

General Introduction: Dirk Philips and the others had to contend with the Seekers of the 1,500s just as their successors in the 1,600 did. After reading these points against the Seekers in the 1500s we can understand the arguments of John Spilsbury and the others in the 1600s. They merely reaffirmed what the Anabaptist leaders had said in the previous century. See footnote #5 for a further explanation of this, REP.

The Sending of Preachers or Teachers, Part 2

By

Dirk Philips from The Writings of Dirk Philips, 1504-1568.

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Answers to the Seekers

But there are many who contradict [us] here. *In the first place, some say that no one may teach and restore the fallen worship again, except they be called of the Lord through a living voice from heaven. Just as Elijah (they say) did not punish the priests of Baal nor restore the fallen worship in Israel before he had received a command from the Lord and was sent to Ahab, 1 Kings 18.* Again, just as Joshua did not again begin circumcision (which was not practiced for a period in the wilderness), before the time that the Lord commanded him, Josh. 5:2.

God No Longer Speaks Through External Voices and Dreams and Visions

Answer God does not now, at the present time, *speak with us through an external voice from heaven, nor through visions and dreams as happened in the Old Testament*, but he *speaks with us through his Son, Jesus Christ*, Heb, 1: 1[2], and Christ speaks *with us through his Word*. And the *Word of Christ is Spirit and life*, John 6:63. Whenever Christ now grants and impresses *His living Word in someone's heart, and thereby calls, that person is without any doubt called of the Lord through his Word*. But whereby one shall know that anyone is thus called of God through the living Word and through the Spirit of Christ, we have said above, namely, *that he speaks God's Word truly, bears fruit, and seeks the honor of Christ and the salvation of souls with wholehearted zeal*, Isa. 55: 10[-11]; John 3:34.

Further, so we have maintained above, *that the apostles and elders, with the congregations of God, called and ordained deacons and teachers through the power of Christ, Acts 6:1[6]; 13:1[2].* What now the Christians of their time did correctly, *that is not forbidden or discontinued for the Christians of this time, but the Christians must conduct themselves according to the practice and procedure of the first churches.* The reason: "*For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ,*" 1 Cor. 3: 11.

Properly Rebuilding the Temple and House of the Lord

Therefore, just as the fallen temple of the Lord in Jerusalem was built again on the first foundation and all worship therein was resumed and practiced according to the law, so also now must the fallen house of God, namely the Christian congregation, be built up again on the first foundation of the apostles and prophets, (of which Christ Jesus is the cornerstone) 1 Tim. 3:[1 12]; Heb. 3:5 [6]; Eph. 2:19 [20]; and all things therein must be conducted and carried out according to the ordinance of Christ and his apostles. Since then the apostles and elders with the congregation of God chose leaders and ministers through Christ and placed and established them in their office, therefore the Christians of this time must also, according to the example of the apostolic congregations, choose and ordain teachers. And necessity also demands this, *for it is certain and incontrovertible, that a Christian congregation may not be built, established, and gathered without correct doctrine, faith, and baptism.*

The Lord's Supper

In addition, *without the Lord's Supper, admonition, discipline, excommunication, or separation, it cannot stand.* For where God's Word is not taught correctly and the gospel of Christ is not preached, how then shall people believe? As the apostle says, "*And how are they to believe in him of whom they have not heard,*" Rom. 10:[14]? But where faith out of the hearing of the Word of God *through the cooperation of the Holy Spirit* is not rightly grasped in the heart, *how can baptism be practiced orderly and received,* since baptism upon faith was commanded and instituted by the Lord himself and practiced by the apostles, Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:[16]; Acts 2:41; 8:[38 39]; 10:47 [48]? *But where the baptism of Christ is not practiced properly, how shall one then be baptized into Christ Jesus, into his death and [added] to the fellowship of his body through the Holy Spirit, Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:12; 1 Cor. 12:13? How then shall the dying away of the flesh, the burial of sins, and the resurrection into a new life be rightly considered and carried out [Rom. 6:6 11]?*

Rightly Observing the Lord's Supper

Where the *Lord's Supper* is not rightly observed, how can his Word and command (that one by and with the breaking of bread should proclaim his death and preserve his memory) be adequately done there, Matt. 26:25; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:22? *How can the fellowship of Christ, yes, his body and blood, be indeed taken to heart there, brotherly love and unity be truly signified and established?* Again, where admonition does not proceed in full power, there the love to both God and neighbor usually grows cold. And where discipline is not correctly practiced, there the one entangles himself in sin with the other. Therefore the Lord says, "*You shall not hate your neighbor in your heart, but punish him, that you may not be guilty because of him,*" Lev. 19:17. Again, where excommunication and the ban are not correctly observed with the gospel, there the one corrupts the other, as Paul says, "*Do you not know that a little leaven ferments the whole lump of dough,*" 1 Cor. 5:[6]?

The Gifts of Grace in the Congregations of the Lord

And if the congregation of God without all these previously mentioned items (and whatsoever more the Lord has ordained for the upbuilding and sustaining of his congregation), can neither stand nor be maintained, therefore there must also be ministers of the Word in the congregation. *For it is not everyone's thing to teach God's Word and to distribute the sacraments of Christ.* But it is with these things as Paul says, "*Similarly, as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, but among each other the one is the member of the other and they have many kinds of gifts according to the grace that is given to us,*" Rom. 12:4 [6]. Again, "*there are many kinds of gifts, but there is one Spirit; and there are many kinds of service, but there is one Lord; and there are many kinds of powers, but there is one God who works all things in everyone. But in each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good,*" 1 Cor. 12:4 [7].

