A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE IDENTITY
OF THE "RULER" OF MICAH 5:2

by

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Examining Committee

S. Herbert Bess
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INTRODUCTION

Often we find ourselves reading Scripture almost as if it were purely a colloquial expression. We hear certain passages and make applications so often that we fail to realize the great depth of such. This is very true of many of the Old Testament Messianic Messianic prophecies. We as evangelicals simply apply all of them to our Messiah, Jesus Christ, regardless of the adamant objections of our liberal counterparts. We should have valid reasons for maintaining our propositions or we to conjecture the opinion of this great mass of professing Christendom.

My interest was drawn to one very familiar verse in Micah 5, namely verse 1, which declares the coming forth of the ruler of Israel from the insignificant Judahite town of Bethlehem. So very many times we have heard this announcement applied to Christ. However, when examining the applications made by liberal scholars, one discovers very consistent rejection of the idea that Christ was the fulfillment of such a prediction. Doubt is even cast on the veracity of prediction, or even the possibility of it.

Having been spurred on by my quest for the proper interpretation of the verse through the scholarly guidance of Dr. Herbert Bovon in an ongoing clean dealing with Micah’s prophecy, I found that the liberal attacks must be refuted on the grounds of a literal and historical understanding of the text. One cannot separate such an
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Having been spurred on in my quest for the proper interpretation of the verse through the scholarly guidance of Dr. Herbert Bess in an exegesis class dealing with Micah's prophecy, I found that the liberal attacks must be refuted on the grounds of a literal and historical understanding of the text. One cannot separate such an
approach from a proper consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture writing. This determination in itself will open a breach between the liberal or rationalist scholar and the evangelical. The only approach one can take, therefore, is to show valid linguistic and contextual arguments which make the stated opinion a valid alternative to the one proposed by the rationalist. This we will attempt to do in the confines of this monograph.
ויבשה רמאו תודובא שכצו סבר קרויא

תבשה. ויהיו מצוה ולא נחמ שמות

משלי ורבינו וורכסיון ממל א

חיכו עליה.
Micah 5:1

אֵשֶׁת בֵּית—לָהֵם צְדֵקָה כֶּלֶד לִי הָלָה
בְּשַׁלְחֵנִי הֹגֵי חָלָק לִפְנֵי הַשֵּׁם
מַשְׁלֵי בֶּית־רְאוֹת מִזְמוֹר הַשָּׁם

תּוֹחַ אֶלֶף
PRIMARY VERSION

The Stephanoz Version

καὶ οἱ ἀρχιτέκτονες ἔστησαν θυσίαν καὶ
οὐ θὰ ἔλθῃ "εἴπως "ἐπιτεύχθη η...
νῦν ἐν ἡμῖν ὁ παῖς τῆς φωνῆς," ὡς ἡμᾶς ἐκλέξα
τοῦτο. οὐ τίς ἔστιν οὗ ἱερὸν τοῦ Ποσειδῆ, καὶ
τὸ κλητὸν τῆς τῆς ἱερᾶς ἀλλιών.
καὶ οὐ βραδεῖς, δίκαι ἔφρασεν ὄλυσθα ἐὰν
tου ἦν ἐν κυνίσει Ἰουδα, ἐκ σοῦ μοι ἐξελευ-
σεται, τού ἦν ἐν ὑψωτίᾳ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, καὶ
ἐξοδοι ὑπὸ τοῦ ὑπόρχει ἐκ ἡμερῶν αἰῶνος.
ARAMAIC VERSION
ARAMEIC VERSION

The Bible in Aramaic edited by Alexander Sperber

ותה ב' לוח שבורה כזריר והחשה

 الفلמעלהור לשליישה דרבך יוהוד

 מנכד וחולץ משחת לקו

 עברד וإسلام עז ישמעל ודי שוקר

שמות מלך דן מוי ועמלח:
ENGLISH VERSIONS

King James Version (1611)

But thus, Bethulien Epherethah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth, who shall be ruler in Israel, whose going forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

American Standard Version (1901)

But thou, Bethulien Epherethah, which art little among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth, who shall be ruler in Israel, whose going forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Divey Version (1907, 1909)

And thus Bethulien Epherethah, a little one among the thousands of Judah; out of thee shall one come forth, who shall be ruler in Israel, and his going forth is from the beginning; the days of eternity.

New American Standard Version (1952)

But thus, O Bethulien Ephrathah, who art little among the thousands of Judah, from thee shall one come forth, who is to be ruler in Israel; whose going forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Bondage Version (1958)

As for you, Bethulien Ephrathah, little as you are among the thousands of Judah, from you shall he come forth, to Me, who is to be ruler over Israel, His going forth are from of old, from days of eternity.
ENGLISH VERSIONS

King James Version (1611)

But thou, Bethlehem Eph'rat, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

American Standard Version (1901)

But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

Douay Version (1582-1609)

And thou Bethlehem Ephrat, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel: and his going forth is from the beginning from the days of eternity.

Revised Standard Version (1952)

But you, O Bethlehem Ephratah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for Me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days.

Berkeley Version (1959)

As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, little as you are among the thousands of Judah, from you shall He come forth to Me, who is to be ruler over Israel, His goings forth are from of old, from days of eternity.
Goodspeed Version (1959)

And you, O Bethlehem Ephratah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you, one shall come forth for me, who shall be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient days.

Moffatt Version (1922)

O Bethlehem Ephratah, tiniest of townships in all Judah, out of you a king shall come to govern Israel one whose origin is of old, of long descent.
ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

In order to gain a proper understanding of any verse of inspired Scripture, it is a necessary procedure to examine the context in which the verse is situated. It is the context which unlocks the door to proper interpretation. Apart from context, any verse in Scripture can be related to be applicable to a situation, and often the proper reading is reduced to an obscurism. We must, therefore, assume context as the very basis of proper expository procedure.

When one mentions the term context the mind always seems to rush to only two phrases; "entourage" and "environment." That stage is to examine the verses immediately surrounding the one of primary interest, in order to gain a general feel for the thesis which is being advanced. Although this is a very proper undertaking, it must be realized that this by no means is the entire endeavor of contextual exegesis. One must also examine the development of the theme in which the verse finds itself. This might involve an intensive understanding of an entire book or, at the very least, a major section of the book.

Furthermore, the life and times of the author have a great deal to say with regard to the proper understanding of a verse and the thematic structure in which it is found. It is with these ideas in mind that we shall proceed toward the goal of obtaining the very basis for the understanding of Isaiah 11:2 (3:1 in the Hebrew).
In order to gain a proper understanding of any verse of inspired Scripture, it is a necessary procedure to examine the context in which the verse is situated. It is the context which unlocks the door to proper interpretation. Apart from context any verse in Scripture can be twisted to be applicable to a situation, and often the proper meaning is reduced to an obscurism. We must, therefore, examine context as the very basis of proper exegetical procedure.

When one mentions the term context the mind always seems to rush to only one phase of contextual examination. That stage is to examine the verses immediately surrounding the one of primary interest, in order to gain a general feel for the thesis which is being advanced. Although this is a very proper undertaking, it must be realized that this by no means is the entire endeavor of contextual examination. One must also recognize the development of the theme in which the verse finds itself. This might involve an intensive understanding of an entire book or, at the very least, a major section of the book. Furthermore, the life and times of the author have a great deal to say with regard to the proper understanding of a verse and the thematic structure in which it is found. It is with these ideas in mind that we shall proceed toward the goal of obtaining the very basis for the understanding of Micah 5:2 (5:1 in the Hebrew).
Micah, the Man

We have no extensive biography of this individual apart from the few identifying notes in his own book. He identifies himself as "Micah, from Moresheth-Gath" in order to distinguish himself from the earlier prophet Micaiah of the Northern Kingdom, who prophesied in the time of Ahab king of Israel (910-896 B.C.). His name is significant in that it in itself initiates a challenge to all who hear it. It means "who is like Yahweh." He is, of course, a prophet whose base of action is Judah and particularly the small dwelling place of Moresheth which bordered on the Philistine village of Gath from whence it received its compound designation "Moresheth-Gath." The prophet, furthermore, carefully dates his ministry as being in the time of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, respective kings of Judah (1:1). This is further corroborated by the testimony of Jeremiah in Jeremiah 26:18.

It is quite evident that Micah and Isaiah were contemporaries in the Kingdom of Judah. Their messages show a great deal of similarity. Both mention the glorious future reign of Messiah and the restoration of "all things" as they were in the beginning. They deal with the coming of Messiah, a righteous and successful ruler not hampered heretofore by the pitfalls of earthly kings. There are stylistic similarities as well as topical similarities and there are passages which seem to have been written by the same pen (e.g. Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 2:2-5). However, their times of service did not exactly coincide, nor did their bases of operation. Isaiah might be characterized as the urban prophet whose position might have been one of royal lineage. At least he appears to be a man of prominence.
in Jerusalem. Micah, au contraire, was a man of lowly derivation, having come from the very minor hamlet of Moresheth. He appears to have been of simple parentage and of limited means, and becomes increasingly aware of the eager oppression of the poor by the rich.

Both men pointed their ministries toward Jerusalem. It seems to be the focal point of all mentioned judgments or blessings. Micah deviates from this, however, in that he also announces judgment upon Samaria, the capitol of the Northern Kingdom. Some very minor towns including his own town "which he loved" were the objects of his announced judgments at the hand of Almighty God.

The Structure of Micah's Message

The Book of Micah exhibits a threefold structure. In chapters 1-3 we see the coming destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem. In chapters 4-5 we have displayed the Messianic Period. And finally in chapters 6-7 we encounter the controversy of Jehovah with Jerusalem.¹

As T. Miles Bennett states in his short manual on the Book of Micah:

"The arrangement is logical rather than chronological, and one should not seek to find three connected prophecies delivered to the people on three separate and distinct occasions."²

The Times of Micah

According to the time line of Micah 1:1 we assume that Micah's prophetic ministry was to be found during some part of the reign of


three successive kings of Judah: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He prophesied of the destruction of Samaria and probably concluded his ministry in the early part of Hezekiah's reign. Hezekiah came to the Judaean throne in 726 B.C. and in the fourth year of his reign Samaria was carried away captive, and that would date it at 722 B.C. There is no mention of that fall in Micah, nor is there any hint of the reformation under Hezekiah. Although it would be possible to extend his ministry down to about 715 B.C. as G. L. Robinson suggests, but we have no proof to demand such. He probably initiated his ministry at approximately 750 B.C. His period of ministry would have lasted about 28 years.

Isaiah had begun his period of Service during the reign of Uzziah and very possibly about 780 B.C. His ministry, however extended down through the time of that of Micah's. Thus we can see that the conditions of the times sparked a great deal of similarity in the two prophets. The Holy Spirit guided these men to some of the most profound and explicit prophecies ever uttered by the human tongue. The times seemed to demand such a word from God through his mouthpieces the prophets.

All historians agree, from the Biblical accounts of the last half of the eighth century B.C. found in Kings and Chronicles as well as Micah and Isaiah, that the picture was dark in Judah and its capitol Jerusalem. Even in the reign of Jotham splendid wealth and

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4The chronology of Hezekiah is the subject of scholarly dispute and the dates are therefore tentative. We have adopted for the present the dates set forth by Robinson.
luxury prevailed and the greedy seemed to scheme for more. II Chronicles 27:2 says that "he did right in the sight of Jehovah, ... but the people did yet corruptly." The pomp and splendor of Jotham's reign with its undercurrent of corruption, greed and vice, broke out into overt debauchery under his son and successor, Ahaz. Baal-worship was introduced by Ahaz himself. The sacrificing of children was practiced, and the perversion of Jehovah worship continued until Ahaz eventually closed the doors of the temple (II Kings 16; II Chronicles 28), thereby halting altogether any sacrifices to Jehovah. Society degenerated rapidly to the point where corruption and greed were its watchwords.

