

figurative mode of speech is employed in the description of Peter's vision, in which he saw a great sheet let down to the earth, "wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air." Who will suppose, since it is wholly unnecessary for the object, which was to convince Peter that the Mosaic distinction into clean and unclean beasts was abolished, that he here had a vision of all the species of terrestrial vertebral animals on the globe?

It would be easy to multiply similar passages. In many of them we should find that the phrase "all the earth" signifies the land of Palestine; in a few, the Chaldean empire; and in one, that of Alexander of Macedon.

Now, so similar is the phraseology of the passages just quoted to that descriptive of the deluge, so universal are the terms, while we are sure that their meaning must be limited, that we are abundantly justified in considering the deluge as limited, if other parts of the Bible, or the facts of natural history, require such a limitation. Indeed, so obviously analogous are the passages quoted to the Mosaic account of the deluge, that distinguished writers have regarded the deluge as limited, long before geology existed, or natural history had learned the manner in which organic life is distributed on the globe; nay, at a period when naturalists, with Linnæus at their head, supposed animals and plants to have proceeded from one centre: an opinion that seemed to sustain the notion of the universality of the flood. The inference, then, that it was limited, must have been made chiefly on exegetical grounds.

"I cannot see," says Bishop Stillingfleet, more than a century ago, "any urgent necessity from the Scripture to assert that the flood did spread over all the surface of the earth. That all mankind, those in the ark excepted, were destroyed by it, is most certain, according to the Scriptures. The flood was universal as to mankind; but from thence follows no necessity at all of asserting the universality of it as to the globe of the earth, unless it be sufficiently proved that the whole earth was peopled before the flood, which I despair of ever seeing proved."—*Origines Sacræ*, B. III, chap. 4, p. 337, ed. 1709.

Matthew Poole, well known for his valuable and extensive commentaries on the Bible, thus expresses himself: "It is