

earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.’* At the time the Epistle to the Colossians was written, most of the world was in heathen darkness, and in utter ignorance of the true religion ; yet in that epistle Paul speaks of ‘ the gospel which was preached to every creature under heaven.’† He could not mean to expose himself to the charge of palpable untruth. In all these, and many like cases, we readily and necessarily assign a modified sense to absolute terms. There is no reason why this principle of interpretation should be held inapplicable to the history of the deluge.

The difficulties which beset the idea of a universal deluge, irrespectively of geological discoveries, have induced many expositors, both ancient and modern, to believe that it was limited.

Even when we take the largest estimate of the size of the ark, its dimensions exclude the supposition that it contained all land animals, and the food necessary for their preservation. The number of species of terrestrial mammiferæ alone is, on a moderate calculation, about seven hundred ;

* Acts x. 11, 12.

† Col. i. 23.