

"Rules for Decision" (T-30.I)

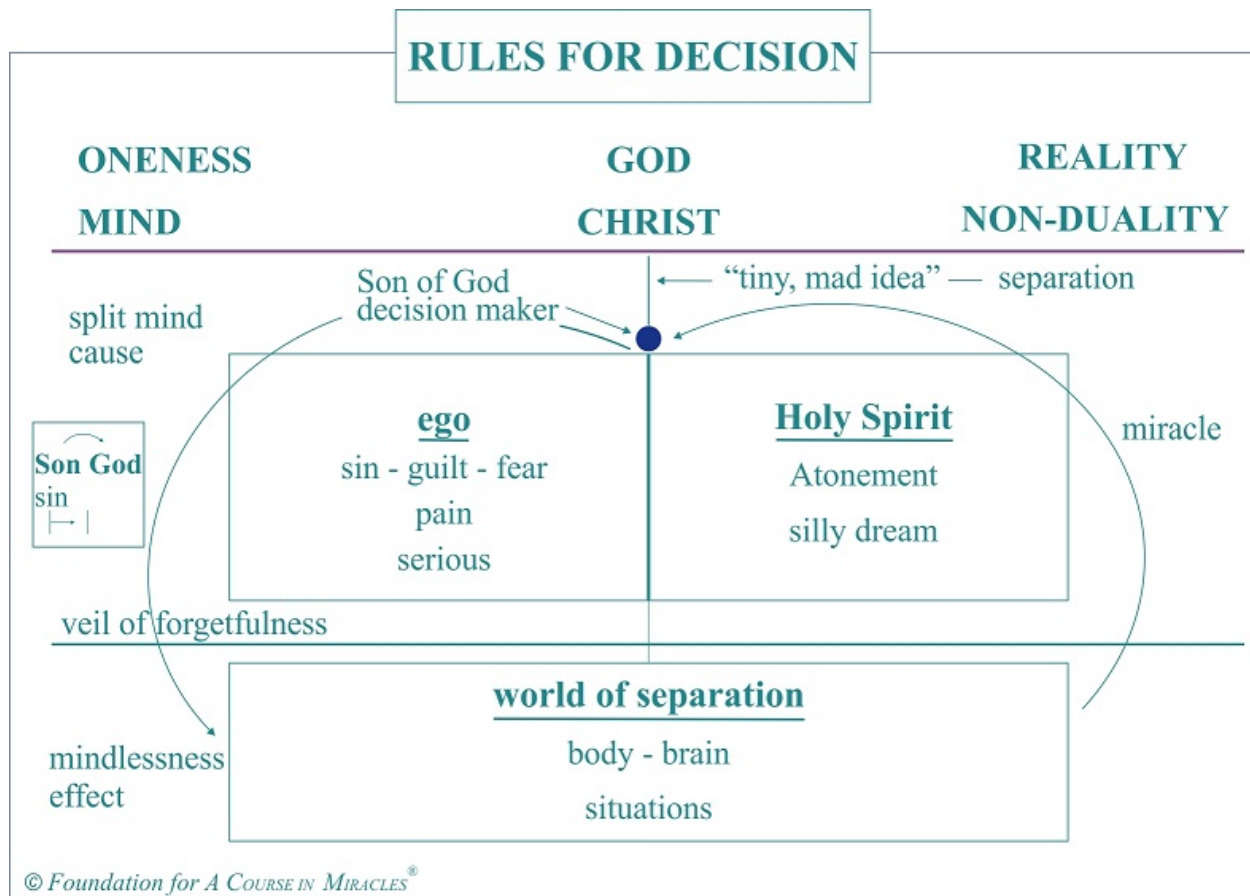
Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Roscoe NY

Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part I Introduction

It is obvious from the title of the workshop, "Rules for Decision," that we will be spending most of our time with that particular section from Chapter 30 in the text, and that that section indeed will be the center point of the workshop. We will look at a number of other parts of the Course which bear on the themes of that section as well. As is also obvious from the title, the central theme that we will be addressing is the idea of choosing or deciding. The whole Course, and in particular this section, makes clear that we have only two possible choices open to us at any time: to choose either to have the ego be our teacher or our "adviser"—the term used in this section—or to choose Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Later on I will spend a considerable amount of time talking about Jesus and what it means to choose him as our adviser or teacher rather than the ego. What I would like to do first, however, is to provide some metaphysical background for the whole idea of choosing the ego or the Holy Spirit. A large portion of what we will be talking about during this workshop will not be very metaphysical. This is a very practical and down-to-earth section in terms of what the experience of choosing the ego or the Holy Spirit is like. But as with any discussion of the Course having to do with the specific or practical—how we behave within the dream or in this world—if we first don't understand the overriding metaphysics of the Course, then the practical application will make no sense. So we will begin with that. I will do a rather shortened version of what I usually spend much more time doing.

