

Micah on True and False Religion
Based on commentary by John Calvin¹

Micah 4:1-2 “But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

It afterwards follows, *And he will teach us of his way.*

Here the Prophet in a few words defines **the legitimate worship of God**: for it would not be sufficient for the nations to come together into one place to profess the one true God, unless **true obedience** followed, **which rests on faith, as faith does on the word**. It ought then to be especially noticed, that the Prophet sets here the word of God before us, in order to show that **true religion is founded on the obedience of faith, and that God cannot be truly worshipped, except when He Himself teaches His people, and prescribes to them what is necessary to be done**. Hence when the will of God is revealed to us, we then can truly worship Him. When the word is again taken away, there will indeed be some form of divine worship; but there will be no genuine religion, such as is pleasing to God.

And hence we also learn, that there is no other way of raising up the Church of God than by the light of the word, in which God Himself, by His own voice, points out the way of salvation. Until then the truth shines, men cannot be united together, so as to form a true Church.

Since it is so, it follows, that **where the truth is either corrupted or despised, there is no religion, at least such as is approved by God**. Men may indeed boast of the name with their lips: but **there is no true religion before God, except it be formed according to the rule of His word**.

It hence also follows, that **there is no Church, except it be obedient to the word of God, and be guided by it**: for the prophet defines here what true religion is, and also how God collects a Church for Himself. *He will then teach us of His ways.*

And a third particular may be added, — that God is robbed of His right and of His honor, when mortals assume to themselves the authority to teach; for it is to God alone that this office of teaching His people can strictly be ascribed. . . . There were then priests and prophets, yet Micah here brings them down to their proper state, and shows that the right and the office of teaching would be in the power of the only true God. We hence see that God claims this office for Himself, that we may not be tossed to and fro, and led astray by various teachers, but **continue in simple obedience to His word, so that He alone may be the Supreme. In short, God is not the God and Head of the Church, except He be the chief and the only Teacher**.

What he now says, “He will teach us of His ways,” ought to be thus understood. He will teach us what His ways are; as though the Prophet had said, that the perfect wisdom of men is to understand what pleases God, and what is His will: for there is nothing farther to be learned.

¹ From John Calvin, *Commentaries on The Twelve Minor Prophets*, Vol. III, trans. Rev. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 257-258, emphasis added and English modernized.

It follows, *And we will walk in His paths*. By this clause we are reminded, that **the truth of God is not**, as they say, speculative, but **full of energizing power**. God then not only speaks to the end that every one may acknowledge that to be true which proceeds from Him, but at the same time **He demands obedience**.

Hence **we shall then only be the disciples of God, when we walk in His ways**: for if we only nod with our ears, as asses are accustomed to do, and assent to what God says with our mouth and lips, it is extremely vain and absurd. **It is therefore then only that men really profit under the teaching of God, when they form their life according to His doctrine, and be prepared with their feet to walk, and to follow wherever He may call them.** *We will then walk in His paths.*