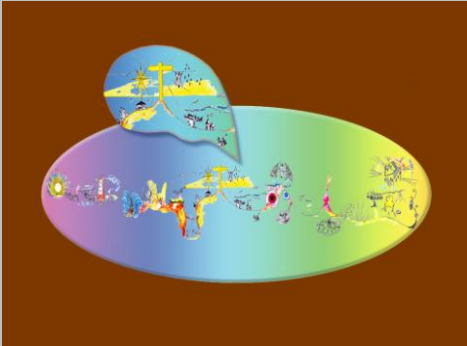


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## Eternal Fellowship News Bulletin

We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Hebrew Bible and New Testament) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

All activities are free of charge and no obligation whatever. Just enjoy our fellowship!

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HULDAH MINISTRY

# LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

## 【TREND SEEKING AFTER NOVELTY】

*While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the market-place day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)*

*Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.*

*"The God who made the world and everything in it is the LORD of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breadth and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'*

*"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone —an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge*

***the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.*** ACTS 17:16-31.

While Paul was waiting for Silas' and Timothy's arrival, he was greatly distressed by what he saw in the streets of Acropolis and Athens. The city was full of idols. He happened to come across some philosophers of his day, Epicureans and Stoics. They had originally taught the importance of happiness as being supreme to temporary pleasure and gratification, however, their ideology soon degenerated into sensuality and materialism. Stoicism taught that reality belonged only to material things, and man should recognise his self-sufficiency ("a god" in oneself) and independence while suppressing his desires, and should live in harmony with "nature", which they equated with a personal and loving deity. They believed that all things were produced from him and would be finally absorbed into him again. On the other hand, though the Epicureans were also materialists, they believed that the world was formed merely by chance without the involvement of gods in creation. Actually they were practical atheists, though they did not deny the existence of the gods.

Both Epicureans and Stoics, being proud of their way of thinking and life, called Paul ***'this babbler'***. This Greek word meant "seed picker", which stemmed from the illustration of a bird picking up seeds here and there, and came to refer to the idler in the market-place who picked up whatever scraps of learning he could find and paraded them without digesting them himself, according to the NIV text note. However, this word rather ironically reflected the exact condition of the Athenians, which Luke, the author of the Book of Acts puts it: ***'All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas'***. Then, seeing that the god of novelty was reigning in Athens, Paul sarcastically addressed them: ***'men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious'***. Here, the Greek word for 'religious' can be translated as 'superstitious', and it was a practice of all-embracing without discerning but with a love for newness and novelty.

In contrast with pantheistic Stoicism and with chance-believing Epicureans' philosophy, Paul addressed a true God as ***'The God who made the world.....heaven and earth'*** and as 'Designer' by putting it: ***'From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.'*** He ended his speech with the announcement that everyone should repent and be away from evil ways, i.e., idolatry by declaring that God ***'has set a day when he will judge the world with justice'***, by Christ. It is probable that, until Paul started talking about repentance, judgment, the bodily resurrection and return of Christ, most of his audience must have listened attentively to him, but he lost the majority of them in the end. After they were implicated for their sin, their moral irresponsibility, contrary ideas of their belief about death, immortality and god, they reacted with sneering or disillusionment. Their condition was exactly what Paul warned believers as end-time characteristics, in which they would love ***'godless myths and old wives' tales'***(1Ti.4:7), and ***'to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear'***(2Ti.4:3). The Athenians and the foreigners in the Acropolis turned their ears away from the truth, and as a result Paul's ministry to them was not successful. Whether or not it was after this failure that he preached ***'with eloquence or superior wisdom'***, Paul declared: ***'For I resolved to know nothing.....except Jesus Christ and him crucified'*** (1Co.2:1-2). This determination of Paul that he should proclaim Christ alone is a perpetual principle up to this day to be followed by His church.

However, what was apprehended and prophetically warned of as signs of apostasy in the end-times by Paul seem to be happening in our age. Today there are some who warn of the dangerous condition of the church that has moved towards experience-driven religion and eastern mysticism, and this is nothing else but the heresy of Gnosticism re-emerging, by which the ancient church was afflicted. According to an article by G. Richard Fisher, a currently famous faith-healer boasts to his audience that he has received visions of his dead predecessor and that he has received direction for his ministry from these revelations. He argues that such a biblically forbidden necromancy is now being advocated in the church. James R. Coggins and Paul G. Hiebert put it in their book: ***"Wonders And The Word"***: "There is a dangerous tendency in our age to seek infallible gurus, faultless leaders, and follow them blindly. Professional athletes who have been Christians for two years become our role models. Evangelists are asked to advise us on theology. Professional Christian singers become our bible teachers." This reminds me of Isaiah's prophecy about the chaos in a community of God's people because of their sinfulness: ***'See now the Lord, the LORD Almighty, is about to take from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support...I will make boys their officials; mere children will govern them. People will oppress each other...A man will seize one of his brothers at his father's home and say, "You have a cloak, you be our leader; take charge of this heap of ruins!"...Jerusalem staggers, Judah is falling; their words and deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence...Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves...Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. O my people,***