Against the background of such events, Micah issues his divinely inspired pronouncements of judgment on Jerusalem and Samaria because of extreme oppression by the wealthy on the needy (Micah 3:2, 3 and 2:2), violence by the wealthy and ruling classes (6:12), judiciary corruption (3:11), expansion of the capitol at the expense of the blood of men (3:10), spoiling and looting (2:8), expulsion of the helpless women and children from their dwellings (2:9), covetousness (2:2), cheating (6:10, 11) and the basic sin of pride (2:3). The conditions found in the Northern Kingdom were worse than in the Southern Kingdom due to idolatry's being the supreme characteristic. Thus the destruction of Samaria was prophesied.

In the center of such a debased society Micah stood out with the message of God for His people. It was a message of judgment, for

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Micah says he stood in the full power "of the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgment and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (3:8). His messages were not only judgment, however, for interspersed throughout are promises of magnificent blessing for God's people. Particularly important to us are the blessings prophesied in chapters 4 and 5, previously identified as the Messianic Period.

The Immediate Context

The immediate context of the verse in which our special interest lies yields a very interesting concept. The basic theme of chapters four and five is Messianic and particularly predictive of a theme of restoration of Edenic conditions. However, there is an abrupt break at the outset of chapter five (Micah 4:14 in the Hebrew) in which Judah's thoughts are driven back from the glories of her restored position to a time previous to her triumph (4:12ff.) and that in itself would be a time of travail. This is a time when Judah's sin would bring her ruination. The people of Zion are exhorted to mobilize their forces against the onslaught of a nameless adversary. The intent is clear, nevertheless Judah was to mobilize only to suffer judgment and humiliation. Her king (chief ruler of Israel is sometimes called "judge") was smitten upon his cheek by the invading hordes, thereby symbolizing humiliation. Their enemy overpowers them, the leader is ineffective and is void of any power himself. Feinberg identifies this one as King Zedekiah who received "shameful treatment at the time of the Babylonian invasion of the Southern Kingdom of Jerusalem."
This interpretation is a speculative gesture, although the events of the Babylonian Captivity and the desecration of Jerusalem fit very well into the context of the prophecy. Thus from the time of Hezekiah, Micah announces a future day of glory of Judah’s, but first there is an intervening time of travail through which it must pass.

Following on the heels of this prophecy of the powerless and debased judge of Israel comes a prophecy of a glorious, successful ruler of Messianic quality. Micah 5:2, the focal point of this discussion, is seen as abruptly arising out of a corrupt situation, particularly contrasting a lack of success, to that of great time-ordered success of Messianic degree. Thus we observe the origin of the prophecy. The value of the context can now be seen as it contributes to our understanding of the general tenor of the verse and the determination of its proper interpretation with a mind to the successful, scholarly solution of the problems of this verse as they are about to be stated.

\[6\text{Charles Lee Feinberg, }\text{Jonah, Micah and Nahum (New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, Incorporated, 1951), p. 94.}\]
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Within the realm of prophetic Scripture there are many problems: problems of interpretation, problems of understanding, problems of application and so on. In the prophecy expounded by Micah there is no exception to this condition. It is impossible to find a unanimous opinion on the meaning of almost any text. Some misunderstandings are merely symptomatic of an individual's spiritual condition. The problem we have chosen to study is one occasioned by a wrong or inadequate view of Scripture, or by a faulty basis from which to strike out after an interpretation.

The focal point of our discussion is, of course, Micah 5:2. The major problem we find with this verse is the identification of the "ruler" of that passage. It will be the purpose of this thesis to examine the verse in its entirety and determine among all the options of whom Micah is speaking.

Included in with the entire observation of Micah 5:2 as to the identification of the ruler, we are confronted with a minor problem which has definite bearing on the major problem. That problem is the meaning of the Hebrew term מָצַּאִים and especially its connection with two other Hebrew idioms, namely מְלֵּא and מְלַעֲפֹת. מָצַּאִים is translated as "goings forth" or "origins," while מְלַעֲפֹת is translated "from of old." מְלֵּא is more difficult
to translate, but we render it "days of eternity," "everlasting" or "ancient days" as possibilities. Each has an intricate relationship to each other and to the proper identification of the ruler.
SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

As is true with all religious prophecy, there is no single interpretation universally supported by all scholars. Isaiah 51:2 is no exception. As we have noted, as a result we have recognized three major suggested solutions to the problem cited. With regard to the identification of the ruler these three may best be characterized by the following terms: the first view is the Nationalistic Interpretation, the second the Double Fulfillment Interpretation, and the third the Purely Messianic-different Fulfillment Interpretation. The writer will defend the third position.

To avoid confusion it should be pointed out that the Nationalistic Interpretation actually further two distant views of its own as to the identity of the ruler of Isaiah 51:7. However, they are aligned under one school of thought which provides the basis from which each develop.

We shall begin with a detailed examination into each position maintained, and shall thereby examine its weaknesses and strengths. The third view is a positive statement of the author’s thought from a detailed consideration of the possible approaches and the demands of the text itself.
SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

As is true with all kingdom prophecy, there is no single interpretation unanimously supported by all scholars. Micah 5:2 is no exception, as we have noted. As a result we have recognized three major suggested solutions to the problem cited. With regard to the identification of the ruler these three may best be characterized by the following terms: the first view is the Rationalistic Interpretation, the second the Double Fulfillment Interpretation, and the third is the Purely Messianic-Distant Fulfillment Interpretation. The writer will defend the third position.

To avoid confusion, it should be noted that the Rationalistic Interpretation actually fosters two distant views of its own as to the identity of the ruler of Micah 5:2. However they are classed under one school of thought which provides the basis from which both develop.

We shall begin with a detailed examination into each position maintained, and shall thereby examine its weaknesses and strengths. The third view is a position statement of the author's resulting from a detailed consideration of the possible approaches and the demands of the text itself.
SECTION I.

Major Problem:
RATIONALISTIC INTERPRETATION

The "Rationalist Interpretation" is the representative interpretation of those in Biblical scholarship known as the "higher criticism." These, by and large, reject the doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture and forthwith the denial of the possibility of predictive prophecy within the Bible. The general approach is rationalistic and hence, any evidence of the working of the supernatural is reduced to "mere natural corruption," or to a desire of "invention" on the part of the deplored writer to see the things come to pass that he in favorable light. There is no genuine expectation that they will come to pass.

Argument from Context

In this passage of interpretation, the one referred to by Moses in this passage as "rulers" who is to "come forth" is nothing but a figure expressed by the prophet for an actual ruler: ideally equipped of theocratic like, and thereby exemplary of the glories and powers of that dynasty. George A. Buttrick states in his commentary on the passage that:

the sentiment expressed here can be easily understood as the agreed reaction of one who has seen his country defeated, her cities destroyed, her farms devastated and her leaders sent into exile. The writer, confronted by what appeared to be a complete end, refused to believe it. As a man of God he anticipates the day when the...
RATIONALISTIC INTERPRETATION

The "Rationalistic Interpretation" is the representative interpretation of those in Biblical scholarship known as the "higher critics." There is, on their part, the rejection of the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, and forthwith the denial of the possibility of predictive prophecy within the Bible. The general approach is rationalistic and hence, any evidence of the working of the supernatural is reduced to a mere textual corruption, or to a desire or "hope" on the part of the Scripture writer to see the things come to pass that he is foretelling. There is no genuine expectation that such will come to fruition.

Argument from Context

In this pattern of interpretation, the one referred to by Micah in this passage as "ruler" who is to "come forth" is nothing but a desire expressed by the prophet for an actual ruler ideally equipped, of the Davidic line, and thereby exemplary of the glories and powers of that dynasty. George A. Buttrick states in his commentary on the passage that, the sentiments expressed here can be easily understood as the normal reaction of one who has seen his country defeated, her cities destroyed, her farms devastated and her leaders sent into exile. The writer confronted by what appeared to be a complete end, refused to believe it. As a man of God he anticipates the day when the
As can be seen in this statement, which is representative of this particular view in its approach to prophetic Scripture, there is a desire to place the prophet Micah into such an historical context of disaster as would have occasioned such an expression of hope for a deliverer. One cannot be consistent to this interpretation and see the prophet announcing such an event from the context of relative stability of the Judaean monarchy. It would demand a time of havoc and dismay for such words as Micah pronounces.

In order to accomplish such a contextual basis for the words of Micah 5:2 these rationalistic scholars find themselves in utter confusion with regard to matters of the date of writing. They demand, in some instances, that conditions be present which only were found during the time of exile in Babylonia when even the temple was profaned and there was nothing remaining of religious or political significance in Jerusalem even to the identification of it as a center of hope for the resurgence of national Judaism. The scholars of this weltanschauung consequently demand that the date of writing of this passage cannot, with any assurance, be settled. They only conclude that it would seem to be post-exilic due to the great Messianic expectation. There is no internal evidence in the prophecy, however, which would allow this interpretation to be drawn.


There are exceptions to this view, however, which would allow a more realistic dating to be developed which is more consistent with the context outlined in the book. Marcus Dods and Archibald Duff are representatives of this view. They still do not recognize a very early time of writing, however they do see that this prophecy arose before the exile. Their primary motivation seems to be the idea that Micah was standing alone in defense of the land. In this context, Micah observed the possibility developing of Zion's capitulation, for a blockade was established and Israel's ruler lay helpless. 3 It was the condition of the times which fostered the promise of a successful deliverer or an ideal ruler, if you will. Although this view would place the time of writing during the Assyrian invasion with relief coming only when the Chaldeans defeated Assyria in 606 B.C., 4 we must observe that this is still not consistent with Micah's time line given in 1:1. Hezekiah was the final king under whom Micah ministered, and therefore this date, although earlier than other rationalists would place it, is not early enough to be consistent with the time boundary prescribed by Micah himself.

How then do these interpreters proceed toward their identification of the ruler of Micah 5:2? We will now observe the plan and procedure by which the rationalists develop their interpretation. They approach the problem in the same way as all scholars do, by making a careful exegetical study of the entire verse. Their findings follow in the next section.


Argument from the Usages of Hebrew Words

The verse begins with the statement "Thou Bethlehem Ephratah," which in context represents that place from which the Messiah will come. The rationalists see it not as the place where the ruler will be born in a prophetic sense, but as a reference to the place from which the great Davidic line found its roots. This town, therefore, is symbolic of the entire dynasty founded by that greatest of Judaean monarchs, David.

You will recall that Bethlehem was the home of David. Scripture says, "David asked earnestly leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city" (I Sam. 20:6). This Bethlehem is distinguished from any other by the additional term Ephratah. I Samuel 17:12 says, "David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah, whose name was Jesse." The chronology of I Chronicles 2:50 also includes the information of the connection between Bethlehem and Ephratah (cf. v. 54). This same relationship is seen in Ruth 1:2 and 4:11, and also in Joshua 15:59. The addition of Ephratah clearly distinguishes the correct town from that of Benjamin mentioned in Genesis 35:16 and I Samuel 10:2. This identifies further the town as being different from Bethlehem Zebullon. The rationalists claim, therefore, that each such reference merely confirms the intent of Micah and that being the importance of the town mentioned: not that a certain ruler would be born there, but that the ruler would be of the Davidic family and arise to the glory of that ancestor although of primitive origin.

