

fossil bones are found, at the epoch of the revolutions which buried these bones; for there cannot be assigned any reason why mankind should have escaped such overwhelming catastrophes, nor why human remains should not now be discovered as well as those of other animals; but I do not wish to conclude that man did not exist previously to this epoch. He might have inhabited some confined tract of country, whence he repeopled the world after these terrible events; perhaps the places in which he dwelt have been entirely swallowed up, and his bones buried at the bottom of the present seas, with the exception of the small number of individuals who have propagated the species.

However it may be, the establishment of man in the country where we have said that the fossil remains of land animals are found, that is, in the greatest part of Europe, Asia, and America, is necessarily posterior, not only to the revolutions which have covered these bones, but even to those which have laid open the strata which envelope them, and which are the last which the globe has been subjected to; whence it is clear that we can neither draw from the bones themselves, nor from the more or less considerable masses of rock or earth which cover them, any argument in favour of the antiquity of the human species in these different countries.