. The ego closes in on itself, rolling into a tight little protective ball, like a frightened armadillo. The spirit, conversely, goes out of itself like an artesian well, gushing up and spilling over.

Extension of God’s Being is the purpose we were created for (3:1). Spirit is like God, in that what is in it “cannot be contained” (3:2) but must extend outward. The fullness of spirit that is referred to here is not a fullness that is “to the brim,” but one that is overflowing. The container is not big enough for the content; it *must* extend beyond itself. That is the nature of spirit’s fullness (3:3). For spirit to exist it must expand, because its nature is expansion. It cannot *not* expand.

Because the ego is contraction instead of extension, it diametrically opposes spirit’s true function. The ego’s thought system is contrary to spirit’s true function and must therefore attempt to keep us from fulfilling that function (3:4). Since fulfilling our function is what gives us joy, this robs us of joy and leaves us feeling deprived, rather than fulfilled (3:5). This perception of ourselves is false because it exists only in our deluded minds; in God’s mind we are still creating and therefore we are perfectly fulfilled (3:6). All that our self-delusion accomplishes is to hide the knowledge of our creations from our own minds; it cannot have any real detrimental effect on our creations any more than our ignorance of our own spirit interferes with its existence. Spirit exists, whether or not we are aware of it. Our creations exist, even though we no longer know them (3:7).

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The Kingdom is forever extending because it is in the Mind of God. ²You do not know your joy because you do not know your own Self-fullness. ³Exclude **any** part of the Kingdom **from** yourself and you are **not** whole. ⁴A split mind **cannot** perceive its fullness, and needs the miracle **of** its wholeness to dawn upon it and heal it. ⁵This reawakens the wholeness **in** it, and restores it to the Kingdom because of its **acceptance** of wholeness. ⁶The full appreciation of the mind’s Self-fullness makes selfishness impossible and extension inevitable. ⁷That is why there is perfect peace in the Kingdom. ⁸Spirit is [Every Soul is] fulfilling its function, and **only** complete fulfillment is peace. [Insanity appears to add to reality, but no-one would claim that what it adds is true. Insanity is therefore the *nonextension* of truth, which blocks joy because it blocks Creation and therefore blocks *self-fulfillment*. The unfulfilled *must* be depressed, because their self-fulness is *unknown* to them.]

• Study Question •

4. *What will enable you to fulfill your true function, and in fact make fulfillment of your function inevitable?*



You've probably heard the phrase, "The left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing." What our minds have done to themselves is like that. Creation is still going on in a part of our mind that is fully awake, but the part that is asleep is completely unaware of it. In spite of the blindness we are experiencing, the Kingdom has not ceased its normal functioning. As it always has been doing, it is expanding within the Mind of God (4:1).

The part of mind we habitually live in, the part dominated by ego, is completely unaware of the Kingdom's expansion. By setting itself in opposition to the rest of the Kingdom and cutting itself off from it, this part of the mind has lost its knowledge of the totality of which it is still a part, and has become joyless (4:2-3).

When a mind is so fragmented and split, the only thing that can bring it healing is to reawaken its awareness of its own fullness and wholeness (4:4). Once remembered, the inherent wholeness of mind regains its function of extension. Selfishness becomes impossible because the mind is so aware of abundance that it cannot conceive of miserly grasping. Once the mind comes to appreciate its own abundance, it spontaneously overflows to others; it cannot help but extend itself (4:5-6). As we come to full appreciation of "the mind's Self-fullness," that complete inability to do anything *but* overflow to others, selfishness becomes impossible and extension inevitable (4:6). The response to this restoration of function within the mind is a deep, abiding peace, since to be fulfilled *is* to be at peace (4:7-8). As was said earlier, our loss of the peace of God comes from not fulfilling our function (T-4.I.9:4), or from not being what we are meant to be. Thus, restoring the mind's function also restores its peace.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Your creations are protected **for** you because the Holy Spirit, Who is in your mind, knows of them and can bring them **into** your awareness whenever you will let Him. ²They **are** there as part of your own being, because **your** fulfillment **includes** them. ³The creations of every Son of God are yours, since every creation belongs to everyone, being created for the Sonship as a whole.

• Study Question •

5. *As you read about "your creations" (5:1), a question may occur to you, one that is often asked by Course students: "What are my creations?" For the one direct description of what our creations are, see T-24.VII.7:1-3. Also, re-read T-7.I.3, where our creations were discussed previously, and state in your own words what our creations are.*



Not until we fully know God, and know our Self, will we know our creations and what they are (T-7.XI.6:3 and T-7.XI.7:2-3). Yet, even as we go through the dream in which we have forgotten what our creations are, they continue to exist, safe from all harm, and we *can* have some foretaste of what they are. Whenever we allow the Holy Spirit to do so, He can make us aware of our creations (5:1). In my opinion, this is one

aspect of what occurs during the experience of the “holy instant,” a phenomenon that is not fully described in the *Course* until Chapter 15 of the *Text*. The holy instant is said to be a snapshot of eternity “set in a frame of time” (T-17.IV.11:5; see also the rest of that paragraph, and T-15.V.11:5). Since creations are eternal, the only way we could possibly know them to any degree would be in the holy instant.