5 Briggs, Driver, and Plumer, p. 103.

Marcus Dods goes so far as to state that the purpose for Micah's inclusion of this place name in this passage was only to personalize his ideal ruler:

Micah emphasizes the rustic, popular origin of Messiah David was a dear figure since he arose from out of the people. Micah therefore, being a prophet to the peasant, tried to surround the Messiah with those associations which paralleled David and his rustic origin to endear them to the people. This would encourage the peasants to whom Micah wrote.\(^7\)

George Buttrick takes a different tact in evaluating the inclusion of this place designation. He seems to feel that this phrase signifies Micah's retrospect over the history of the Hebrew monarchy. In so doing the author uses prophetic address to describe the Bethlehem of David's origin at the time David was called to his kingship.\(^8\) This view is highly significant in that it is such a departure from the consistency of the rationalistic interpretation. Buttrick would reduce the whole passage to a mere historical statement of the antiquity of the Davidic dynasty. This would invalidate any attempt to make it prophetic, even if an "ideal" Messiah were intended, as the German scholars would suggest.\(^9\) Nevertheless, this usage of prophetic address cannot be substantiated. It is simply conjecture and a more elaborate means to avoid responsibility to any possibility of predictive prophecy.

A further designation of the origin of Micah's ruler is the statement that Bethlehem was "least among the thousands of Judah."

\(^7\)Dods, p. 544.

\(^8\)Buttrick, p. 931.

This statement is rather obscure and there is a great difference of opinion as to its real meaning. The predominate view maintains that we have a reference here to the lowliness of the ruler as to his derivation. In the days of David, Bethlehem Ephratah was undistinguished in the villages of Judah. Palestine was then well-populated and Bethlehem would have been relatively insignificant. I Samuel 17:12 records the founding of the Davidic dynasty which lasted for almost 500 years, down until 586. This statement does not demand a specific birthplace, but more likely just that this ruler was to come not from the high and lofty Jerusalem, but from a group or "family," too small to be considered significant in size. I Samuel 23:23 reinforces the concept that is equivalent to "family" in certain instances when it says, "I will search him out among all the families of Judah." The context would seem to demand the idea that the family from which the Davidic line was carried through was rather small and insignificant especially being represented by the very minor town of Bethlehem Ephratah. This lowly place, as the ancient origin of the David line signifies the "hope" of Micah that another of David's type come forth from his line.

The central phrase of the verse for our purposes follows next. Micah says, "out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." Piepenbring feels that this is a very

10Buttrick.
distinct reference to the restoration of the Davidic dynasty when he states:

The restoration of the house, the dynasty, of David is in fact the essence of the Messianic hope of Israel and the prophets, and not the sending of a person, a unique king, as has generally been believed in the Christian church.¹³

The rationalists feel that there was a genuine need exuded in this statement by Micah, because of their being no king in Judah. They feel that this reinforces the predominant view that this was written by Micah or an unknown prophet in shortly post-exilic times. Briggs, Driver and Plumer record that,

at the time of its utterance there was no king over Israel and thus indicates the late origin of His passage.¹⁴

The prophet supposedly was expressing the need of his people to have a ruler again. Amos calls for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty. Hosea does likewise for he says, "afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king . . ." (Hosea 3:5). Here is an assertion of the need which the righteous felt. Jeremiah also expresses the ideal of restoration when he says, "then shall there enter in by the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David . . . (Jeremiah 17:25). The same idea is expressed in Jeremiah 22:4. A more distinct expression of the hope is to be found in Jeremiah 33:17-26 for he expresses the hope again in prophetic address stating, "David shall


¹⁴Briggs, Driver, and Plumer, p. 104.
Piepenbring evaluates this era of the restored dynasty by stating that,

in the Messianic era an uninterrupted series of kings and princes will occupy the throne of David; that the prosperity of David will be multiplied in order that he may never want a successor.15

Abarbanel, Grotius, Hartman, Rosenmuller, Gesenius, Hitzig, Maurer, Ewald, et. al. claim that origines is the meaning of the "coming forth" (אֵלֶּה) to be ruler.16 This one who finds his descent from the David line identified in the town of Bethlehem should make an appearance. It is not a reference to birth, but a reference to an arrival on the scene to take control of the nation which is without a king at this time. It is a hope in the possibility that some descendant of David himself might arise from relative obscurity to a position of leadership as a type of Messiah, saving people from the despair of a leaderless nation.

The rationalists do not allow such a position to go unsupported by Scripture. A pattern of passages emphasizing the restored monarchy are marshalled to fortify the Messianic hope of the post-exilic Jews. The hope is placed in one person of the Davidic line, which was cut off by the exile to Babylon. This one personifies the whole restored dynasty. This is the ruler that Micah speaks of. Ezekiel develops this thought of an eternally restored rulership when he records the word of Jehovah saying, "Son of man, this is the

15 Piepenbring.
16 E. Henderson, p. 248.
place of my throne: where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever." "In the land it shall be to him for a possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; but they shall give the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes" (Ezekiel 45:8). "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: If the prince give a gift unto his sons it is his inheritance, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance . . ." (Ezekiel 46:16-18).

Although the entire monarchy is embraced as that which is restored, the attention is placed only on the first king to appear. Isaiah 32:1 says, "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in justice." The ruler of Micah 5:2 must therefore be referring to that single king of Isaiah. The attention is directed to one such king who, being first, symbolizes the entire restored monarchy. Such an approach to the problem leads to the following two applications.

The Post-Exilic Fulfillment Application

Many rationalist interpreters follow through with their reasoning by stating that this ideal ruler of Micah's was merely an expression of an historic event spoken in prophetic address. They identify the ruler of Micah 5:2 as being none other than Zerubbabel, the restored monarch of the Davidic line. They draw support for this identification from the post exilic prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai says, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying . . . in that day . . . I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant . . . and

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17 Piepenbring, p. 220.
will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee saith Jehovah of hosts" (Haggai 2:21-23). This application finds further confirmation in the words of Zechariah who says, "the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto you" (Zechariah 4:9).

The Hebrew Old Testament scholar Max L. Margolís cites a passage from the Targum as it paraphrases Micah 5:2 and he deduces the idea from it that the prophet is trying to convey the concept of a "second and greater David." The passage reads:

\[\text{סונכ ינפנ יכדר חאלד יבכד שחלת אמ} \]

As it is translated the following develops: "From you before me shall go out Messiah to exercise dominion over Israel, the name of him was announced from of old, from days of old." The idea that Margolís tries to emphasize in the interpretation of the Targum, is the idea of a man of like stature to David, but being the embodiment of generations of hope for one who was to be a great deliverer. Thus the appearance of Zerubbabel in post-exilic Judaea as recorded by the post-exilic composer of Micah 5:2 is seen as this embodiment of the desire for the restored Davidic dynasty. Several passages are cited to emphasize the point. Ezekiel stresses the Davidic character of this deliverer when he says, "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd" (Ezekiel 34:23 and 37:24).

\[\text{18Max L. Margolís, The Holy Scriptures with Commentary} \]

This position which would identify the ruler as being Zerubbabel in whom the glories of the restored Davidic line were to be found once again dates back much further than recent scholarship. Theodore of Mopsuestia, Grotius, and Duthe in time past sponsored this view. Theodore was, of course, a 4th century Christian theologian while Grotius was a rather active Danish theologian of the 16th century, so we can see that this approach is not new.\(^{19}\) This view, although not unique in the 20th century, has fallen into disfavor in recent times. Modern rationalists recognize that there are problems with making Micah 5:2 post-exilic and since predictive prophecy has no place in this system, Zerubbabel cannot be the fulfillment of this passage if it were pre-exilic, or better said, he cannot be the subject of Micah's statement made in prophetic address.

There are historical problems with identifying Zerubbabel as the great deliverer of Micah 5:2 for he was never a dynamic ruler of alternative stature to the one in Micah 5:1. He was merely a governor of Judah (Ezra 1:8, 11; 5:14) as appointed by Cyrus the Persian. He was not a glorious king of the restored Davidic character although he was of David's line. The result of modern attacks on this interpretation have brought its demise.

The Hope Theory Application

The major position of the rationalists as to the identification of the ruler might well be that proposed by the Jewish scholar, Martin Buber in his work *The Prophetic Faith*. In this work

\(^{19}\)Henderson, 249.
Buber identifies the ruler of Micah 5:2 and the Messiah of Isaiah's words as a figure clothed with myth drawn from history.

The Messiah—whether he is regarded more as the man whom God has found, or as the man whom God has sent— is the fulfiller, he who at last fulfills the function of the viceregent, through whose agency the ordering of the people under JHVH's leadership will be realized... This figure is not drawn from a myth, but grows out of history; it is not its form, but its garb that is given it by myth, just as was done for JHVH. But— however mythical the garb of the Messiah as he is shown as in the prophecy of Isaiah, he is in no way, as some scholars imagine, "more than man," nor "of a divine rather than human sort." 20

The development out of history of this "fulfiller king" of whom Buber speaks, rests on the clamor of the righteous prophets of JHW for one who is an antithesis to the perverted monarchy of the times. Micah, while ministering during the reign of Hezekiah, raised a clarion call for reformation and Micah's cry had its effect upon the monarch as can be seen as an historical fact (II Kings 18:4). Although Micah's cry was answered in the reform of Hezekiah, his denunciation of social sin received no appropriate response from the people. The effect in the ultimate sense, therefore, was that nothing of the cult reform survived in the days of Manasseh. 21

The ruler is, according to this weltanschauung, merely a desire for a righteous, just, and successful king who fulfills the ideals of the prophets of JHW. The hope as expressed in prophetic address leads one to an expectancy of a personality who once and for all would capture the concern of the prophets for one who would rule as perfect mediator in God's stead.

21 Ibid., p. 158.
Buber, in order to emphasize his contention that the fullfiller king of Isaiah and Micah was no more than a man garbed in myth, but developed from the historical realization of the potentialities of the Davidic monarchy and a desire to have them reinstated, proceeds to discuss the redeveloped theme as it appears in the words of Jeremiah 100 years later during the reign of Josiah and the restoration of the proper attitudes reformed by Hezekiah. However, with the ascension of Jehoiakim to the throne, Jeremiah begins his fight against the kings in the tradition of Micah (cf. Jeremiah 22:1-23) and Hosea. In the same language as Micah uses in 5:1, Jeremiah in 23:5 promises the ascension of the righteous sprout whom Jehovah will let come near to Him so that He may approach him (30:21). This was distinct from those who rose to the throne after Josiah. 22

It seems that there is a conscious note of despair in the entire proceeding. There is guarded optimism with reference to the appearance of another David, however his appearance is not predicted with any hope of manifestation. The prophecy is reduced to a hope or desire of the heart of the righteous prophets of JHWH. There is no real assurance one will appear, but against the bleakness of the perverted monarchy is the hope that inevitably someone would appear who would measure up even as Hezekiah and Josiah did. They are the representatives of the prophetic ethic ascribed to the ruler of Micah 5:2.