In addition the apostle says, "*Grace is given to each one among us according to the measure of Christ's gift, and he has established some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, that the saints should all be joined together for common service, for improving the body of Christ, until we all extend our hand to the other in one faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to become a mature person who is there in the measure of the fullness of Christ,*" Eph. 4:7, [11 13]. And Peter says, "*Serve one another, each with the gift he has received, as good stewards of*

God's varied grace: if someone speaks, that he speaks God's Word; if someone renders service, that he renders it out of the strength which God gives in order that in everything God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be honor and dominion from eternity to eternity. Amen," 1 Pet. 4:10[11].

The Placement of Divine Gifts

Out of all these words it is easily understood *in the first place, how God places his ministers in his congregations and distributes many kinds of gifts. In the second place, how necessary ministers are in the congregation and what their work and service is. In the third place, that the congregation (since it is one with Christ) has the power to choose teachers and ministers according to the Scripture.*

The Congregation Defined

But which is the congregation of Christ, which has received such power from Christ (not only to choose teachers and leaders, but, what is more, to bind and to loose, to forgive sins and to retain them), Scripture testifies clearly at many places, namely, *that it is a gathering of believers, that is, of living saints and born again persons who believe the Word of God entirely, teach the same correctly, bear fruit with it, practice the sacraments of Christ fittingly, correctly maintain the ban, walk in love, and conduct and carry out all things according to the gospel, Matt. 16:19; 18: 18; John 20:23; 8:30.*

Citing Important Scriptures such as I Cor. 12:13

Yes, the congregation of Christ is the fellowship of the saints, *who through the providence of God the Father, through the grace of Jesus Christ, and in the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, was gathered through the preaching of the gospel, and through one Spirit baptized into one body, unified, and joined together, 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 12:13a; Eph. 4:4; so that it is the body of Christ, his bride, taken out of his side, made from his flesh and bone, washed in his blood, cleansed through the water bath in his Word, and sanctified through his Spirit, Eph. 5:30; Col. 1:14; Eph. 5:26.*

The Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem

For therefore *he also allowed his side to be opened and pierced through on the cross and allowed blood and water to flow or run from it so that he might gain, purify, and save his congregation, John 19:34; Eph. 5:25 [26]. Therefore it is also his pure bride, his most beloved friend, the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, come here out of*

heaven from God, and illumined with the glory of God and of the Lamb, etc., Rev. 19:7[8]; 21:2.

Finding the True Congregation and the Power of God

This congregation has the power through Christ Jesus (from whom it has received everything) to choose leaders and ministers. And if anyone should ask, *"Where is this congregation?"* we answer, *"Where God's Word is correctly taught, believed, and kept, for they are Christ's disciples who have his word, believe, and keep it,"* John 8:30; 17:6; Matt. 18:20; Luke 24:14[15]. Where now such disciples are gathered in his name, there he is in the midst of them. *But if Christ is among them, then they are always a congregation of Christ. If they are a congregation of Christ, then they must also have the same power which Christ gave the congregation. But the power which Christ has given his congregation (namely, not only to choose teachers and ministers of the Word, but also to bind and to loose, to forgive sins and to retain them), has been adequately related and explained above,* Matt. 16:[19]; 18:18; John 20:23. *(For much more of this type of teaching please read John Spilsbury on the God's Ordinances and King on the Way to Zion, Vol. 1; 1656. REP)*

The Rediscovery of God's Word

Therefore we conclude that, since God's Word has now come to the [light of] day, *there must, therefore, also be a congregation of God; for God's Word is not without fruit,* Isa. 55: 10 [11]. If then someone says that there is no congregation of God, *he must also say that there are no believers upon the earth, yes, that God's Word is nowhere upon earth; for where God's Word is, there is also a congregation of God, be it small or large.*

The Imagined Invisible Congregation and the Real Visible Congregation

But the congregation of God is not only invisible, *as some permit themselves to think and imagine an invisible Christian people, (The Reformers- REP)* but also visible. *For believers recognize each other and join with their kind,* (as also all animals do according to Ecclesiasticus), Eccles. 13:[15 16], *and love each other since they are the children of one heavenly Father, born out of one God, brought forth out of one seed, partakers of one divine nature, and endowed with one Holy Spirit,* John 1: 13; 1 John 5: 1; 1 Pet. 1:23.

Out of this comes the difference between *brotherly and common love,* 2 Pet. 1:7. And this is the reason the apostles wrote all their letters

to the Christians, *to their brothers and companions of faith and not to the world*. This would not have taken place if they had not known the Christians and had not known the difference between Christians and the world.

The Manifestation of the Christian Congregation

Yes, the Christian congregation *is also in part manifest to the world, just as Abraham was manifest to the world through his faith, righteousness, and glorious deed according to God's Word, and left to us as an example in Scripture to teach and admonish that we should follow in his footsteps with sincere trust and fruitfulness of works which God commands us, Gen. 15:6; 22; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23*. Yes, Christ Jesus our Lord and Master, Matt. 23:[8], our Pioneer and Ruler, Heb. 12:2, revealed himself to the world through words and works and thus also commanded his disciples and said, "*Let your light shine before people, that they see your good works and praise your Father in heaven,*" Matt. 5:16.

To this Paul also admonished the believers that they should walk such good lives through which they would become manifest to unbelievers, and says, "*Do all things without grumbling or questioning so that you may be irreproachable, innocent, and children of God blameless in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shall shine as lights in the world, that you will remain with the Word of life,*" Phil. 2:14[16]. And Peter says *that the godless and blasphemers indeed recognize Christians whenever they do not run with them as earlier in their licentious, unseemly, and godless ways,* 1 Pet. 4 4.