In those holy moments when, because we are willing, the veil lifts in our minds so that our awareness of God returns, however briefly, we also become aware of our unity with every living thing. “They are there as part of your own being” (5:2). This is the mystical experience that R. M. Bucke dubbed “cosmic consciousness” in his book bearing that title. As philosopher Ken Wilber puts it, “the individual comes to feel, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that he is fundamentally one with the entire universe” (*No Boundary*, p. 3). The *Course*'s version of cosmic consciousness applies most specifically to our awareness of union with our own creations. Yet, it also explicitly includes “the creations of every Son of God” (5:3), since all creations come into being as gifts to the universe rather than as something held for personal profit by their creator (5:3).

If you have ever read the description of “cosmic consciousness” by any mystic who has had such an experience, you know that it is nearly impossible to put into words. The metaphysical poet, Thomas Traherne, wrote, “...all things abided eternally as they were in their proper places. Eternity was manifest in the light of day....” Bucke said, “Only one in all the infinite universe! The All-loving, the Perfect One.... Worlds, systems, all blended into one harmonious whole.” Traherne expressed the awareness that every creation belonged to himself, when he said:

The streets were mine, the temple was mine, the people were mine. The skies were mine, and so were the sun and the moon and stars, and all the world was mine, and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it. I knew no churlish proprieties, nor bounds, nor divisions; but all the proprieties and divisions were mine; all treasures and the possessors of them. (Quoted in *No Boundary* by Ken Wilber)

All I can say is, if you have had such an experience, you know that you have had it, and you recognize it when others speak of it. It blasts away the restricted boundaries you have placed upon yourself, and in an instant, for an instant, you *know* that what you thought was “other” is a part of your Self. Having known that, even though the intense awareness may slip away quickly, even though it may seldom return with such intensity, your life and your sense of yourself can never be quite the same again.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹You have not failed to increase the inheritance of the Sons of God, and thus have not failed to secure it for yourself [*yourselves*]. ²Since it was the Will of God to give it [*your inheritance*] to you, He gave it forever. ³Since it was His Will that you have it forever, He gave you the means for keeping it. ⁴*And you have done so.* ⁵Disobeying God's Will is meaningful only to the insane. ⁶In truth it is impossible. ⁷Your Self-fullness is as boundless as God's. ⁸Like His, It extends forever and in perfect peace. ⁹Its radiance is so intense that It creates in perfect joy, and only the whole can be born of Its wholeness.

• Study Question •

6. *The Course says in several places that we are not fulfilling our function, which is why we are not joyful (T-7.VI.13:1; T-7.IX.3:4-5; W-pI.82.3:4). Yet this paragraph says that we have continued to extend our fullness without failure.*

- a. *How can these two things be reconciled?*
- b. *In a related question, why is it not appropriate to feel guilty about our failure to fulfill our function?*

Our reality is that we have not failed. We continue to create constantly, adding to the riches of the Kingdom of God (6:1). We *do* extend, and therefore we retain our inheritance, which can be kept only by giving it away. God's Will is that we keep it, and since that is His Will, He must also have given us everything we need to keep it (6:2-3). Since the means for keeping anything is giving it or extending it, God also gave us the necessary extension! For that reason, we *have* kept our inheritance (6:3-4).

What this says to me is that, despite my apparent experience to the contrary, my mind has continued to create, to give, and to extend God's Being. God Himself has assured that it cannot be otherwise. If some part of my mind seems to be experiencing "disobeying God's Will" (6:5), that part of mind is simply insane, because disobedience is literally impossible (6:6).

I do experience myself doing things that I believe are not God's Will. I think most of us do. I find myself acting selfishly, contracting instead of expanding, avoiding relationship instead of opening to it, fearing instead of loving. When I do, my "natural" inclination is to feel guilty about it. My ego tries to convince me that I must berate myself about these things, these "sins," and to make myself feel awful because of them. But disobedience of God's Will is *impossible*, the *Course* tells us (6:6). After all, this is *God* we're talking about! How can puny little me go against God?

It reminds me of a joke, one I can't remember exactly. It goes something like this: "What does a 600-pound gorilla eat at McDonald's?" The answer: "Whatever it wants."

It isn't a very good analogy, of course. Both the gorilla and God represent irresistible forces, but God's force isn't simply violence or even superior power, it is the force of Authorship. When He created things, He created them to be what and how He willed them to be. He created spirit to extend, so spirit extends because that's what being spirit *means*. It cannot do otherwise. "Its radiance is so intense that It creates in perfect joy, and only the whole can be born of Its Wholeness" (6:9).