The following diagram depicts the chart drawn on the board during the workshop, and which is referred to frequently in Kenneth's commentary.



Heaven

We begin, as we always do, at the Beginning which is Heaven, and God and Christ are the two beings that dwell in Heaven. The principal characteristic of Heaven is that it is a state of perfect Oneness, which means literally that, as the Course says, there is no place where the Father ends and the Son begins (W-pl.132.12:4). In other words, there is no differentiation in Heaven between God and Christ. There is no separated personality or separated consciousness in One that can observe itself in relation to the Other. In fact in Heaven there are no terms "God" or "Christ." These are terms which we use within the dream, within the illusion, to try to describe what the state of Heaven is like. But there is no way here that anyone can know what a state of perfect unity or perfect Oneness is. We will be speaking a great deal this weekend about the mind. In Heaven we are talking about a Mind—the Course frequently speaks about the Mind of God or the Mind of Christ. The Mind of God and the Mind of Christ are totally unified so that, once again, there is no place where the Mind of God ends and the Mind of Christ begins. These are terms that only have meaning for us here, but would have no meaning in Heaven. What this also means, and this is an important idea which we will build on, is that there is no choosing in Heaven. There

is no decision in Heaven. There is no free will in Heaven, because free will, decision, or choosing reflect the thought that there are alternatives you can choose between.

Now if all that exists is perfect Oneness, or what we could speak of as a state of non-duality, then there is absolutely nothing you can choose between. There is no way that Christ, God's Son, can choose to be other than what He is: a creation of God, and totally unified with His Source. So that the Judeo-Christian idea that God endowed His creation with free will, a will that could choose a reality or thought or being other than God, is impossible from the perspective of the Course. This is a purely non-dualistic system. The whole notion of God that you find in the Bible, which obviously is the cornerstone of both Judaism and Christianity, is that of a dualistic God. It is a God Who coexists with the devil, a God of good Who coexists with evil. It is a God that allows Himself to be chosen against, as you find in the Adam and Eve story, where the two sinners disobey God's rule and choose to eat of the forbidden fruit. That is impossible in the state of Heaven that the Course teaches us about. Again, we are speaking of a perfectly non-dualistic state in which there is no choosing at all, in which there is no decision. What this then means—and this will be an important idea that we will emphasize later in the workshop—is that the whole concept of choosing is an illusion, the whole concept of making a decision is an illusion. There is nothing real about it. That doesn't mean that it is not an extremely important concept: obviously it is. But it is very important to keep in mind that the whole notion of choosing or making a decision is inherently unreal, because the only state of reality is, to say it once again, that of perfect Oneness or non-duality.

The Split Mind

Now we will talk briefly about what the Course refers to as the "tiny, mad idea," which is the thought of separation that seemed to creep into the mind of God's Son, and which in reality never happened at all: "Into eternity, where all is one, there crept a tiny, mad idea, at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh" (T-27.VIII.6:2). In reality this never could have occurred because there could never be a thought of anything other than God. How could there be a thought of imperfection, a thought of duality, a thought of separation in the Mind of perfect Oneness? This is impossible, and therefore it never happened—but we believe it happened. This is the beginning of what the Course refers to as the split mind (always appearing in lowercase), the mind that resulted from the "tiny, mad idea." This mind itself splits in two: the part we call the ego, and the part we refer to as the Holy Spirit. I should mention that in this whole discussion, nothing I say or that the Course says regarding this should be taken literally—these are symbols. In effect Jesus is telling us a myth, and myths are not true. Myths attempt to reflect a reality, but in and of themselves they are not true. These are symbols, and as Jesus says in the manual for teachers: "Let us not forget, however, that words are but symbols of symbols. They are thus twice removed from reality" (M-21.1:9-10). We are talking about words that are symbols for an idea or a thought, but the thought itself is not real. This is the language of myth or the language of metaphor.

So when the "tiny, mad idea" seemed to arise in the mind of God's Son, there also arose within that same mind two different ways of looking at that "tiny, mad idea." One is what we call the ego, the other is what we call the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's way of looking at the "tiny, mad idea" is what the Course refers to as the principle of the Atonement—the statement that the separation never happened. It is the Holy Spirit's way of saying to the Son of God: "What you are looking at or thinking about is simply a silly dream. It is not to be taken seriously, because how could a thought like this have any effect upon

reality?" There is a wonderful phrase in the section called "The Little Hindrance": "not one note in Heaven's song was missed" (T-26.V.5:4). In other words, this "tiny, mad idea," this thought of being separate from God had no effect at all in Heaven.

