Johann Friedrich Esper Encyclopedia Article

Johann Friedrich Esper

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Johann Friedrich Esper

1732-1781

German pastor and paleontologist who discovered the first human fossils. During Esper's lifetime the prevailing view was that fossils were created during the Biblical deluge by sedimentary processes. Esper discovered fossilized remains of extinct animals and human bones in the cave of Gaillenreuth in Barvaria. Though initially considering that man had lived side-by-side with these animals, Esper's *Detailed Account of Newly Discovered Zooliths* (1774) adopts the deluvian interpretation that the fossils were brought together during the Biblical flood.