The Visibility of the Christian Congregation

Herewith it is adequately shown that the congregation of God is not alone invisible, *but also visible and in part revealed to the world*. But it is not in a particular location or place like the figurative Jerusalem was nowhere on earth except in the Jewish land alone. *But the heavenly Jerusalem is everywhere, wherever the Word of God is rightly taught, believed, and kept, Gal. 4:26; Rev. 21:2; Matt. 28:[18], and the sacraments of Christ are used correctly according to the Word*. For the Lord has added his sacraments to the gospel, attached them to it, and commanded not only that his gospel should be preached but also that his sacraments should be practiced and maintained, Mark 16:[16]; Matt. 26:[26 28]; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11: [23 25].

The Dwelling on this Earth of the Heavenly Jerusalem

Thus has the Lord ordained and thus it shall also remain to the end. "*Heaven and earth,*" says Christ, "*will pass away but my words mill not pass away,*" Matt. 24:35. *Therefore we still say that where God's Word is correctly taught, believed, and kept, and the sacraments are properly practiced, there is the heavenly Jerusalem, there dwells God the almighty Lord and the Lamb,* Rev. 21:2; Heb. 12:22, just as Christ himself testified and said, "*Whoever loves me shall keep my word, and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him,*" John 14:[23]. And in another place God says, "*I will live in them, and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people,*" Lev. 26: [11]; Ezek. 37:27; 2 Cor. 6:16, says the almighty Lord.

Are there to be Signs and Wonders Now?

In the second place, some say that the teachers now should confirm their sending with signs and miracles like the apostles did. (5)

The Answer

Thereupon we answer that to require signs and not permit oneself to be satisfied with the words is a sign of unbelief as Christ testified with these words: "*Whenever you do not see signs and wonders you do not believe,*" John 4:48. Therefore we may indeed say that they do not have the true faith who demand and desire signs beyond the Word of Christ. But where they have such faith as the centurion had who said to Christ, "*Oh, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, therefore I also did not consider myself worthy to come to you. But speak a word and my servant will be healed,*" Luke 7:6[8]. Had they such faith (we say), they should always believe the words of Christ and now demand no signs but allow themselves to be satisfied with the fact *that Christ in the beginning and thereafter the apostles have adequately confirmed the teaching of the gospel with signs and miracles.*

And should it be that they already saw signs and wonders, they would perhaps mistakenly do as the Pharisees; namely, they might attribute the works of God to the devil or seek another reason in order to blaspheme the works of God. But now that they see no signs they speak with the Pharisees, "*We would like to see a sign.*" But what did Christ answer to the Pharisees? "*This evil and adulterous nature seeks a sign but no sign shall be given to it except alone the sign of the prophet Jonah,*" Matt. 12:38 [39]. What did Abraham reply to the rich man (who desired that he would send Lazarus to his father's house that he testify to his brothers in order that they would not come to the place where he was)? "*They have Moses and the prophets;*

let them hear those." But he said, "No, father Abraham; but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent." He said to him, "*If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe if someone should rise from the dead,*" Luke 16:27 [31]. And Paul says, "*The Jews demand signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach the crucified Christ, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Greeks, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, we preach Christ a divine power and wisdom,*" 1 Cor. 1: [22 24].

Concerning Those Who Require Signs and Wonders

Out of these and similar words of Holy Scripture we may clearly observe what kind of people these are who require signs and do not allow themselves to be satisfied with the Word and how one must believe God's Word more than signs and miracles and how those cannot be helped who will not hear Moses and the prophets. But if these are not to be helped, how then shall those be helped who will not hear Christ and his apostles? But if they wish to hear, why do they then demand signs?

It is true that the miracles and signs of wonder are witnesses of the gospel and the divine Word and that they confirm and strengthen the same. The miracles also move the people toward faith but with the understanding that not the teaching which is already accepted and established must be therewith confirmed, but every new doctrine, that it is from God. *Therefore these signs are not necessary now at the present time just as they were necessary at the time of Christ and his apostles.* [The] reason: *Since Christ is the end of the law and a mediator of the New Testament, therefore his teaching had to be confirmed with strong signs and wonderful works, just as the Old Testament was confirmed with signs and miracles,* Rom. 10:4; Heb. 7:11; Gal. 3:20; Heb. 12:24. But now that the teaching of Christ has once been established, and no other teaching is taught or may be taught, yes, cursed is the one who preaches another gospel than that which Christ and his apostles have preached to us, Gal. 1:9. *Thus the signs are not a necessity. For the law was after all not established more than once with signs and with the blood of calves and goats,* Exod. 19:16; 24:6; Heb. 9:13. *And as it was for a period of time obscured and hidden and was again found and came to the light of day, even so, it was not confirmed by signs a second time,* 2 Kings 22:8. So also the pious Josiah, as he heard the book of the law read desired no sign but indeed allowed himself to be satisfied with the words and carried out all things according to it, and also kept the Passover. The same no king in Israel had done before him [2 Kings 23:21 23].

The Gospel System Has Been Once Confirmed

Because the gospel has now been confirmed with such glorious miracles (the like of which had never taken place) [and] in addition was empowered with the innocent death and precious blood of the spotless Lamb, Jesus Christ, Heb. 9:13[14], and was for a long time obscured, but now through the grace of God [has] again come to light, so all devout Christians must allow themselves to be satisfied therewith. So that whoever requires a sign beyond this must hear "*an evil and adulterous nature seeks for a sign,*" etc. Matt. 12:39.