Paragraph 7

7. ¹Be confident that you have never lost your Identity and the extensions which maintain It in wholeness and peace. ²Miracles are **an expression of this confidence**. ³They are reflections of both your proper identification **with** your brothers, and of your awareness that **your** identification **is** maintained by extension. ⁴The miracle is **a lesson in total perception**. ⁵By including **any** part of totality in the lesson, you **have** included the whole.

• **Study Question** •

6. *Based upon your studies in this chapter up to this point, explain sentences 4 and 5. In your response, answer these two questions:*
 - a. *In what way is a miracle “a lesson in total perception”?*
 - b. *What do you think is meant by “including any part of totality” in the miracle?*

Although the Course has spent a good deal of time encouraging us to fulfill our function, it also reassures us again and again that nothing has been lost by our apparent failure. Our Identity is secure; our extensions, which are essential to the continued existence of our Identity, are safe (7:1). In this world, the healing impact of miracles demonstrates both the truth of our Identity with our brothers and the beneficent nature of our Being (7:2–3). When we extend a miracle, it testifies that we are part of one another. It shows that we know that we cannot remain aware of our true Identity *unless* we extend to one another.

Notice: To affirm that our Identity and our creations are secure, unaffected by our ego's insanity, does not mean that we can sit back and do nothing. On the contrary, it means that, *on the basis of the truth of our Identity*, we perform miracles! As the Bible says, “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). Claims of union with God, without the evidence of miracles of extension and joining between people, are dead claims. What proves our Identity with God is the quality of our relationships with our brothers.

How we see one brother is a lesson in how to see everything (7:4). As we were told earlier in the chapter, correctly evaluating one part of creation opens the way to correctly perceiving all of it:

Perceive any part of the ego's thought system as wholly insane, wholly delusional and wholly undesirable, and you have correctly evaluated all of it. This correction enables you to perceive any part of creation as wholly real, wholly perfect and wholly desirable (T-7.VII.11:1-2).

One brother is all brothers. Every mind contains all minds, for every mind is one (W-pI.161.4:1-2).

(T-7.VII.11:1–2; W-pI.161.4:1–2).

When we see one brother as included in the totality of the Kingdom, the lesson transfers to everything, and our mind opens to the vision of totality (7:5). Thus, far from absolving us of the responsibility to handle the conflicts in our relationships, the truth of our invulnerable Identity and immortal extensions acts as a catalyst for such healing, and the healing of the specific relationships of our lives is our doorway to the vast awareness of cosmic consciousness.

Your way home to God lies through the brother or sister next to you.

Answer Key

1. Selfishness is trying to gratify the needs of the separate self at the expense of others. Self-fullness is to know that your Self includes everything, and also involves extending outward to totality, rather than recoiling from totality as selfishness does. Self-fullness is the overflow of a Self that knows Its own abundance and cannot refrain from sharing it.
2. The will and desire of spirit is to share its being, to create, and to extend God's Being.
3. The primary negative effect of failing to extend is that I perceive myself as unfulfilled. I feel as though I am not living up to my potential, or not "doing my job" in the world.
4. Coming to fully appreciate the Self-fullness of your mind will make fulfilling your true function of extension inevitable, and will make selfishness impossible (4:6).
5. Our creations, like everything in Heaven, are pure limitless spirit, formless, timeless, and perfect. They are the heavenly extension of love, but since creation is eternal, it *cannot* occur in time; at best, our loving thoughts and acts, and our forgiveness, can simply *reflect* creation. We cannot really know what our creations are while our minds are bound by earth.
6. (a) Our failure to fulfill our function is an experience in our dream, in the earthly part of our mind, because we have cut that mind off from awareness of our Self-fullness. The part of the mind that we think we are does *not* extend, and therefore does not experience joy. Yet this failure is not *real*. The *reality* of our mind is that it continually creates and extends the Kingdom of God. Thus, our mind *is* fulfilling its function, but in the enclosed, contracted part known as the ego, we are unaware of that fulfillment, and therefore, we remove ourselves from joy.
(b) It is not appropriate to feel guilt over failing to fulfill our function because that failure is only illusory; in reality we never cease to create: "The mind is very powerful, and never loses its creative force. It never sleeps. Every instant it is creating" (T-2.VI.9:5-7).
7. Two-part answer:
 - a. In a miracle you see one aspect of totality—which means seeing one brother—truly. Through forgiveness, you include this brother in the Kingdom (the totality). Since seeing one brother truly is the same as seeing all brothers truly (T-7.VI.1:2; T-7.VII.11:1-2), perceiving one brother as included in totality leads to total perception, to seeing all aspects (that is, all brothers) truly; i.e., seeing totality truly. Thus, a miracle with one brother teaches us total perception.
 - b. "Including any part of totality" refers to perceiving any one brother as whole.