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" THAT THE SOUL BE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE, IT IS NOT GOOD."—PROV. XIX. 2.  
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A CRITICAL EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH LII. 14 & 15 VERSES.

No portion of Scripture has been more keenly contested than the prophetic oracle in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, and, as the closing verses of the 52d chapter, form the introduction, and, indeed, constitute a part of it, it has shared the same fate. The enemies of evangelical religion have laboured hard to set aside its true sense in order that they might destroy at the very outset, the testimony which this precious portion of Scripture bears to the character and work of Christ as an expiatory purifier from the guilt and defilement of sin. The entire oracle is written in very elevated and poetical language, participating largely in the peculiarities of the prophetic style,—abrupt, condensed and elliptical; and for that very reason requiring greater caution in its exposition, but affording greater facility to a heretical interpreter to give a colour of plausibility to his erroneous views. This is pre-eminently the case with the passage in question. And besides the ordinary obscurities of the prophetic style, it is encompassed with other difficulties that enable one who is so disposed, to impose upon it a very erroneous sense. This is especially the case with the first clause of the 15th verse: "So shall he sprinkle many nations."

The true sense of this passage is, that the Messiah would extend to the nations of the earth at large, the purifying efficacy of his blood and spirit. Even Hengstenberg gives the verb the sense of cleansing, and that with reference to the effects of the atonement. But the Rationalists of Germany impose very different senses on the passage; and these senses, as might be expected, are as discordant as they are false,—the invariable consequence and sure indication of a departure from the truth:—some contending that the phrase, "sprinkle many nations," should be rendered, "he shall cause them to leap for joy;" others, "they shall rise from their seats with reverence;" others still, "they shall be struck with cordial admiration." These senses exclude, and they are adopted for the purpose of excluding, all reference to the atonement, so clearly implied in the parenthetical sentence, "his visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."

It grieves one to observe that Dr John Brown, of Edinburgh, adopts this erroneous view of the passage, in his able work, entitled, "The sufferings and glories of the Messiah." His words are, "I feel constrained to go along