Thus we must again also administer and maintain all the ordinances of God according to the gospel. For to that [end] God reveals his Word to us that we through this should learn to know his will, turn ourselves to God, abstain from sin, believe rightly, live a Christ like life, and maintain all his commandments, as Christ says to his apostles, "*Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you,*" Matt. 28:20. But even as we accept and must accept the teaching of the gospel without signs if we would be saved, James 1:21, in the same manner we must also accept the teachers who proclaim the teaching to us without signs and recognize [them as] good. The work always praises the master, and blameless teaching and walk [praises] a Christian teacher. Nevertheless, even though a teacher is blameless in all things, the hypocritical and pharisaical nature will yet not believe the gospel.

False teachers can also sometimes indeed perform signs. One knows well how the Egyptian magicians withstood Moses and what they did through their magic, Exod. 7:11 [12]; 2 Tim. 3: 8. And Christ says that many false prophets and false Christians shall arise [and] do great signs and wonders so that (if it were possible), even the elect should be led astray, Matt. 24: 11. And Paul says, "The coming of the antichrist will happen according to the activity of Satan with all kinds of deceitful signs and wonders among those who will be lost," 2 Thess. 2:9[10]. Therefore then, a Christian may not look upon the signs alone, but much more upon God's Word which is always certain and true, John 17:8.

And if one still requires signs, then one must demand them not only of the teachers but also of all believers. For Christ says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater works, because I go to the Father," John 14:12. And at another place Christ says, "The signs which will accompany those who believe are these: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will drive out serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and it will become better with them," Mark 16:17[18]. But now we do not see that anyone does

such outward signs. Who will therefore say that there is no one who believes?

This be far hence! Does Paul not say after all, that they are not all workers of miracles, 1 Cor. 12:29. Therefore, just as external signs do not follow faith at the present time, and there is without the slightest doubt faith to be found in some persons, therefore also external signs do not follow the sending of God. Nevertheless, some without doubt are still sent out from God in order to preach his Word whom one shall not attempt to recognize by the signs (for these are many times false and deceptive), but by their sound teaching and fruits (which will not be found with all false prophets and false Christians).

Paul also describes to us expressly how a bishop shall be qualified, but he does not say that he must also perform signs, 1 Tim. 3:1[7]; Titus 1:5[9].

One reads nowhere in Scripture that Timothy, Titus, and others in addition, who were full of the Holy Spirit did signs. Therefore someone can indeed be a bishop and yet not do any sign. But a bishop's office or service is to preach the gospel and thus to feed the flock of Christ, 1 Cor. 1: 1 [?]; [Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2 4]. But preaching the gospel is more than to distribute the sacramental signs, yet the one was established and commanded with the other of the Lord Christ Jesus, as was said above, Matt. 28:[20]; Mark 16:15.

Out of all this it now finally follows that a teacher may indeed be sent of God, teach God's Word, and serve the congregation of Christ, yet nevertheless do no signs. Therefore they err who look upon signs and watch for them to come. But [let] them beware that they do not accept and receive Satan (who is very cunning and hides all his wickedness under the guise of hypocrisy) as Christ, 2 Cor. 11: [14 15], and that it not happen to them as with the Jews, to whom Christ said, "I have come in my Father's name, and you did not accept me; but if another comes in his own name, him you will receive," John 5:43.

In the third place, some say, that a teacher who is sent of God should not teach secretly but should proclaim the Word of God openly before everyone.

Answer

Thus it also happened to Christ. For his brothers (says the evangelist) said to him, "'Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples may see the works you are doing. For no man works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.' For even his brothers did not believe in him," John 7:3 [5]. Thus the unbelieving and

evil world also says now at the present time [together] with the apostate and false brothers, that teachers, if they are from God, should make themselves manifest to the world. But what did Christ answer his brothers (who did not believe in him and therefore wanted that he should reveal himself to the world?): "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil," John 7:6[7]. Thus all disciples of Christ must now do also, maintain their silence, accommodate themselves to the time (yet in such a way that they do not act against God's Word) and not regard what the perverted and godless say, Rom. 12:[12]; Eph. 5:16. For the world has always blasphemed the works of God and cannot look upon them with good eyes. It must all be evil, however good that is which the good Lord Christ Jesus does.

Therefore he also says in the Gospel, "To whom shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates, 'We piped to you, and you did not want to dance; we lamented, and you did not want to cry.' John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'See what a glutton and drunkard this person is, a companion of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom must let itself be justified by her children," Matt. 11: 16 [-17]; Luke 7:31 [32].

From this one may recognize the evil, hypocritical nature which always seeks a reason to oppose Christ and finds none. Here one may clearly see that the perverted and malicious [persons] who hate the gospel, and it does not help whether it is sweet (as Christ makes it) or sour (as John makes it). But they pervert it into evil every time they [have opportunity to] abuse the gospel. The apostle Paul had to be regarded by the Jews as an agitator and by Festus as mad, Acts 21:38; 26:24. Thus the world has always been perverted like it still is and deals in a perverted manner with the Christians. For if they reveal themselves and come forth boldly and proclaim God's Word, the world can yet not, above all other things endure such, and abuses them as enthusiasts [and] agitators; yes, persecutes them with sword, water, and fire. But if they keep themselves secret and live their faith in quietness, then the world blasphemes them nonetheless and calls them rabble spirits, corner preachers, and does not know how to blaspheme them disdainfully enough.