*your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path*' (Is.3:1-12). Fisher argues: 'The Church today is adrift on a sea of neo-gnosticism and subjectivism. It is spending its time in hearing and telling new things...the massive move away from the sufficiency of Scripture is creating incredible problems that all the false solutions and fad panaceas will never repair or heal...What we need is a revival of study and memorization of Scripture. That, followed by practical obedience to its commands, would eliminate the need to fabricate revival with ear-splitting music, bizarre manifestations, altered states of consciousness, and emotional frenzies.'

The following poignant remarks by Kevin Reeves highlight the dangerous trend of some denominational church, where the distinction between revelation and imagination is confused and lost. In the light of the article which follows Reeves' writing below, such "mental pictures" misinterpreted as so-called visions according to Reeves' argument might be related to "hypnotic" mind control.

'Never in the history of our planet have so many who call themselves Christian claimed visions from God. Encounters with Christ, angels, demons, even saints long departed have begun to appear in book form, crowding the charismatic section of our local Christian bookstores. The popularity of visions never seems to wane, and the more a person has and the greater the scope, the quicker he is skyrocketed to Christian stardom. People with virtually no genuine theological training are suddenly propelled into the teaching arena, regaling vast audiences with tremendous accounts of their own spiritual derring-do. And while the stories continue to scale the heights of plausibility, an amazed public looks on, vicariously a part of the panoramic excitement and often with hands folded atop a closed Bible in their laps. Sadly and without exaggeration, the above account is an apt description of the spiritual maelstrom that always characterized [my former church]. Sunday services were routinely stopped to give opportunity to report a vision that occurred during worship. Many in the congregation would listen with rapt attention as one person after another would share what had transpired "in the spirit." Sometimes demons would make an appearance; sometimes it was the Lord Jesus Himself. Angels were a particular favorite. I can't tell you how many times angels made an impromptu appearance at our services.... No one halted the festivities to suggest examining the claim in the light of God's Word. It was merely taken at face value and used to bolster our self-image as the church on the cutting-edge of God's worldwide movement....The cries of "I saw!" reverberated throughout my church my whole tenure there. Sometimes the visions were two-dimensional, sometimes 3-D, and sometimes the person was actually caught up into them, in the same way the apostle John was translated into the heavenly realms in the book of Revelation. They moved as participants in the vision itself, walking, feeling, etc. As our pastor consistently reminded the congregation of its prophetic calling, dreams and visions grew to paramount importance. They were used to chart our congregation's very course, and any resistance or verbal doubt was severely frowned upon or openly dismissed....Many people cannot appreciate the gravity with which visions are accepted in many charismatic circles, and consequently cannot understand the bondage that results. If someone has a vision of "the Lord Jesus" and is given a message to convey to you, for you to treat it lightly is to despise the very words of God. You are bound to carry out the instructions of this visionary or face the consequences. The ensuing fear can be devastating, especially if the message contradicts your own conscience or understanding of the Scriptures....I believe that most of what are reported as visions are not such at all, but could be more appropriately termed mental pictures. The two are certainly not synonymous. Mental pictures occur constantly during our waking hours but don't necessarily have anything to do with the spiritual, whereas visions always have their origin in the supernatural realm....The practice itself can be dangerous, actually maneuvering an innocent Christian in the wrong direction. In many cults, and, unfortunately in much of the Pentecostal arm of the church, it has already done just that....According to the Bible, there are three sources of visions--God, the devil, and the flesh. Of these, only one can be trusted as to motive and authenticity. As for the other spiritual experiences originating with the kingdom of darkness or human sensuality, they must be discarded, and immediately....I cannot stress this enough--contrary to popular fallacy, there is no such thing as a harmless false vision. Its fraudulent nature alone is enough to condemn it in the eyes of God; those who give ear to it will eventually have their faith in Christ contaminated, perhaps shipwrecked. Any spirit, vision, dream, prophet, experience, whatever, that does not agree with the revelation of Jesus Christ as set down in the Scriptures is not of