22Ibid., p. 174.
In conclusion, Buttrick states that no other passage of Scripture has been more abused by its friends than this. It is one of the Scriptural sources of the Messianic hope that was to loom so large in post-exilic Judaism. The tradition that Jesus came in fulfillment of this and other prophecies was so early and so deep a part of the Christian apologetic, that it wrote itself into the Gospels, notably Matthew, Luke and John. It is hard to believe that anyone who had actually read this chapter carefully could think that it referred at all to the coming of Jesus Christ. There is little or nothing in common between the central theme and anything he said or did. Actually, the Gospel records claim only that Bethlehem was the ordained birthplace of the one who was to be ruler in Israel. Once they have established that by referring to verse 2, they walk away from everything else in the chapter.23

Such a position as we have seen upheld in this chapter can only be regarded as one which fails to adopt the principles of self-interpretation laid down by Scripture itself. To approach Scripture on a humanistic, rational basis is to disregard its supernatural character. Hence, all prophecy is regarded as non-predictive and merely historical hope. One's view cannot be objective and hence his conclusions are slanted. We must recognize however, that there are other ways to approach Scriptural problems more consistent with what Scripture claims of itself. The result is totally different since you are not dominated by rationalistic presuppositions and their accompanying "closed continuum" in our world view. The effects of such are seen in its attitude of life and henceforth, its attitude toward the Word of God. We must approach the verse on a more acceptable basis, therefore. We shall see the effects of such.

23Buttrick, p. 930.
DOUBLE FULFILLMENT INTERPRETATION
DOUBLE FULFILLMENT INTERPRETATION

The approach taken by the proponents of this view is partially the result of a reaction. That reaction is one of many evangelical scholars to the attacks directed at the traditional interpretation of Micah 5:2 by the rationalists. In order to give the appearance of at least allowing for an historical fulfillment, these scholars combine a view toward an historical fulfillment while maintaining the traditional interpretation of a future fulfillment.

This view has been fostered by many recent commentators, among whom we find T. Miles Bennett, professor of Old Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. In his brief little study manual on Micah he says,

A more satisfactory approach . . . is to include both the historical situation as the basis for the prophet's message and the predictive element, as the prophet under the inspiration of God's Spirit used words, figures, etc., which were capable of being filled with messianic content, and which were filled by later writers inspired by the same spirit.

This approach is not wrong in recognizing the importance of the historical situation. Such an approach was probably motivated by the principle of interpreting kingdom prophecy which recognizes that it arises out of a definite historical situation existing

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before the prophet. Secondly, the prophecy often contains what is referred to as "double reference." This simply indicates that it might refer to "some event or person in the near future, connected with Israel and the Mediatorial Kingdom, or to some event or person in the remote future connected with the Messiah and His kingdom, but not to both."  

The higher critical approach only recognizes the possibility of the first aspect of prophecy. It is not predictive to them in any sense. It only issues forth as a "hope" of the prophet himself. "Such a view fails to give proper consideration to the work of the Holy Spirit in their writings." This view fails for anyone who appreciates God's ability to work and direct the affairs of men.

There are three basic tenets of this view which provide the framework for an alternative to the rationalistic approach. The first tenet recognizes the effect of the historical situation upon the prophet and his writing. The second assumes that the written prophecy is predictive both of a near and a far fulfillment, and thirdly, this particular prophecy definitely refers to a future deliverer as well as a near fulfillment. As a result of these tenets we are provided with a definite alternative to the rationalistic point of view.

Argument from Prophetic History

The double fulfillment interpretation is receptive to the progressive revelation of the ruler to be born of the Davidic line.

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2Alva J. McClain, "The Kingdom and the Church." This is an unpublished syllabus for the course of the same name at Grace Theological Seminary. (Mimeographed.)

3Bennett, p. 47.
In Genesis we read that this one is to be born of woman just after sin entered the world, for it says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). This one is connected with the family of Shem for we read, "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem . . . God enlarge Japheth and let him dwell in the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9:26-27). He is to be of the seed of Abraham for "in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3, cf. 22:18). He will be of the seed of Isaac since Moses records the reaffirmed promise when he says, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 26:4). The promise passes down through Judah as is stated in Genesis 49:10.

In Numbers there is recorded the dominion the ruler will have. It says, "I see him but not now; I behold him but not nigh: There shall come forth a star out of Jacob . . . and out of Jacob shall one have dominion" (Numbers 24:17-19). This one was also to be a teacher who would gain the hearts of the people, so Deuteronomy says, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Even within Micah's own time the eternal glory, universal dominion, supreme Godhead, superhuman virgin birth and his sufferings and humiliation were unveiled by Isaiah, Micah's contemporary (Isaiah 7:9, 51). Although these stipulations could never apply to anyone of merely human stock, the double fulfillment idea supports
the theory that all these prophecies were at least fulfilled typi-
cally in some man in history. As for the fulfillment of Micah 5:2
with regard to the ruler's identification, they would demand the same
type of fulfillment.

The reasoning for a typical fulfillment goes like this:
even as all the mediatorial rulers were types of the Messiah, in a
sense, so is this one who is to come forth as ruler. He will arise
in contemporaneous times to Micah as a type of the ultimate fulfill-
ment in the distant future.

**Argument from Context**

As we have seen in the examination of the book's background,
the prophet's ministry was carried on in the times of three kings
of Judah: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Micah 1:1). The conditions
of the times were totally unsuitable for God's people in the light of
JHWH's self-revelation and their expected circumspect walk. Even
during the times of prevailing righteousness on the part of Israel's
kingship, unrighteousness prevailed among the people.

We read in II Kings 15 and II Chronicles 27 that the mo-
narch Jotham "did rightly in sight of Jehovah" (II Chronicles 27:2).
However, the people of Judah "did yet corruptly." Jotham's reign
was characterized by splendid luxury, and the wicked greed of the
rich to gain more of the same. Throughout his entire reign there
was an undercurrent of corruption, greed, and vice. \(^5\) Although sup-
pressed from overt display during the time of Jotham, these same
conditions erupted outwardly under the debauchery and wickedness of

\(^5\) Pusey, p. 8.
Jotham's malfactor son and successor, Ahaz. The sacrificing of children was practiced, Baal-worship was introduced by Ahaz himself and the perversion and final prohibition of Jehovah worship came about with the closing of the temple doors by Ahaz (II Kings 16; II Chronicles 28). In the early reign of Hezekiah such conditions still existed.

Those who maintain a double fulfillment view simply examine the contemporary situation Micah found himself in and therefore, understand the prohibitions, denunciations, and judgments pronounced by Micah upon his nation. They have no problem in seeing why the prophet would not cry for a ruler of justice who would hearken back to the morality and the glory of the Davidic dynasty. It is the contemporary situation which seems to demand the ruler prophesied in Micah 5:2 so there must be one who will appear to fill this void at least in part, they reason.

It is significant to note here that those who hold this view find it unnecessary to hold that there was no monarch on the throne at this time as their rationalist counterparts do. These scholars maintain that Hezekiah was ruling at this time, but that this was previous to the Hezekian reform initiated by the converted monarch. Yet despite the reform of Hezekiah and his apparent conversion and subsequent dedication to Jehovah, there is no clamor for an identification of Hezekiah as the type of Messiah of Micah 5:2. Such an identification would be very natural if one wanted to press it that far.6

6Eiselen (ed.), Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 797.
Chapter four presupposes the restoration of Edenic conditions, yet in 5:1 we see a time of travail exhibited, symbolized by the humiliation of Judah's leader. Many feel this is a reference to the humiliation of the Messiah, however, such an occurrence would best suit an identification with the future deposition of the Judaean monarch at the time of the Babylonian Captivity. The double fulfillment supporter would identify with this view as a prediction of such prior to the restoration of the "fullness of times." Thus the natural identification of the ruler of Micah 5:2 in the contemporary sense would have to be a post-exilic character of Davidic parentage.

The near fulfillment in post-exilic Judah is developed from some very key Scriptures. The reasoning follows as such: Isaiah writes, "the Lord himself will give you a sign" (Isaiah 7:14) regarding the birth of this fulfiller king. The reasoning of the rationalist, Frederick Carl Eiselen, is followed here by those that hold the double fulfillment view. If the Lord was to give Judah a sign it certainly could not be the birth of a Messiah 735 years following. It would have to be to those in Ahaz' generation for he makes it personal with the use of 'E meaning "to you." This refers to those to whom he is specifically writing. If the view that the prophecy was written to those of a Messiah's birth 735 years later be taken, it would have been no sign at all to Isaiah's contemporaries. These individuals also feel that the same individual is primarily being prophesied by Jeremiah when he says, "Behold the days

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7Feinberg.
8Eiselen, Commentary on the Whole Bible, p. 183.
come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land" (Jeremiah 23:5ff). This interpretation is sealed for them when they read the application made by Zechariah of this verse scarcely a century later to Zerubbabel, restored governor of Judah. Zechariah says, "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows sit before thee; for they are men that are a sign: for behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch . . . thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Jehovah" (Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12). There is no doubt this is speaking of Zerubbabel. A further personal identification is made by Haggai for he says, "yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel . . . speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth . . . in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, have chosen thee, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Haggai 2:4, 21-23).

It must be noted that this view does not maintain that the aforementioned is the sole fulfillment of Micah 5:2. It allows for the double entendres and the distant future's more perfect fulfillment. Nevertheless, the importance of this near fulfillment by a person of relatively contemporary times who is to amend, in part, the present situation is not neglected. We must recognize that this view does not minimize the predictive character of the

prophet's writings since it is essential to both aspects. However, it will be necessary to evaluate this position in the light of the entire spectrum of Messianic prophecy to determine whether such a near fulfillment is warranted. Micah 5:2 is not an isolated passage. It is one in a series of highly specific prophecies regarding a future rule composed by Micah and his contemporary Isaiah. The same individual is prophesied by both, whether a near fulfillment is demanded is certainly not conclusive.
PURELY MESSIANIC INTERPRETATION

We have seen two great interpretations of these verses, their respective identifications of the tire. It was proposed that they were either wrong or incomplete. The former was the one which I have chosen to present. This paper is of the position that the second of the two verses contains the prophecy to which the present interpretation is to be applied.

This proposition is that only the second is to be applied, and that the first is not to be applied, and that the first can be understood to be a parallel to the second, and that the second is to be understood as a parallel to the first.

In the fourth chapter of Isaiah, there is mentioned the prophecy that the kingdom of the world is to be subject to the king of kings. This prophecy is to be understood as a parallel to the second verse of the first chapter of Isaiah.

I want to make it perfectly clear that in arriving at this parallel, I have not taken into consideration the historical situation of the prophecy at the time of its writing. The prophecy is influenced by the time in which the prophet is living.

However, it is not necessary to suppose that when the prophecy was written, the reader could not have referred to the distant fulfillment of the Messianic kingdom. This is not a significant part of the particular interpretation.
We have seen two major interpretations of Micah 5:2 and their respective identifications of the ruler. We have observed that they were either wrong or inadequate. The third major view is the one which I have chosen to defend. This view takes the position that to identify the ruler of Micah we must recognize the prophecy as being entirely Messianic having no historical fulfillment.

This prediction of a ruler is specific in its demand for an individual who is extraordinary. His rule is to be a literal, political, and physical rule. As is presented in the whole of Scripture, this one must be divine and Micah declares his kingdom in the fourth chapter as being one of the restoration of all things to Edenic conditions. The ruler can be none other than the much longed for Messiah whom Isaiah declares as God in the flesh. This position will be defended as my own.