Is this not a perverse nature which castigates Christians whenever they keep themselves hidden and remain quiet, and whenever they are open they cannot endure a single Christian? So there is here now no other counsel to be found than that the Christians, if they are

exposed, will be persecuted by the world, and if they are hidden they will be blasphemed and disdained by the world. This is also the prediction of the Lord, as all Christians and God fearing [persons] well know, Matt. 5:10; 10:16[17]; 24:9; John 15:18. Therefore then, they do not regard what the world and the false brothers say. Nevertheless we thus wish, through the grace of the Lord, to serve all goodhearted [persons], but give to our ministers a more reasonable answer [and] broader information thereon, and speak thus. In the first place, we have indicated above, with many clear testimonies of Scripture, whereby a true teacher shall be known and differentiated from a false teacher. Whoever now is such an one, just as the Scripture portrays a true teacher, and remains always conformed to Christ his Lord and master, yes, out of true fervent love of God and the neighbor is driven to his ministerial office, he is without doubt sent of God whether he teaches secretly or openly, 1 Cor. 10: [33]; Phil. 3:17.

The opponent then says, yes, [but] Christ and his apostles taught openly.

Answer

Christ was promised to the Jews and sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matt. 10:6; 15:24. To them he proclaimed his Father's Word and performed such works among them as no one else had done in order that they should believe in him, and if not, that they then had no excuse. In addition, Christ could slip away in the midst of his enemies, Luke 4:30. Yes, he caused them to fall to earth through his powerful Word and no one could lay a hand on him before his hour was come, John 18:6. Nevertheless he still hid himself and did not trust the people, for he knew well (as John says) what was in the people, John 2:24 [25].

The apostles were chosen by Christ and sent out to preach the gospel to all creatures, and to be witnesses of Christ to the end of the world, Matt. 28:[17 20]; Mark 16:15; John 15:27; Acts 1:22. Therefore God also worked marvelously with them. But God does not work thus with all teachers, for they are not all like the great apostles, and God also does not want to accomplish through all teachers what he accomplished through the apostles. Therefore he also did not lay upon all teachers what he laid upon the apostles. The apostles were commanded of the Lord to preach the gospel to all creatures which they also did through God's grace, Matt. 28:[18 20]; Mark 16:15; Col. 1:6. The teachers who now follow them must then preach not only to so called Christians, but also to Jews and Turks and all heathen. But now Paul says to the teachers and bishops of the congregations that they should take heed to themselves and to the congregation over which the Holy Spirit had set them, Acts 20:28.

The apostles spoke at Pentecost with tongues of fire and everyone

understood them, Acts 2:[3]4. This had not happened before that time nor since. Thus God also miraculously released the apostles from prison, Acts 5:18; Acts 12:7; 16:25[26]. Thus if anyone now wants to say that the teachers should preach openly as Christ and his apostles did, he [should] still consider that Christ was able to free himself out of the hands of his enemies as he milled and that God worked and dealt so marvelously with his apostles. The one must always be observed with the other so that one does not with indiscretion lay upon every teacher [to do] what Christ and his apostles did. But just as God apportions to every individual the measure of the Spirit and faith, and has given him his particular service, he himself will know [what] to observe, and also [what] should be observed by the congregations, 1 Cor. 12:[4 11].

Yes, says the opponent then, God's hand is not shortened. He is still able to help his own as he helped the apostles.

Answer

That we know and indeed believe. The disciples at Damascus also knew and believed that God is almighty, but nevertheless they helped Paul over the wall at night and thus he escaped out of the hands of the authorities of Damascus, Acts 9:25. The Christians at Ephesus also knew and indeed believed that God is almighty and could certainly protect Paul from all his enemies. Nevertheless they would not permit Paul to go among the people and give them a reply, Acts 19:30. But now some wish to expel the teachers into the midst of their enemies, even when it has been shown before their eyes how extremely blood thirsty the world is and with abominable tyrannies persecutes the teachers unto death. But what kind of a spirit, disposition, and love these people have may be seen and understood [when compared with] the example of these disciples at Damascus and at Ephesus.

Elijah also well knew that God is almighty. He also trusted his Lord and God that he could protect him well. Nevertheless, he feared [for] himself before Jezebel and fled into the wilderness, 1 Kings 19:3. But Jezebel could cherish no more evil purpose against Elijah than the world now has against all Christians, and in particular against the true teachers and preachers of the gospel.

Above all this, Jesus Christ our Lord left the land of Judea when he heard that Herod had thrown John into prison, Matt. 14:13. If then Elijah hid himself from Jezebel [and] Christ from Herod, why should not a true teacher also do the same?

The opponent then says [that] Elijah revealed himself before Ahab and

Jezebel and the whole people of Israel, 1 Kings 18:1; [18: 17; 18: 30; 19:1 2], and Christ did not always remain outside of the land of Judea.

Answer

That Elijah revealed himself was the will of the Lord, therefore he was also driven thereto by the Spirit of the Lord. When God also wills that the teachers should come into the open and not fear for themselves before murderous Jezebel, then the Lord will indeed work and drive [them] thereto through his Spirit.

The opponent then says, yes, since the teachers of this present time are not driven through the Spirit of the Lord to reveal themselves to the world, therefore they should remain silent and not take it upon themselves to teach, to distribute the sacramental signs of Christ, and thus to gather a congregation of God.

Answer

If after all the apostles out of fear of the Jews came together secretly, held their gathering [behind] locked doors, taught, baptized, and broke bread in houses, and that not by day only but also by night, why may and should it not now also take place in this way, John 20:19; Acts 1: 13; 2:46; 20:7? Or will one accuse and censure the apostles because of this? Or is it now sin and censurable what in that time was good and useful?

