

was in one sense, yet in another it became to him the source of a very serious error. For as he considered the characteristic petrifications of each individual group of strata (which had been deposited during one main period of the earth's history) to be entirely different from those of the strata lying above or below, and as he erroneously believed that one and the same species of animal was never found in two succeeding groups of strata, he arrived at the false idea, which was accepted as a law by most subsequent naturalists, that a series of quite distinct periods of creation had succeeded one another. Each period was supposed to have had its special animal and vegetable world, each its peculiar specific Fauna and Flora.

Cuvier imagined that the whole history of the earth's crust, since the time when living creatures had first appeared on the surface, must be divided into a number of perfectly distinct periods, or divisions of time, and that the individual periods must have been separated from one another by peculiar revolutions of an unknown nature (cataclysms, or catastrophes). Each revolution was followed by the utter annihilation of the till then existing animals and plants and after its termination a completely new creation of organic forms took place. A new world of animals and plants, absolutely and specifically distinct from those of the preceding historical periods, was called into existence at once, and now again peopled the globe for thousands of years, till it again was suddenly destroyed in the crash of a new revolution.

As to the nature and causes of these revolutions, Cuvier expressly states that no idea could be formed of them, and that the present active forces in nature were not sufficient