I want to make it perfectly clear that in taking a purely messianic view of the passage I am not totally rejecting the historical situation of the prophet as being irrelevant. All prophecy is influenced by the times in which the prophet is found to be living. However, it is not necessary to demand that there be two fulfillments: one to meet the contemporary mediatorial situation, and another to meet the distant fulfillment of the messianic kingdom. This is not a requirement of this particular prophecy.
In order to graphically support this view, material will be presented in three specific areas in order to show the wide spectrum of support for this view. Firstly, there will be the argument from context (the verse and the times of the prophet). Secondly, this view will be supported by the argument from the New Testament usage of the verse, and finally there will be the argument from the usages of the Hebrew words and idioms used in the verse. These should establish well the veracity of this interpretation.

**Argument from Context**

As we have noted before in our chapter entitled "Essential Background," the time of Micah's writing had a great effect upon the nature of his composition. Having ministered in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah the prophet experienced some of the most depraved and disheartening times between God and his covenant people. We shall see how these conditions were used by the Holy Spirit to move Micah to the prophetic statement of a glorious ruler who would restore the proper attitudes and conditions between God and His people.

We read in II Kings 15 that "in the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign. Five and twenty years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem ... and he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah" (15:32-34). Micah began to minister in Judah during this sixteen year reign. We get the picture, from the II Kings passage, that the reign of Jotham exhibited a relatively good relationship between Jehovah and the king, however the conditions of the nation as a whole did not amend, for
we read in II Chronicles that although "he did what was right in
the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his father Uzziah had
done . . . but the people did yet corruptly" (27:2). Isaiah issues
this indictment against the covenant people: "For the vineyard of
Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his
pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression;
for righteousness, but, behold, a cry." (Isaiah 5:7, cf. also 5:11,
13, 14, 22, 23.) Nothing had changed. 1 Splendid luxury and the
quest for it characterized the times with the corresponding corrup-
tion and immorality. For Micah the conditions could only cause dis-
couragement.

The events that took place upon Ahaz's ascension to the
throne only deepened Micah's trouble, for we read in II Kings 16
that "Ahaz, the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign . . . and
he did not that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah his God like
his father David. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel"
(16:2ff). In this chapter in II Kings we have enumerated the sins
of Ahaz including his replacement of Jehovah worship for that of
Baal. The sacrificing of children was practiced and all manner of
defilement was heaped upon the holy name of Jehovah. We read that
"Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God and shut up
the doors of the house of Jehovah, and he made altars in every corner
of Jerusalem" (II Chronicles 28:24). We see here the abolition of
temple worship of Jehovah. Judah under Ahaz was totally depraved.
How utterly abhorrent things must have been to the servants of God
like Micah and Isaiah. At least Jotham had made an attempt to do

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1Costen J. Harrell, The Prophets of Israel (Nashville,
right in Jehovah's eyes. Ahaz had done the opposite. Despair was the necessary result.

Conditions in the reign of Ahaz's successor, Hezekiah, did not improve in a spiritual sense, although the king himself was a righteous man, who "did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done" (II Chronicles 29:2). All the leaders of Judah restored the covenant relationship with Jehovah in cleansing the temple and re-establishing the line of Levitical priests (II Chronicles 29:5ff) for the sacrificial worship of Jehovah. The passover feast was celebrated (II Chronicles 30) and the idolatrous articles were destroyed.

The changes wrought by Hezekiah were the result of a changed heart, but we see no indication of such a reversal on the part of the people of Judah. They were wrapped up in the same quest for riches, exhibiting lust and greed as they had before. The same cry by Isaiah brought the resultant reaction of the prominent men of Judah who treated the appeal as contumacious (Isaiah 28:9, 10). The restoration of Jehovah worship was to them merely legislated and therefore, the only reason they had to adhere to it. The only change was outward and not in the heart of the people.

Against the backdrop of such conditions and the impending disaster of an Assyrian invasion, Micah issued his prophecy. By the Spirit of God he issues his denunciation of the greedy oppressors of Judah and Israel and calls for their mournful repentance. He says,


3Harrell, p. 90.
"make thee bald, and cut off thy hair for the children of thy de-light ... for they are gone into captivity from thee" (Micah 1:16).

In chapter two he issues a woe to the greedy oppressors of Israel and Judah. He warns of the disdainful conditions of following prophets not of Jehovah, who issued their oracles under the influence of strong drink (Micah 2:11). The conditions were deplorable.

Micah issued strong condemnations of the corrupt political heads of Judah for in chapter 3:1-4 we see such an indictment. The religious leaders did not escape for they receive equal condemnation in 5-8. The nation as a whole was not to escape and in 9-12 we see issued the prophecy of judgment upon the nation and particularly Jerusalem. He says, "therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest" (Micah 3:12).

Now Micah draws an abrupt contrast to the deplorable conditions of his time. He looks forward to an everlasting kingdom, which shall experience ultimate prosperity and peace. In 4:1-8 the sublime glories of the distant future are foretold when Jerusalem should no longer be in waste and ruin but under the blessing of God would be the metropolis of the earth. According to the prophecy, thither shall the nations yet go to appear before the God of Jacob who will teach them the law of the new order of the Word of the Lord.

In 9-10 the prophet returns to the painful description of impending doom (cf. Isaiah 66:7-9) at the hands of Babylon who will carry them

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5Ibid.
into captivity. However, there is a promise that "there will Jehovah redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies" (4:10).

At this time Judah is divinely strengthened and will be the judge of all nations. Judah and particularly Jerusalem is compared to a threshing floor where the nations, as sheaves, will be gathered to be threshed (Micah 4:12-13). This is a figure used many times in the Old Testament to indicate judgment. The nations will gather their armies together against Zion to defeat it, but will find themselves crushed as grain on the threshing floor by the power of Jehovah working with and through His people. We see however, that before deliverance is granted "they shall smite the judge of Israel on the cheek" (5:1). This indicates Judah will be sorely pressed and must endure a time of fear and trembling before she will be delivered.

Against the backdrop of impending doom Micah announces the appearance of the glorious king of the glorious kingdom presented in 4:1-8. He addresses Bethlehem as the seat of his appearance. "This dramatic action and address in the light of context proves to be both a parable and a prophecy." It demands that at the time the nation is in the throws of an onerous defeat, she will turn to a ruler gloriously characterized, but coming from the lowly village of Bethlehem.

The prophecy cannot be applied to any natural man. Although Hezekiah was a type of the ruler in Micah 5:2 in a very

\[6\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 195.}\]
limited sense, he could not meet the demands of the times. This one is connected with the establishment of a peaceful kingdom and the restoration of Edenic conditions (4:1-8). He is to be a deliverer of unparalleled proportions, for he must needs bring his people from a time of their greatest trouble when the nations of the world arise against them. All the context demands a ruler, not as has appeared before, but of supernatural power able to influence the direction of the entire world, able to accomplish a just and lasting peace such as the world has never known (Isaiah 42:4). The only one who could possibly fit this demand is the God-man, Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, but who will rule Israel in a kingdom of peace where Zion will be lifted up on high at the head of nations (Isaiah 2:4; 24:23; Micah 4:3). It will be Jesus who returns and delivers His righteous remnant from the clutches of the nations of the world arrayed against her. He will deliver her (Revelation 19:19) and will doom the kings of the earth and their followers, thus bringing in his kingdom (Micah 4:1-8).

Argument from the New Testament Usage

One can scarcely discuss Micah 5:2 apart from its usage by New Testament Scripture writers. These men, who were guided and directed by the Holy Spirit as they composed their various passages, appropriated on occasion, the words of Micah in pronouncing the coming of Messiah, namely Jesus Christ. Even our blessed Lord seems to make allusion to this verse. We must see how it is used and the

idea it founded throughout Jewish history and Rabbinical literature so as to appear as common knowledge in the days just prior to the birth of Christ.

The New Testament appropriated Micah 5:2 because of its notoriety among the learned Jews as declarative of the birthplace of Messiah. The reason for such notoriety must have been the result of the historical treatment the verse received. Such a presumption is affirmed by the earliest treatment we find of the verse, in the Aramaic. It does not refer primarily to the birth place of the Messiah, but it does emphasize the nature and character of the Messiah. It appropriates the Hebrew idiom שָׁמַרְיָמ meaning "days of old or everlasting days." It incorporates this idea in its paraphrase in order to show the two-fold coming of the Messiah, once of lowly human birth, but existing eternally previous to that birth in a glorious and divine state. The passage also declares the uniqueness of the Messiah. As to the Messiah's origin, no one doubted that he should have ancestors dating back to the hour of antiquity. The Aramaic desired to declare the everlasting quality of the ruler to come forth. The text of the Aramaic paraphrases Micah 5:2 by using an hyperbole, whereby the name for Messiah is substituted for his person, giving us a reading like this:

וְיֵשֵׁב־רְאוֹם אֵלֶּה מִנָּהּ לַיָּמִים שָׁמַרְיָמ

is the definite Aramaic form for the masculine noun שָׁמַרְיָמ and is identical to the Hebrew שָׁמַרְיָמ in meaning.  

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Therefore, the inscription declares the eternality of the Messiah's person.

Caspari observes in the Aramaic passage that,

the prophet pointed out just the feature of pre-existence, and of the eternal existence of the Messiah, and these only because the announcement of his origin from the little Bethlehem led just to this, and to this alone.  

Apart from this Aramaic inscription we have very little extra-Biblical literature from which to gain an insight into the historical Jewish interpretation of the passage. However, from those which we do have, we can make some valid observations and conclusions which betray the consistent interpretation and application of the passage. A few notes on these will follow later.

We are able to observe the fact that Bethlehem was looked upon as Messiah's birthplace from a view of Rabbinical literature. Even though much of this literature was composed after the birth of Christ, the interpretation is still the same as throughout Jewish history. The Talmud, Echa Rabbah (a commentary on Lamentations), and Breshith Rabka (a commentary on Genesis) affirm the Messiah's birthplace to be the little town of Bethlehem.  

Often such a declaration was spiritualized, but its basis affirmed the fact that through Jewish history the idea of the Messiah coming forth from Bethlehem was a standard and accepted interpretation of the verse.

Even during the reign of Hadrian, Emperor of Rome, the Jewish insurrection led by Bar-Cochba brought the Emperor's interdict upon Jerusalem and Bethlehem, thereby prohibiting residence there by

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10 Hengstenberg, p. 495.

11 Ibid., p. 496.
the Jews. The very thing that motivated this action was the fear of the fulfillment of this prophecy which was prominently spoken about causing the continuance of messianic expectancy for a ruler to arise out of Bethlehem. We must note, therefore, that at this late date (154 A.D.) the interpretation was still continuing among unbelieving Jews.