The opponent then says thus: Christ after all said in the gospel, 'Whoever does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, so that his deeds will not be punished. But whoever does the truth comes to the light, that their works may be revealed, for they have been done in God,' John 3:20 [21].

Thereupon we answer that these words are not against us. They are spoken by Christ to mean that evildoers hate the light of the divine Word in order that they may not be disciplined nor shamed thereby.

Therefore the apostle says to the Thessalonians, "You are all children of light and of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not sleep, as the others do. Those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night," 1 Thess. 5:5[7]. Again, [he wrote] to the Romans, "The night is gone, the day has come. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the weapons of light; let us conduct ourselves honorably as in the day." Rom. 13:12[13].

Therefore the previously mentioned words of Christ are not to be

understood that one may not teach God's Word secretly (for the contrary there is proof enough in the Scriptures), but that unbelievers and evildoers hate the true light, that is the Word of God, and flee from [it] because God's Word disciplines and judges.

Yes, (as the apostle says), "It is sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of body and soul, also through nerves and marrow, and is a judge of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is invisible before him....," Heb. 4:12 [13].

Since then God's Word thus pierces, disciplines, and judges, evildoers hate the light of the divine Word so that they may neither be disciplined nor judged by it. For the godless hate discipline, Prov. 9:8 and seek corners to slip into in order to hide themselves. They love darkness and are not eager to be seen, since what they indeed do secretly is a shame to say, as the apostle writes to the Ephesians, Eph. 5:12.

Likewise, let us observe with understanding what this signifies and what our Lord willed to give us to know therewith when he sent Elijah in the time of drought to Zarephath to a widow and there preserved him before Ahab and Jezebel, and fed, nourished, and kept him and the widow through a little oil and meal, 1 Kings 17:9. The Lord could well have fed and kept Elijah even had he not sent him to the widow. He could also have comforted the widow even if Elijah had not come to her. But it now pleased the Lord that Elijah with the widow and the widow with Elijah, would be kept (as is said) through a little oil and meal. But what this signifies we will give to all Godfearing persons to consider. According to our understanding these figures (as also all other figures), happened and [were] written for our

learning, "so that by patience and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope," Rom. 15:4; namely, that God does not forsake his own, but helps them in every need and gathers them to each other that they may live their faith in quietness and solitude, guarded before Ahab and Jezebel, fed and nourished by God through his Word and Spirit. For the Lord does not forsake his saints but in evil times they are kept, Ps. 33:19; and in the time of drought they shall have enough.

The rich must suffer want and hunger, but those who fear the Lord have no lack, Ps. 34:[9 10]. But what [does] Christ say? "I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon to a woman who was a widow," Luke 4:25 [26]. Thus it still goes. For Ahab and Jezebel reign now also at this time and have brought Baal into Israel; therewith they make Israel to sin against the Lord. Therefore the Lord is

also angry over Israel and has sent them a time of famine (that is) hunger and want of his Word upon earth, [Amos 8: 11], as Israel in the time of Elijah had want of bodily bread. And just as Elijah was sent alone to the widow in Zarephath, so also few are now found who are pleasing to the Lord, so that they receive the comforting and quickening of their souls from God through his Word and Spirit with the cooperation of the servants and ministers of Jesus Christ.

But that Elijah had to keep himself hidden [and] also was not sent by the Lord to many, but alone to the widow in Zarephath, that was not his fault but that of the others. That the teachers must now also hide at this time and not be sent to the world by the Lord the fault is not the Lord's (for he desires that all persons should be saved), also not of the sincere ministers (for they are of good will and inclined to serve everyone and to proclaim God's Word) but the wicked will not hear nor endure them, Ezek. 18:23; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9.

Finally, since Jezebel is so hateful against all servants of God, it is better to serve God in secret than to bow the knees openly before Baal better to teach God's Word secretly among those who have a desire for the truth and bear fruit according to it than to keep completely silent about it. It is better to teach the mystery of the kingdom of God and explain it secretly, where it is accepted and understood, as Christ and the apostles did, Matt. 13: 11, than to hear that the harmful throne openly serves evil with the law, Ps. 94:20. It is also better to practice the sacraments secretly with the God fearing and true believing [persons] according to God's Word than to openly misuse them with unbelieving and false Christians, or to despise them and abandon them entirely as the erring and prideful spirits do who think and say unashamedly, "They are rich and have prospered, and need nothing; not knowing that they are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked," Rev. 3:17.

Further, as Scripture clearly indicates, one may not speak about God's Word wherever and whenever one wills, but alone when and where God wills. But the Lord wills that his Word shall be spoken where it bears fruit. Again, where it does not bear fruit, there it shall not be spoken. Therefore Ecelesiasticus says, "Where there is no hearing, there one shall not speak in vain," Ecclus. 32:[4]. And Christ said to his apostles, "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and tear you to pieces," Matt. 7:6. These words give us adequate recognition that God's Word (which is the holy thing and the pearl) shall not be preached to the persecutors of truth (which are the dogs who gnash their teeth together over the righteous), Ps. 37:12, and the unclean who are drowned in the desires of the flesh (which are the swine). Moreover, it is well to observe here that the Holy Spirit forbade Paul to speak in Asia but sent him to Macedonia to preach the gospel there, Acts

16:6 [9]. Therefore the same apostle said, "Speak what is profitable, for improvement where it is needed, that it may be profitable to hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in which you were sealed for the day of redemption," Eph. 4:29 [30].