The Holy Spirit then can be thought of as the memory of God's perfection, of the perfect Oneness of God and Christ that the Son took with him into the dream. And it is memory that links the Son back to God, just as the memory of a loved one who has died links us with that loved one. You think of this person who was very dear to you and you begin to feel that person's presence. You weep; you feel glad for the happy times that you had; you feel angry for the unhappy times that you had and the grievances that you are holding on to—but it is your memory of that person that links you with that person, so that you feel things now that you might have felt when the person was still alive. Thus, the function of memory in our everyday experience is that it links us with something in the past. In this sense, this memory of Who we are as Christ is the link between our current experience and Who we truly are in Heaven. So again, when that "tiny, mad idea" arose, there was also a thought in the mind that said that the impossible never happened—this thought is what the Course refers to as the Holy Spirit. This is the thought that says that the "tiny, mad idea" is simply that: an insignificant thought that has had no effect at all and is totally insane. When Jesus uses the word "mad" or "madness" in the Course, he always uses it as a synonym for "insanity."

On the other side, however, is the ego, and the ego is a thought that says not only that the separation happened, but it was a terrible event. The Son of God has committed an outrageous offense against his Creator and Source. This is what the word "sin" means. This is a very serious action for which the Son should feel guilty; and he now should be in terror of the wrath of God that seeks to have vengeance on what the Son has done. What the Son has done according to the ego is stolen God's power, stolen God's life, usurped His role as Creator, as First Cause, and over God's dead body now proclaims himself as his own creator and source. This is the Course's version of original sin. Again, this never happened in reality, but within the dream this is the essential point. And so what will end up happening if the Son chooses the ego is that he will believe he has separated from God. He will feel overwhelmed with the guilt over what he has done and will now believe that God is going to punish him.

These are the two choices open to the Son of God. The Son of God who must make a choice we will represent in the chart by a blue dot—and we will give it a name: the decision maker. Those of you who have been studying the Course a while know that the term "decision maker" is never used in the Course in this context. It is actually used once in the manual but in a different context. It is a name that we give to that part of the split mind that must choose between these two thought systems. Over and over again Jesus is asking us to make another choice. Certainly in this section, "Rules for Decision," this is a major theme: that we must decide, that we must choose. In fact we could say, as we will certainly elaborate on later in the workshop, that the central teaching of the Course is that we do indeed have another choice. We have chosen mistakenly, and now we can choose again. And as you know, the very last section of the Course, that beautiful section "Choose Once Again" reiterates that for the last time. Thus the part of our minds that must choose or that must decide we just call the decision maker—this makes it easier to refer to it. When Jesus refers to the Son of God in the Course, when he addresses the reader as "you," this is the "you" he is addressing—this part of our minds that must choose either the ego or the Holy Spirit.

What happened—and we all are the witness to the fact that this has happened—is that as one Son we turned to the ego and turned away from the Holy Spirit. We said basically that we don't believe the Holy Spirit's story; rather, we believe the ego. Again, we are talking mythologically, so it is not as if we had a conversation and said all these ideas—but, in effect, what went on in the Son's mind is that he liked being on his own. If indeed he had listened to the Holy Spirit and identified with His Atonement principle, then the separation would have vanished in the same instant it seemed to appear. All individuality would have vanished, and the Son would have disappeared into the Heart of God and would no longer have existed as a separated being. Within the dream, the Son now exists as a separated being who has the freedom (or the illusion of freedom) to choose whether he will listen to the Voice for God, as the Course refers to the Holy Spirit, or will listen to the voice of the ego. He likes being on his own. He likes the autonomy. He likes the individuality that he is now beginning to identify with and to enjoy. The very important term that the Course uses to summarize this is: he likes his *specialness*. In Heaven he is not special. In Heaven he does not exist as a separated personality. Now all of a sudden he finds himself on his own and he likes it—he likes being special. And he is not aware at that point of the tremendous cost to himself, of turning away from the Holy Spirit and turning towards the ego.