Apart from Jewish history we have the citations in the New Testament which confirm the application of Micah 5:2 to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as it was intended by Micah himself. In Matthew 2:6 we read: "and thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth a governor that shall rule my people Israel." Matthew records in this verse the words of the Sanhedrin as they recited the general idea of Micah 5:2. These words were a response on the part of the Sanhedran to the question of Herod. Matthew 2:1 and 2 presented information that was heard by the ears of Herod. The thought of the recent birth of a Jewish king worried him immensely, so Herod theorized that if such rumors were true, the instructors in the synagogue should know where he was to be born. He appealed to the chief priests and scribes (v. 4) of the Jews and their answer was "In Bethlehem Juda." In Luke 2:4 we find the claim that God providentially guided the birthplace of the Messiah in answer to prophecy. John 7:42 also contributes to the application of Micah 5:2 to Christ. It says, "Did not the Scripture declare that the Christ comes out of the seed


13Hengstenberg, p. 497.
of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" Lenski notes that we have here,

the assurance derived from Micah 5:2; Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5 and from their synagogue instruction that the birthplace of the Messiah must be in Bethlehem. 14

We can claim without any doubts, therefore, on the basis of the New Testament citations, that Jesus Christ was the literal fulfillment of Micah 5:2, being born in Bethlehem and possessing the glorious attributes of eternality and power as are presented of him in that passage. Benson notes that,

the words must be very much wrested and changed from their natural meaning or deprived of their full force or signification, before they can be applied to any other person. 15

Christ himself seems to appeal to the Micah 5:2 passage in a passive way when, during his trials, just prior to his crucifixion, He continues to urge his claims as the Mediatorial King of Old Testament prophecy. 16 In Matthew 27:11 Pilate asks, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" to which Christ replies, "thou sayest." (cf. also 29, 37, 42). He fails to deny that He is such and let's His passivity stand as an affirmation of his fulfillment of that prophecy.

We have, therefore, a basis from Jewish history and from the words of New Testament Scripture that Christ was the fulfillment


16 McClain, from his unpublished notes, p. 78.
in the fullest sense of Micah’s "ruler prophecy." That one born in Bethlehem, was the pre-existent, divine Son of God, having no beginning and no ending.

Argument from the Usages of Hebrew Words

When we examine Micah 5:2 and its ruler we cannot divorce that very task from all that is said about the ruler by other prophets. So very much is said about him that there is very little doubt which should be left as to his proper identification. As we have seen, some have identified the ruler as Zerubbabel, while others have merely said that he is not to be regarded as a distinct personality, but as an expression of the "messianic hope." But it is significant to note that no commentator denies the messianic character of the prophecy whether or not they accept Christ Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of that prophecy. Isaiah tells us of the virgin birth of the ruler, while Micah tells us the place of his birth and the character of his person. Let us see how the Hebrew text supports our messianic interpretation with Christ as the single fulfillment.

The Micah 5:1 passage in the Hebrew text (5:2 in English) is marked by its close connection with the preceding passage by the use of the Hebrew copulative . The purpose of this connection appears to be to draw a contrast between a failing ruler who appears as the "judge of Israel" in 4:14, and the one in 5:1 who is of a glorified strain. This latter one exhibits an everlasting origin and one who is of divine appointment and choice.

The passage begins with an ascription to Bethlehem. There is a great deal of importance in this address and it is often misunderstood. Micah says תִּפְתָּא יִבְרְאוֹל which means "thou Bethlehem," thereby making specific his address to the small town located 6 miles to the southwest of Jerusalem. Although the city was small it was significant in that it was the birthplace of David (I Samuel 20:6). Many interpret this passage to mean nothing more than the Davidic origin of the forthcoming Messiah. This is not the most natural understanding of the statement, for it is the capstone of a long series of revelations regarding the Messiah's coming, from Genesis through Isaiah.

Isaiah, having foretold the eternal glory, universal dominion, supreme Godhead, superhuman virgin birth and sufferings of the Messiah (Isaiah 7:9; 51), leaves Micah to reveal simply the birthplace of the same individual. To demand something else would be to overburden the teaching of the passage with no contextual justification. It was a promise to those at Bethlehem that the future ruler should be born there.  

Micah adds another word to Bethlehem so as to leave no doubt in the minds of the readers which Bethlehem he was talking about. He adds פַּרְגָּא (Ephratah) being of the tribe of Judah as opposed to the Bethlehem of Zebullun. The etymological meaning of the term refers to the "fruit of the land." However, the purpose of

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19 Butler, p. 479.

20 Benson, p. 969-970.

21 Hengstenberg, p. 481.
such an inclusion seems to be only to distinguish the Bethlehem as that of Judah. The identification is found in Genesis 48:7 and in Ruth 4:11. In these two passages Bethlehem and Ephratah appear as parallels. In II Samuel 7 and following, Bethlehem and Ephratah are to be definitely distinguished. The first as being the town and the latter the environs of that town. Some say the purpose of such a connection was simply a combination of the modern and ancient (Genesis 48:7) names. Others suggest that the word, since it alludes to "fruitfulness" or "fruit-bearing" is significant in that at some future time that town would be blessed in a much higher sense, that being the coming of the Messiah from her midst. Such would be consistent with Micah who in 7:18 reads such a meaning from the etymology of his own name. It is difficult to determine the exact intention of such an identification since, both appellations are placed unconnectedly beside each other, without any indication of their relation.

It would be acceptable to say that Micah attempted to present a double meaning in this statement: the first of which was to distinguish "which Bethlehem" and the second to show, the amazing coincidence of the word for "fruitfulness" with that coming Seed who would bear much fruit. It might, however, be pushing the etymological meanings too far, especially since we're not sure about the etymology.

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22 Ibid.
24 Hengstenberg, p. 481.
In contrast to the relative unimportance of Bethlehem, the prophet foresees the day when the ruler over entire Israel will make his entrance therefrom. The Davidic covenant asserts in II Samuel 7 and 23:1-7 that Messiah was to be of the lineage of David. We read of Jehovah's promise which states, "when thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee... He shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (II Samuel 7:12-13). So it was out of the house of David that this everlasting king was to appear.

As David commenced his reign he soon established its glory in the city Jerusalem. It was the capital of the nation and was the center and base of activity for the Davidic line throughout its entirety. The "house of David" was often thought to refer to Jerusalem. Most individuals expected that Messiah would be born in Jerusalem, would then mount the throne and then rule in splendor and glory subjecting the entire world to his command. However, we know that Micah himself foretold of the plowing under of Jerusalem (Micah 3:12) and there was no basis from which he could rise following the fulfillment of this prophecy in 605-587/6 B.C. when the Babylonians invaded Palestine and then destroyed the Holy City.25

Micah tells us that the Messiah will be born in the ancient ancestral home of David. We see the fulfillment of this prophecy not in the near future, for Micah tells us in 4:1 that even Jehovah's house would not be re-established until the "latter days." The birth of the Messiah was to come before that. This same ruler who

25Cooper, p. 197.
is born in lowly Bethlehem is prophesied as ascending the throne of Israel, on high, also in the latter days. The one who is to reign as Micah's ruler in those days is spoken of elsewhere as the Lord God Himself. This magnificent restoration is prophesied in Micah 4:1 through 4:8 and in the words of Micah's predecessor Amos (9:11).

The prophet contrasts the decay of the Davidic household as it is pictured in the ruins of Jerusalem, with the sublime and glorious figure of Israel's future ruler. His greatness shines in marked contrast with the ruin of the Davidic household. His magnificence is a further contrast of his lowly birth to His divine personality. He thusly takes control and establishes the peace for which this world has so long yearned.

We see that not only was the ruler to be born in the city of David which was indeed, "little to be among the thousands of Judah," but he was to **מַעֲנֵֽא** (**come forth unto me**). This statement demands close examination. **מַעֲנֵֽא** is the qal imperfect, third person masculine singular of the root **מָעָן** which means "to go out, go forth, or to come forth." There are various suggestions as to how to handle this. In Genesis 17:6 there can be no other meaning than to indicate descent. In this vein **מַעֲנֵֽא** is sometimes translated "being born," thereby existing in the general category of the meaning "going out." The context

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in Genesis 17 and II Kings 20:18 demands this understanding. However, if we were to understand this to be true of Micah 5:2, then the meaning would be that Bethlehem is the Messiah's father. The second alternative is to identify the meaning as the same as is found in Jeremiah 30:21 and Zechariah 10:4. According to Caspari, "going forth" here is equivalent to "proceeding." In other words, it is saying that "out of the population of Bethlehem there shall arise a ruler." The parallel found between Micah 5:2 and Jeremiah 30:21 can scarcely be denied. It is conclusive. The ("ruler") proceeds out of their midst "in the sense of being of the same nationality and stock."28

The ruler, therefore, must be Messiah who proceeds forth from Bethlehem or arises out from Bethlehem, if you will. The reason Micah apparently uses such a term is to draw a contrast between the "divine greatness" and the "natural littleness of Bethlehem."29 Keil and Delitzsch similarly relate that, instead of saying Micah gives the sentence the turn he does, for the purposes of bringing sharply out the contrast between the natural smallness of Bethlehem and the exalted dignity to which it would rise, through the fact that Messiah would issue from it.30

Not only is the Messiah to come forth from Bethlehem, but he is also to come forth "unto me." This prepositional phrase is a translation of the Hebrew The one speaking here is Jehovah, in whose name Micah ministers. There are some commentators

28Cooper, p. 199.
29Hengstenberg, p. 485.
30Keil and Delitzsch, p. 479.
who would differ with this understanding, saying that it refers to the prophet himself: the prophet being representative of the entire people of the covenant.\(^31\) This is not likely at all. The prophet is speaking in the name of Jehovah not after the fashion of his own lips. In the context of coming judgment with people being delivered over to Babylonia, it would appear that this prophecy is an assurance given to God's covenant people that they will not be totally and eternally forsaken.

Furthermore, would seem to indicate that God is providing in this manner a true mediator who can approach Him as an equal. One "coming forth unto Jehovah" could only approach Jehovah if he were of the same divine essence. David was a type of the Messiah for God esteemed him as a man after God's own heart. Yet, David could not approach God in the manner that this ruler will. This one will be the fulfillment of all the yearnings of centuries for a ruler like unto Jehovah himself.

In this ruler the contrast is drawn from his lowly place of coming forth to His glorious position as perfect mediator before Jehovah. Hengstenberg says that this merely shows Messiah's lofty dignity and divine nature, in contrast to his human and lowly origin. This in itself is a declaration of his divine nature and his manhood.\(^32\) Whether or not we understand the implications of this statement, Micah was inspired to include it in order to present the

\(^31\)Hengstenberg, p. 486.  
\(^32\)Ibid.
forthcoming ruler as perfect mediator of the restored order presented in Micah 4:1-8.

It is likely that הָיָה was used in addition, to declare the purpose of Jehovah in the Messianic mission. The Messiah comes forth "to do my will for my praise and glory, saith Jehovah." Deane makes an additional observation as to the significance of הָיָה.

He says,

Micah, by these words, would recall the announcement concerning David made to Saul, 'I have provided me a king' (I Samuel 16:1), and thus show the typical relation of David to Messiah.33

We can but conclude that we have the positive declaration of the great ruler who is to come, being the total fulfillment of every Messianic prophecy, in this verse. He is to be one who is typified by David, and is everlasting in his perfect reign which is always glorifying the great I AM. Note that in Micah 4:7 Jehovah declares that he himself will rule the restored remnant of Israel. This cannot be separated from the presentation of Micah 5:2 and its ruler. The ruler must be man and God. No one could fulfill this prophecy, but Christ who as God's Son, became man and as such fulfilled this and every other Messianic prophecy uttered in Scripture. There can be no alternative to Christ Jesus, our blessed Saviour.

SECTION II

Minor Problem:
The key to the meaning of the entire Micah 5:2 passage might well be in the last phrase. The interpretation that is adopted with regard to this phrase has the controlling influence over the interpretation of the major problem of the identification of the ruler. As such, we are dealing with another major problem. We shall want to determine the meaning of the Hebrew phrase which being interpreted is, "whose goings forth are from old, from days of eternity." Is it merely a statement of ancestral origin, or does it have some deeper significance? We shall want to determine the answer to this question in the following section. Let us look first at the rationalistic school's interpretation.