Yes, Christ himself did not want to give the Pharisees an answer to their question and also did not want to answer all the questions of Herod with a single word, [Luke 23:9]. In addition, Christ often spoke to the people in parables, Matt. 13: 10; Mark 4: 10, but the mystery of the gospel he explained secretly to his disciples to whom he said, "To you it has been given to understand the secrets of the kingdom of God, but to the others it has not been given," Matt. 13:11; [Mark 4:11], as it stands written, "he made known his ways to Moses, his intentions to the people of Israel," Ps. 103:7 And further, "he declares his word to Jacob, his manners and rules to Israel," Ps. 147:19. And Paul says that God's Word, that is, the mystery which was hidden from the foundation of the world, and from former times, is now revealed to the saints. "To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ among you, the hope of glory," Col. 1: [27].

Therefore Christ also says, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth that you have hidden these things (the gospel) from the wise and understanding and revealed them to those without understanding and the simple ones; yes, Father, thus it has been pleasing to you," Matt. 11: 25 [6]; Luke 10: 2 1.

And Christ further says, "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, that is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world," John 14:21[22]?

Out of all these words it is easily observed that God himself hid his Word from the world, that Christ spoke to the people in obscure parables, the Holy Spirit forbade Paul to speak God's Word in Asia, and God revealed his Word to his saints and not to the world. How then may the ministers of the Word be blamed with any reasonableness that they act according to this example in these dangerous times, to conceal the mystery of the gospel from this evil world, and in quietness secretly to reveal and speak what is profitable to the goodhearted who are receptive to hear them,⁷ in order that they not grieve the Holy Spirit, Eph. 4: [30] ?

In summary, how a teacher shall primarily be tested and recognized by his teaching and fruits is adequately explained above. But whether to

teach openly or secretly is beside the point. For to teach openly is good and right according to the opportunity of the time; to teach secretly is not forbidden according to the opportunity of the time. Public teaching, if it is false, does not therefore become good because it is publicly taught. That which is false must be and remain false even if it were taught publicly a thousand times and were it wonderfully decorated with beautiful sounding words. Again, to teach secretly does not therefore become false because it was taught secretly. For what is right, that must remain right (says the prophet) and this shall please all devout hearts, Ps. 94:15. And God's Word is and remains the truth whether it be taught secretly or publicly. And if it were [so] that the true teachers might teach publicly, they should yet proclaim to us nothing other than this same Word of God that is revealed and taught us through the grace of the Lord.

Therefore here is not to be twisted, here no looking around after another gospel, since after all, both angels and people must be cursed who preach us another gospel than that which we have received from Christ and his apostles, Gal. 1:8[9]. So let us now, according to the word of the prophet, give God the honor, and observe the light before it becomes dark and our feet stumble on the dark mountains, Jer. 13:16. We also see before [our] eyes how perilous the times now are, much more than at the time of the apostles. Then the apostles and Christians could flee from one city to another, Matt. 10:23, but now all lords and princes, cities and lands have made a covenant against us.⁸ Then the heathen government was so reasonable and proper that they did not wish to oppose strongly the faith and affairs of the Christian religion, Acts 17:9; 18:14 [15]; 23:22. But now almost everyone wants to be a lord over the conscience [of others] and a judge of faith (which after all belongs to Christ alone). Now the papal caesardom with all who are included therein, persecutes our faith as abominably as Antiochus persecuted the God fearing Jews.

[In] particular the remnant of the pharisaic race, the perverted scribes, the presumptuous wise and arrogant of the world shout and rage against us, those who are of the seed of Cain and not of Abel, Isa. 5:21; Gen. 4:8. Therefore they persecute and kill the righteous, 1 John :[12]. And even though they are many times warned and instructed by God's Word, both orally and in writing, yet they remain stuck in their blindness, wickedness, and abominable tyranny. How then could it go otherwise with these despisers and persecutors of the divine Word, than it went with the rebellious, unbelieving, and malicious Jews; that is, that the kingdom of God would not come to them or again would be taken from them because they, after all, did not want to bring [forth] its fruits, Matt. 21:43?

And how much more is there to say? The world has no inclination to hear God's Word, therefore it is also not worthy to hear it. It despises righteousness, therefore it has also fled far from it. It persecutes Christ and

has no desire whatever for that which [is] his; thus Christ also does not desire it. It will not cease from evil; therefore it also will not be disciplined by God's Word. It hates the truth, as Ahab did; therefore a lying spirit misleads them in the mouth [s] of all the prophets of Baal, 1 Kings 22:[22]. It will not endure true teachers; therefore the Lord sends it false prophets in heaps who speak to it what it gladly bears. And stated in the briefest form it happens even as Isaiah laments, namely, "that they are a rebellious people; lying, faithless children who will not hear the law of the Lord; who say to the seers, 'you should not see'; and to the prophets, 'Do not tell us what is right but what is pleasing to us; show us illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let the Holy One of Israel cease among us,' " Isa. 30:9 [11].

Since then the world wants to have such prophets, the Lord thus sends her such teachers as she desires. But they must all come to shame as the Lord says through Ezekiel, "If the prophet be misled and speak a word, I, the Lord myself have misled that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him, and will root him out of my people Israel. And they shall both bear their misdeeds, the misdeeds of the inquirer shall be the same as the misdeeds of the prophet, etc." Ezek. 14:9 [10].

Jeremiah also lamented over Jerusalem that it was so miserably led astray by the false prophets and was brought into captivity, and says, "Oh, daughter of Jerusalem, wherewith shall I comfort you? Whom shall I liken to you, daughter of Zion, with which to comfort you? For your injury is great. Who can heal you? Your prophets have preached idle and foolish visions and have not revealed their misdeeds. Therewith they could have avoided your captivity, but they have preached idle sermons, so that they have preached you out of the land," Lam. 2:13 [14].