In fact, we could say that one of the major things Jesus does for us in the Course is to have us understand the tremendous price that we pay for continuing to identify with our specialness and with the ego. As you work with the Course over a period of many years, you will realize to your horror just what an awful, awful price this has been. If you think it is bad now, wait ten or fifteen years when you really get to the heart of this and realize with a real horror what it is that you have actually done. When you realize what you have done within the dream, you will understand why your guilt is so strong. In reality this has not happened at all, but as long as you believe you are here, as long as you believe you are a special individual, as long as you believe you are a separate personality, you *will* believe that you have indeed done a monstrous, monstrous thing. However, right at the beginning, we are not aware of what we have done. We think we are just playing, we think that we really enjoy our newly found freedom and individuality, and so we choose as one Son—at this point we are still talking about one Son of God—we choose as one Son to believe in the ego, which means that we *identify* with the ego. Once you choose to believe in what the ego says, you not only choose to believe it, you *become* it. So you become this sinful, guilty, fear-ridden self. That is the price that was paid for the specialness, and for the thought of being outside of Heaven and on one's own.

The World and the Body

Once the Son has done this, the ego realizes that it has a potential problem on its hands, because the ego knows that it has "pulled the wool" over the Son's eyes. The problem that the ego faces is: What if the Son suddenly wakes up one morning and realizes what he has done? He will change his mind. He will turn against the ego and towards the Holy Spirit. He will awaken from the dream. He will disappear into the Heart of God. Then: no more ego. No more individuality. No more separation. No more specialness. No more personality. No more life—as the ego judges life.

Now that it has the Son in its clutches, the ego does one more thing: ensure that the Son will never ever change his mind. And it does this by a very clever strategy: If the ego can render the Son *mindless* and cause him to forget that he has a mind, how can the Son change his mind? You can't change something you don't believe you have. So what the ego then does is project itself outside the mind and makes or—

as the Course says earlier—*miscreates* a world of separation, which is nothing more than the reflection, seemingly outside, of the thought that is inside. The world results, in other words, from taking the contents of this wrong-minded ego box of sin, guilt, and fear and all the other thoughts that go with it—simply taking all this from inside and saying it is now outside. Once that thought of separation has projected itself outside the mind, it does what separation does: it separates— and separates, and separates, fragments, divides, subdivides, over and over and over again. This is a process that seems to occur over billions of years. In reality it occurs in one instant; and in "real reality," if I can make such an awful distinction, it never happened at all. Once the fragmentation process has been accomplished, then each of the seeming fragments is placed in what we call a body. The body, if you can forgive the pun, is the embodiment of the ego. It is the thought of separation now given form and encased within a body, that by its very nature separates itself out from other bodies and other objects. That is how the world of separation was born.

What regulates the body, so we are told, is the brain. The brain is not the mind. The brain exists outside of the mind as a reflection of the thought that is within the mind; but it is not the mind. What the ego then does is cause a veil to fall over the mind of God's Son, and it is this veil, the veil of forgetfulness, that causes the Son to forget where he came from. Again, where he came from is simply from a projection of a thought in the mind. One of the important principles in the Course is that "ideas leave not their source" (T-26.VII.4:7), which means that the idea of a separated body has never left its source, which is in the mind. This in turn means that there is literally no world out there. There is a *belief* that there is a world out there, but the world we think is outside us is simply the projection of what is inside us. However, because of this veil that falls across our minds, we forget where we came from. Idea and source have been split off, cause and effect have been split off, and now we believe we are in this world. We have total amnesia—we don't recall at all where we have come from. So the ego now has succeeded because it has made us mindless. And to repeat, the significance of this is that if we do not have a mind, how can we possibly choose?

All of the choices we think we have are within the illusion, and they are all made-up choices. This is because we are really not choosing anything—we are simply choosing one illusion over another. I prefer *this* illusion rather than *that* illusion. There is this illusory problem over here, and so there is that illusory solution to it over there. In reality there is nothing. The *only* problem, as the Course tells us over and over again, is simply that we turned away from the Holy Spirit and turned to the ego. In effect what we did is we bet on the wrong horse. And we are not aware that the horse dropped dead in the starting gate and is going absolutely nowhere. Now we spend all of our time trying to revive this dead horse and get it to take us someplace—and there is no way it can do that because it is not alive. So what Jesus is doing in the Course is saying to us in effect: "You bet on the wrong horse. This horse will take you nowhere. Bet on me—I will take you back home." But we are so stubborn and so stupid and so insane that we persist in trying to get this dead horse up. And it goes absolutely nowhere. Every single thing we do in this world is like trying to revive a dead horse and get it to take us someplace—and it will take us nowhere. It cannot take us to the promised land, it cannot take us home—it is dead. Just imagine yourself on a dead horse. You are whipping it, you are cajoling it, you are doing all kinds of things, and it doesn't hear you. It does absolutely nothing. That is what we do in the world. That is what we do with the body. But the body is a dead horse. We don't know what we are doing because we don't know about anything else. It is not the horse that has blinders on, we have blinders on. All we see is what the ego

wants us to see: what is *outside* us. It doesn't have us see where the real problem is, which is *inside* us—in the mind.