The rationalists, whether they support the post-exilic messianic interpretation, or the hope messianic interpretation, find great unanimity on the meaning of this phrase to the end that the interpretation of the entire verse is affected by this one phrase. The rationalists translate it as such: "his goings forth are from old, from ancient days." Very strong emphasis is placed upon the etymological meanings of the component words of this passage. For example, Briggs, Driver, and Plumer paraphrase it in these words:
"whose origins are old, from ancient days." We can see two very obvious emendations of the standard reading signified by their paraphrase thereby equalling value judgments on the meaning of the passage in question. The two are to be found in the words "origins" and "ancient days." Such translations are the results of the rationalist's presuppositions and tend to emphasize the demythologizing procedure common to such a world view. These emendations emphasize first the natural origin of the "ruler" from one of the oldest of Judaean families, and second, that those origins reach back within history in the temporal sense to the basis of the Davidic line.

The idea of "origins" is supported, say the rationalists, by a number of texts. In Ezekiel 34:23ff. we have the Davidic origin emphasized when it says, "I will set up one shepherd over them... even my servant David." Again in 34:24 the same idea is prominent: The Davidic "outgoings" of the fulfiller king is portrayed for he says, "my servant David shall be king over them." Hosea emphasizes the same when he states: "the children of Israel shall turn, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king" (3:5). Of course, the literal fulfillment of a personal return of David would be inconceivable, therefore the rational approach would be to expect one whose ancestral roots would be in the Davidic line. In Brown, Driver and Briggs's lexicon, the comment on the term ClientRect{notes that it is a noun of feminine gender

1Briggs, Driver and Plumer, p. 104.
whose usage is found only once in the Old Testament and that is in Micah 5:1 (although it is found in the of II Kings 10:27).
The rationalists would demand that this be translated as "future ruler out of Bethlehem and hence to his origins." We shall see later that the traditional interpretation of this word has as valid a basis as the rationalists'.

If does refer to origins the rationalists make a good case for the meaning and contextual significance of the next two words to be considered: and , meaning "from old" and "from days of antiquity" respectively. Most scholars would assume these two idioms to be in the characteristically Hebrew parallel construction.

Buttrick affirms this in his inimitable style of proposing that these idioms are merely emphatic of the remoteness of the origins of the Hebrew monarchy, back to the time of David. The hope is not for a single, and therefore temporary leader blessed with evanescent triumphs. This kingdom of David's will hopefully last forever. Piepenbring states that,

attempts have been made to find the pre-existence of the Messiah in the declaration of Micah that his "origin dates from ancient times, from the days of eternity." But this later expression is explained by the parallel expression "from ancient times." The prophet simply means that the Messiah will be descendant of the ancient family of David...the word eternity or eternal has a merely relative signification in the language of the Old Testament.

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3Buttrick, p. 931.
4Piepenbring, p. 225.
The first idiom, without doubt, refers just to times past or olden days. The rationalists apply this by stating that \( \text{D} \text{Y} \text{P} \) refers to the days of David which were approximately 310 years prior to the ministry of Micah. These certainly were old days. Even one hundred years would mean such today.

The second idiom cannot be as conclusively identified as to the specific times to which it refers. \( \text{D} \text{Y} \text{Y} \text{R} \text{P} \) is translated by some as "everlasting" and by others as "days of antiquity." The contrast in meanings is between time and eternity.

The rationalists would argue for the last translation. It is found in other passages of Scripture. Amos uses it when he says, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old..." (9:11). Here Amos is using \( \text{D} \text{Y} \text{Y} \text{R} \text{P} \) to refer back to times no more ancient than David. It is also to be found later in Micah (7:14) and it is undeniable that the word conveys a temporal meaning even in this place.

The word is also found in the parallel construction with \( \text{D} \text{Y} \text{P} \) in other portions of Scripture. The rationalists cite Malachi 3:4 which says, "then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jehovah, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years." We must conclude then that the usage of \( \text{D} \text{Y} \text{P} \) and \( \text{D} \text{Y} \text{Y} \text{R} \text{P} \) do not, either independently or collectively signify any eternal origin. Such usages refer to ancient times, but within history.
We might observe that although these idioms do refer only to ancient time within history, it is not limited to the time of the origins of the Davidic monarchy. The remoteness of דְּבִי י is to be seen in the messianic passage of the Lieden Papyrus No. 344. Here Messiah is equivalent to the reincarnation of the god "Re." This very fact places the god as of the first generation of mankind. We observe here that although the idiom expresses a time within history, it is nevertheless of greater antiquity than David's time.

Van Hoonacker presents the problem of the greater antiquity expressed in the term דְּבִי י by alluding to Nowack and Marti's observation regarding the times of Micah. Micah was living in pre-exilic Judah and the constancy of the Davidic line was seen down to his day, although it was 300 years removed from the establishment of the Davidic monarchy. Such a time would not seem to be of remote antiquity. Only a dramatic event like the Babylonian exile which severed all practical relationships with the Davidic line could project such an idea. The rationalist is again forced to flee to a later date for the composition of Micah, to explain this problem, though it is not supported by any other evidence externally or internally. Some try to escape the problem by demanding that the origins are intimated, as such, to be the line of the patriarch Abraham. This is a very strained position. The meaning of לֵילָה יִד ("origins") would seemingly be lost in the maize

5 Briggs, Driver and Plumer, p. 104.
of Hebrew geneologies and since all Jews were of this same stock it would have no meaningful significance. The rationalist is thus left with the dilemma of trying to fit his interpretation of the paraphrastic construction \( \text{םליאו ד"} \) into his scheme, thereby demanding reference to the ruler's Davidic origin. Such an interpretation is required by the context of Amos 9:11, but we have nowhere near that degree of certainty here in Micah 5:2. All we can be sure of is that the construction is temporal in significance, thereby expressing antiquity within history.

On such flimsy textual support Buttrick concludes:

No other passage of Scripture has been more abused by its friends than this. It is one of the Scriptural sources of the messianic hope that was to loom so large in post-exilic Judaism. The tradition that Jesus came in fulfillment of this and other prophecies was so early and so deep a part of the Christian apologetic, that it wrote itself into the Gospels, notably Matthew, Luke and John. It is hard to believe that anyone who had actually read this chapter carefully could think that it referred at all to the coming of Jesus Christ. There is little or nothing in common between the central theme and anything he said or did. Actually the Gospel records claim only that Bethlehem was the ordained birthplace of the one who was to be ruler in Israel. Once they have established that by referring to verse 2, they walk straight away from everything else in the chapter.\(^7\)

The position set forth in this chapter can only be regarded as a failure since it refuses to adopt the only valid hermeneutical principles for interpreting any Scripture. That principle is set forth by the Word of God itself. The rationalistic position disregards the power and reality of God within the words of Scripture.

\(^7\)Buttrick, p. 930-931.
Therefore, to approach Scripture on a humanistic, rational basis, is to disregard its supernatural character. Hence, all prophecy is regarded as non-predictive and therefore only historical. To observe the phrase, "תּוֹרְנִיֶּה יָהְדֹּתְתָּ דִּינָרָה עַצֵּמָה" for them, is to see only a reference to the source of derivation for some "hoped for" ruler, whose very origin is confined in time to only the Davidic monarchy. To demand that "תּוֹרְנִיֶּה" be interpreted as "origins" is an assumption without any convincing support. Therefore, the rationalist operates within his closed continuum which, as a matter of course, rules out any possibility of the supernatural. The ultimate result is that a slanted and fallacious interpretation is adopted as valid. We must reject it as being an inadequate explanation of the meaning of this Scripture, for it is a slave to its own presuppositions.
PURELY MESSIANIC INTERPRETATION

The two concepts of interpretation just mentioned are based on the same lexical meaning of the phrase. This word is translated "going forth" and is a Hebrew familial noun plural in form, being derived from the verb "to go forth" in the verse. The feminine noun form occurs only once in the Old Testament but seems to denote the action of "going forth." But even though that it can imply the place, the time, and date of the very act itself of going forth. Let us examine the various views with regard to the meaning of the phrase "his going forth was from old from everlasting."

After having observed the rationalistic interpretation of the phrase מפלת הגרד ביזור קדש קôle, we rejected it as a fallacious representation of the meaning of the Hebrew. We must turn from that view to search for a valid alternative. Within the view expressed as the "purely messianic interpretation" which the author defends, one finds two logical alternatives to the rationalist position. One maintains that the aforementioned phrase declares the "eternal generation of Christ's Sonship," whereas the other demands that the phrase is descriptive of the "pre-existence of the Messiah."

The two reasonable alternatives just mentioned are based on the valid lexical meanings of the term מפלת H' קôle. This word is translated "goings forth" and is a Hebrew feminine noun, plural in form,\(^1\) being derived from the verb נזר used earlier in the verse. The feminine noun form occurs only once in the Old Testament but seems to denote the action of "going forth," but some contend that it can imply the place, the time, and mode, or the very act itself of going forth.\(^2\) Let us examine the various views with regard to the meaning of the phrase "his goings forth are from old, from everlasting."

\(^1\)Briggs, Brown and Driver, p. 426.
\(^2\)Keil and Delitzsch, p. 479.
The Eternal Generation View

This particular view finds the lesser amount of support among commentators and Hebrew scholars, simply because it has very little textual support. "Eternal generation" is the term used to denote the intertrinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son as this is taught in the Bible. Generation makes it plain that there is a divine sonship prior to the incarnation. . .that there is a distinction of persons in the Godhead and that between these persons there is a superiority and subordination of order.

Their argument proceeds as follows. a plural form of the feminine \( \gamma \nu \varepsilon \iota \varepsilon \iota \) is difficult to explain the need for the plural aside from recognizing it as a plural of majesty. Hengstenberg records this position as being held by Grocerus. He states that the plural, being a plural of majesty is not without importance. The Son (the Messiah) has not proceeded from the Father at one time like man does from a woman. A man is born at a particular time, thereby having an origin at one point in history, but the Son of God has a consistent "coming forth." There is no specific time of procession, but just a continual effulgence of life, thereby marking the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. The Messiah was, from the beginning, being brought forth out of the nature of God. His coming forth or emanating from the Godhead is continual from "old times and even from the days of eternity." It is the \( \alpha \eta  \rho a  \gamma i  \gamma i o \mu a  \varepsilon \zeta  \delta \varepsilon \gamma i s  \alpha  \iota  \omicron  \omicron  \omega  \) the "radiance of his glory." 

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4Hengstenberg, p. 487.
This coming forth from eternity is in contrast with the simple going forth of his humanity. Grocerus says that the single going forth does not relate to manifold "goings forth." If the single going forth did, in some way relate to the eternal emanation of the Son from God, then there would be a reference here to a time of origin or a time of initiatory existence.5 This, of course, cannot be the case.

The view presented as "eternal generation" was the predominant view among the Church Patriarchs. Based on the Septuagint rendering of \( \varepsilon \gamma \omega \delta \sigma \iota \) and the Vulgate's \( \textit{egressus} \), both of which translate \( \textbf{\textit{γινεῖς}} \), the church fathers claimed that he who was born at Bethlehem has an eternal existence emanating from the Father. The Council Lateran in determining that it does refer to eternal generation of the Son from the Father from everlasting to everlasting says,

> without beginning, ever and without end, the Father begetting, the Son being born (nascens), and the Holy Ghost proceeding.

This, of course, is true, but I do not agree that this is what Micah is teaching in the phrase we are observing.