Thus the false prophets deceived Jerusalem, brought it to Babylon, and [they] themselves also came there. Yes, some received abominable punishments for their deceptive prophecies, Jer. 28:16. Thus it shall also go with the world and her false prophets as long as they do not amend themselves. But the Lord wants to convert them that they may honestly repent and turn to the living God and may come from darkness to the true light that they may be saved.

See, dear brothers, we have written a little through the grace of the Lord, out of brotherly love, about the sending of the evangelical teachers. Our friendly desire is that you will accept this for the best and test it well with the touchstone of Holy Scripture. We certainly might write much more about the matter, but we hope that we have done enough for the understanding and good hearted. The perverted and malicious are not to be helped, even though an angel from heaven were to preach the truth to them. But the almighty God, a Father of all mercies and a God of all grace,

2 Cor. 1:3; 1 Pet. 5:10, who enlightens, strengthens, and confirms all true teachers and ministers of his Holy Word, whom he has set over his congregation through Christ Jesus with his Spirit, [grant] that they may remain steadfast in the evangelical teaching and show themselves irreproachable workers, who rightly divide the Word of truth, 2 Tim. 2:15, so that at the revelation of Jesus Christ they may receive from him the unfading crown, 1 Pet. 5:4.

And you, dear brothers in the Lord, "you who were straying like sheep, but are now converted to the shepherd and guardian of your souls," to Christ Jesus, 1 Pet. 2:25, remain steadfast in his teaching, hear his voice alone, follow in his footsteps, and be at peace with your leaders and teachers who rightly teach you God's Word, John 10:27; 1 Thess. 5:12[13]. [Do this] so that the God of peace may be among you and that the Lord Jesus Christ may recognize you as his sheep on the last day and set you on his right hand and say to you, "Come here, you blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom of your Father that was prepared for you from the beginning of the world," Matt. 25:34. To that end the eternal God help us all through Christ Jesus. Amen.

D. P.

ENDNOTES

1. Dienaers, literally servants but used generally, in this context, to refer to ministers. So also Leeraers, literally teachers, means ministers but will be translated as teachers to avoid redundancy since Dirk often uses both terms in conjunction.

2, Gherneynte is often translated church, but congregation(s) is the more accurate translation. By "church" most Anabaptists tended to think of the Roman Catholic and Protestant institutions. Cf.. the well known church and sect typology of Troeltsch (1865 1923), The Social Teaching of The Christian Churches, pp. 694ff. and related literature.

3. The "gospel of all creatures" is referred to frequently in early Anabaptism, particularly in the baptismal theology of Hans Hut (d. 1527). Drawing on both medieval mysticism and on natural theology it held that true knowledge of God can be had through all of his creation, Rom. 1:20, and is preached to every creature, Col. 1:23. Creation itself prepares the way for the gospel of Christ, particularly through suffering. Thus Hut writes, "In the gospel [of] all creation is nothing else signified and preached than alone Christ the crucified, but not only Christ the head, but the whole Christ with all [his] members, this Christ preach and teach all creatures.... Here is not [to be] understood that the gospel is [to be] preached to dogs

and cats, cows and calves, foliage and grass, but as Paul says, the gospel that is preached to you in all creatures." Muller Glaubenszeugnisse, p. 16.

That is, the gospel is not preached to but in or of [through] all creation. To make this point, Hut changed the Mark 16:15 text from the dative to genitive

case. For a translated excerpt of Hut's "Of the Mystery of Baptism," see Rupp, Patterns of Reformation, pp. 379ff. See also Packull, Mysticism, and Williams, The Radical Reformation. In Genesis 9:8 17, we note that the covenant was not only made with Noah and his descendents but also with "every living creature."

4. The quotations from Psalm 73 and 12 are translations of the Dirk text but do not correspond with the Dutch text of the Biestkens Bible of 1563. They do, however, correspond with the German text of Luther's translation. This raises the possibility that Dirk sometimes worked with a German Bible whose text he simply translated into Dutch.

5. Dirck V. Coornhert and others argued that for a ministry to be valid the minister must be either called/sent by a legitimate congregation or be able to perform miracles. They did not accept the Anabaptist congregation(s) as legitimate and, since Anabaptist ministers could not perform miracles, their ministry was not of God.

6. Dirk's meaning here is not clear. The reference may be to Ps. 94:20 where the RSV reads, "Can wicked rulers be allied with thee, who frame mischief by statute?"

7. The identity of these "good hearted" people, a phrase frequently used by Dirk, is not clear. He may, in fact, be referring to Anabaptists, but it is also possible that he had friends of Anabaptists in mind, people who largely agreed with them and often helped them, but did not join them for fear of persecution; hence the "in quietness secretly to reveal . . ." words. The attitude toward these "friends" [true hearted] was to become an issue in the Amish division of 1693 97. See "Half Anabaptists" in ME 11:634 and related literature.

8. The article "Mandates" in ME 3:446 53 lists 221 decrees against the Anabaptists from 1525 1761. The listing is not exhaustive. The imperial mandate issued by Emperor Charles V on January 4, 1528, was reaffirmed at the second Diet of Speyer in 1529 and extended to the entire area then known as the Holy Roman Empire. A specific edict was issued against Menno Simons by Charles V on August 31, 1544, followed by others in the Lowlands and Rhine Valley area. Dirk's assessment of persecution in the early church is too optimistic.

