

used in a limited sense, as in Nahum iii., 9: "Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite." The proper definition of "infinite" is *unbounded, unlimited*; but here it is used figuratively to show their strength was very large. So with the words *eternal, everlasting, forever and ever*. *Eternal* means without beginning and without end; *Everlasting* means that which had a beginning, but will have no end; and though like other words they are sometimes used figuratively, as when it is said "I will give thee the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession," the plain meaning is as long as the Jewish commonwealth should continue; or when the term "everlasting hills" is employed it is plainly an expression of their great antiquity, solidity, and long duration; but still these words have their proper meaning, and when used figuratively, the subject or their connection will always determine when they are used in an improper or limited sense. When we meet with such expressions as the "Eternal God," "Everlasting God," "eternal life," and "shame and everlasting contempt" they are doubtless to be taken in their utmost and most unlimited sense. So obvious is this, it is a matter of boundless surprise how any one should ever have had the rashness to make it a subject of controversy at all. But such has been the case, and perhaps from a variety of motives,—some from the solemnity and incomprehensible nature of the subject. The very thought of an eternity of suffering is overwhelming; and some, no doubt, have sought to diminish its magnitude and force by seeking to limit the meaning of the words that give expression to it. While we cannot but respect this feeling, we must at the same time question its loyalty to the teaching of Scripture, and ask, after all you have said and given every consideration to the arguments you advance, what stronger terms could have been used than those which have been used, to set forth the never-ending punishment and eternal sufferings of the finally impenitent?

But, laying aside all cavil about words, there are some things which appear unaccountably strange and irreconcilable in the teaching of Scripture, on the supposition that all are at last to be saved.