The use of \( \textbf{\textit{γινεῖς}} \), translated "days of eternity," is taken by the same individuals to remind us that the character of God's wisdom is eternal. The Messiah's "coming forth" is to be identified in the same manner that God's wisdom emanates

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5Ibid.  
6Deane, p. 68.  
7Ibid.
from his person. The Messiah is the Son, the physical manifestation of the eternally generated Son. In other words the Messiah is God in the flesh. 8 אֶּחְיָהוּ, meaning "eternity or everlasting" etymologically, merely defines the length of time of the generating action. אֶחְיָהוּ could be translated as adjectival. Many cases of nouns following construct state and allowing an adjectival translation can be adduced. To translate the phrase דַּגְּלָן as "ancient of days or everlasting days" would seem to imply a time limit. However, those who hold this view state that the phrase is used as such to draw a temporal contrast between דִּדְּגֹּלָן ("from old") and itself. There has to be a relationship of some kind before any contrast is possible. We would then note the contention that the eternity of the generating of the Son from the Father is exhibited in the words of this Hebrew phrase. I reject this view.

The Pre-existence View

This interpretation finds much more support among scholars due to the failure of the "eternal generation view" to marshal enough convincing evidence from the text. The alternative view states that דִּדְּגֹּלָן refers to the existence of the Messiah before His entrance upon the human scene. This existence was not passive but was marked by a number of appearances in various forms to men, called theophanies. Although the final interpretation is agreed upon by all who subscribe to the pre-

existence view, there are differing opinions as to how to arrive at this conclusion. The difference lies in the identification of \( \text{\textit{םיינא}} \) as meaning repetitive acts of going forth, or to places of going forth mentioned as a two-fold act. We shall deal with the latter first.

**Places of Going Forth**

This view is the most complex of the two to be cited. It is put forward by Hengstenberg in his *Christology* and is supported by a few minor commentators. The position basically demands that \( \text{\textit{םיינא}} \) denotes "place, not acts of going forth." Hengstenberg gives the possible meanings of the word as "place where, instrument wherewith, time wherein, way and manner whereby something is." He then claims that \( \text{\textit{םיינא}} \) as a feminine noun, never denotes the action of going forth itself. We might note that since the feminine noun only occurs once in the Old Testament, Hengstenberg is safe from examples of contrary usage.

In Hosea 6:3, Numbers 33:2, Psalm 19:7 and I Kings 10:28, various forms of the verb \( \text{\textit{םיינא}} \) appear and are used to express "going forth" as to place or to that itself which goes forth. The possibility of a "place" interpretation is possible here, therefore, says Hengstenberg. However, of these four, only Numbers 33:2 demands place rather than act. One might appeal to the Septuagint word used to translate \( \text{\textit{םיינא}} \) also as a support for the "place" interpretation. The word used is \( \text{\textit{ἐξοσοφί}} \). It is

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9Hengstenberg, p. 488.
used only three other times in all of the New Testament (Hebrews 11:22, II Peter 1:15 and Luke 9:31). The Hebrews 11:22 passage is closest to the Micah 5:2 context. It is used in this verse to describe the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. It does not refer to the "act of coming out" particularly, but to the "place" from which the children of Israel departed. So as this word is applied to "goings forth," it might carry with it the same connotation. It can just as legitimately mean acts of going out, however.

It is also pointed out that the verb form \( \text{יִשָּׁר} \) has the primary meaning of "going forth from a place" when it is found in connection with the preposition \( \text{לִשָּׁר} \), meaning "from." We would then have the same case with \( \text{יִשָּׁר} \) supposedly, as we do with the verb. The "place" meaning is very possible here. The masculine form of the same verb can be translated as "place of going forth," however those instances are clearly defined by context.

We must observe that there would seem to be no point to demanding a "place" interpretation in this context. As we shall see, there would be no point to ascribing either eternity or great antiquity to the "place of going forth." It is not likely that this is what Micah had in mind in his use of this noun.

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12Ibid., p. 425.
Repetitive Acts

The second, and most feasible understanding of the meaning of the word \( \text{ラウロド} \) is to accept it as simply denotive of "acts of going forth." This view is supported by Jerome, Edward Henderson, David L. Cooper, and Keil and Delitzsch (et. al.). This view is held traditionally as the best support for pre-existence as found in Micah 5:2. It affirms the character of the word in context as specifically relating to acts. It follows on the heels of its verbal root \( \text{ラロド} \) which speaks of Messiah's earthly act of "going forth" from Bethlehem possibly referring to his birth at that place. Here it speaks of pre-existent activity.

Four passages may be cited to add credibility to this view. In Hosea 3:1, I Kings 10:28, Ezekiel 12:4 and II Samuel 3:25 various forms of the root \( \text{ラロド} \) are used. The similarity of these passages to Micah 5:2 is unmistakable. The ideas of time, mode, or place "do not accord with the facts of the contexts, whereas the acts of going forth . . . blend perfectly with the flow of thought."\(^{13}\)

Henderson summons support for this view by arguing that to ascribe locality to eternity would be incongruous, therefore the idea of "place" would be ruled out as a possibility. The "act of going forth" is also affirmed by the following versions: the Septuagint has \( \epsilon\epsilon\omicron\delta\omicron\iota\upsilon\omega\ \zeta\alpha\nu\chi\varsigma\ \epsilon\zeta\eta\mu\epsilon\rho\omega\upsilon\upsilon\ \delta\iiota\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \), which means, "whose goings forth are from the beginning, from the

\(^{13}\)Keil and Delitzsch, p. 480.
days of the ages." The Vulgate translates it as such: *aeternitatis* which means, "his goings out are from the beginning from everlasting." Both describe an act bounded by a temporal delineation within history. Neither can be taken as an allusion to place, time or mode. Therefore the passage is distinctly proclaiming the pre-existent acts of Christ in theophanic form.

There is basic agreement from both positions as to the meaning of the two idioms *and*. However, as a result of Hengstenberg's interpretation of "goings forth," he sees in these terms more of a unitary contrast to the first going forth at Bethlehem. Bethlehem is in contrast to the idioms "from old and from days of antiquity." Both represent places of going forth: one in time at Bethlehem and one in the ancient past, or namely, the beginning of time.

Some conservative scholars would demand a priori that "days of antiquity," be differentiated as to its relationship to *meaning "from of old." Although is sometimes used to describe "eternity," the very ambiguity of the term placed in temporal relationship to leaves such a contention without reasonable support. We must recognize that Micah was not portraying the eternality of the ruler, but simply his activity before his entrance upon the human scene at Bethlehem.

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14 Henderson, p. 249.

15 Hengstenberg, p. 490.
With this assumption in mind we are free to observe the true meanings of דָּבָר and דָּבָר. We must recognize their character as a Hebrew parallelism in the Micah 5:2 passage. They are to be recognized as equivalents, both being descriptive of the temporal aspect of the activities of the ruler within history prior to his entrance upon the earthly scene at Bethlehem. The two words in question are seen as equivalents in many other portions of Scripture. In Deuteronomy 33:27 and Habakkuk 1:12, דָּבָר expresses the eternity of God. In Psalm 77:6 דָּבָר is equivalent of מַעַל thereby expressing antiquity within history. There is no intimation of any eternal quality to the words in this passage. We might observe their use in Micah 7:14 and 20. Here, both are indicative of "ancient times." A very profound proof is also to be found in Proverbs 8:23. Here דָּבָר, תִּשְׁחַר and פְּרֵס תִּשְׁחַר are found. All are temporal in significance in this context, occurring in parallel construction.

In the light of such passages we cannot demand an "eternity or everlasting" understanding of the idiom הָעְדִּיק. It is clearly temporal, relating to a period of time within history, and very possibly to the entire relationship in history of JHWH to his covenant people. The One interacting with the nation Israel in its development might well be the one described as the ruler in Micah 5:2. Even the nature of the noun הסף, meaning "goings forth," would seem to support such a contention. Since it is a
we as conservatives have as much right to demand an understanding of it as meaning "acts of going forth" as the rationalists do to demand the "origins" interpretation. Our interpretation fits the context better and parallels the general usage of the masculine form of the noun to a greater extent than does the rationalist's interpretation.

Since one's interpretation in the final analysis is totally dependent upon his epistemology, we must assume that the rationalists have adopted the wrong criteria from which to judge important statements of Scripture. We recognize that this particular Scripture is declarative of the birth of our pre-existent Saviour, Jesus Christ, in Bethlehem 700 years later. It can only be descriptive of Him, therefore it must be regarded as completely predictive, with the fact of the fulfilled event confirming such an assumption. We can only rejoice in the greatness of God and His concern in Grace for mankind. For we see revealed here the "Everlasting One, Jesus Christ, the Righteous" as the complete and perfect fulfillment of Micah's prophecy.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).
CONCLUSION
Micah 5:2 (5:1 Hebrew) is a definite Messianic prophecy with no immediate fulfillment in the prophet's own time, therefore having only a future fulfillment in the incarnate Son of God as Jesus Christ in Bethlehem Ephratah. He was without question the ruler of Micah 5:2. We know that the ruler did appear, but his rule was rejected by the nation Israel whom he came to rule, and from thence subdue the entire world to His authority. Since the rule and ruler were rejected this particular aspect of His task were set aside. We are now living in the interregnum of the Mediatorial Kingdom which will come to an end at the glorious second coming of the ruler born at Bethlehem.

Christ will one day return to fulfill the prophecy of His rule over the nation Israel and the world, at which time he will restore the Edenic conditions predicted in Micah 4:1-8. That rule will be glorious and everlasting. The Son of God, prophesied in time past as coming in the form of man from Bethlehem is the ruler of Micah 5:2. His glorious pre-existence is affirmed thus demanding no one less than the second person of the triune Godhead. We can reach no other conclusion.
And as for you, Judah, and Israel, my two sons, though you be as white as snow, so that you may be despised, though you be polluted, though you be cast out, though you be in the fire, yet shall I love you, and therefore I will hate you not. And I will not, as at the first, disinherit them from being a people; for I am the Lord their God, and I will hear the cries of the sons of Jacob, and will not hear the cries of the sons of Israel. For I am the Lord their God, and I will hear the cries of my people Israel, and I will not hear their cries, for I am the Lord their God. And I will hear the cries of my people Israel, and I will not hear their cries, for I am the Lord their God. For I am the Lord their God, and I will hear the cries of my people Israel, and I will not hear their cries, for I am the Lord their God.

EXPANDED PARAPHRASE

And as for you, Judah, and Israel, my two sons, though you be as white as snow, so that you may be despised, though you be polluted, though you be cast out, though you be in the fire, yet shall I love you, and therefore I will hate you not. And I will not, as at the first, disinherit them from being a people; for I am the Lord their God, and I will hear the cries of the sons of Jacob, and will not hear the cries of the sons of Israel. For I am the Lord their God, and I will hear the cries of my people Israel, and I will not hear their cries, for I am the Lord their God. And I will hear the cries of my people Israel, and I will not hear their cries, for I am the Lord their God. For I am the Lord their God, and I will hear the cries of my people Israel, and I will not hear their cries, for I am the Lord their God.
EXPANDED PARAPHRASE

"And as for you Bethlehem of the region of Ephratah, though you be relatively insignificant among the great families of Judah, a Ruler shall come forth from your very midst who shall approach me, Jehovah, as a mediator between my people Israel and myself, who has been active long before his forthcoming birth in interaction with my covenant people from of old, yea to the very limits of their ancient history."
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