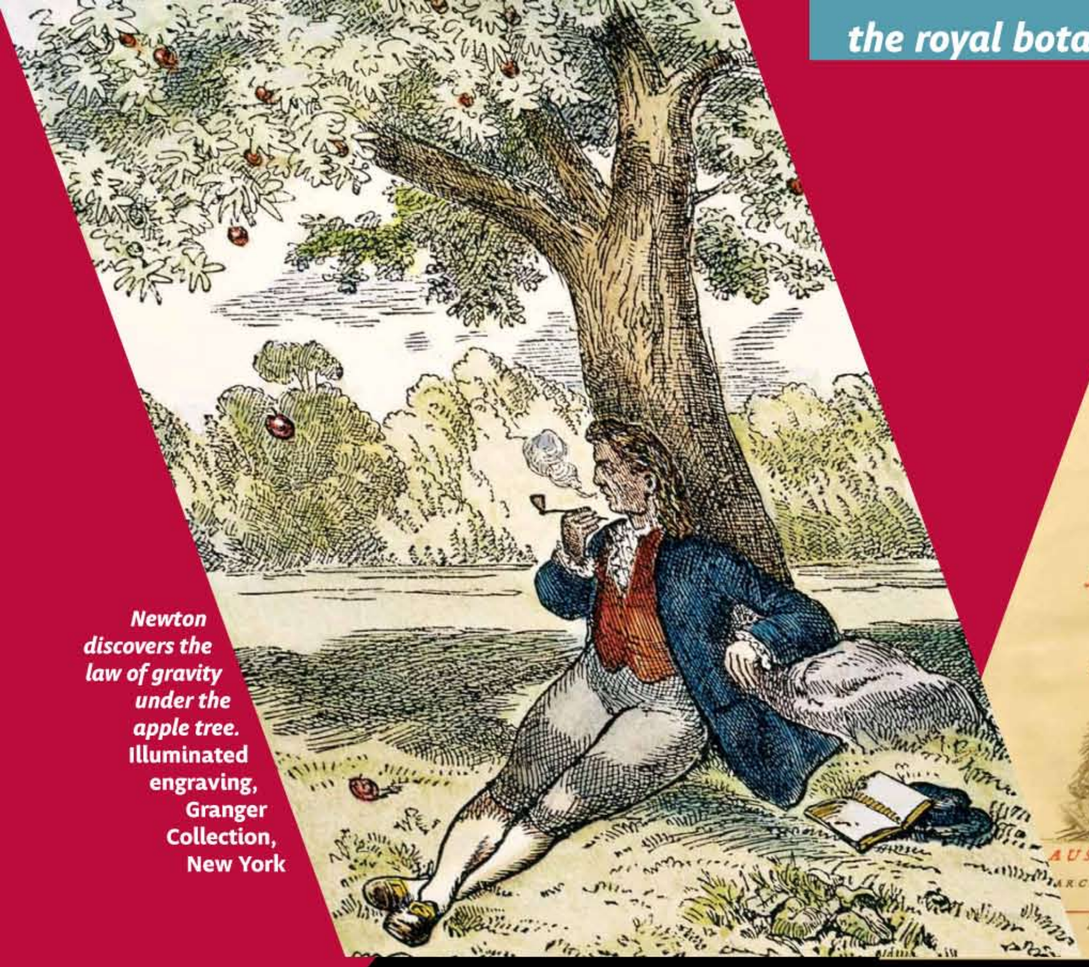
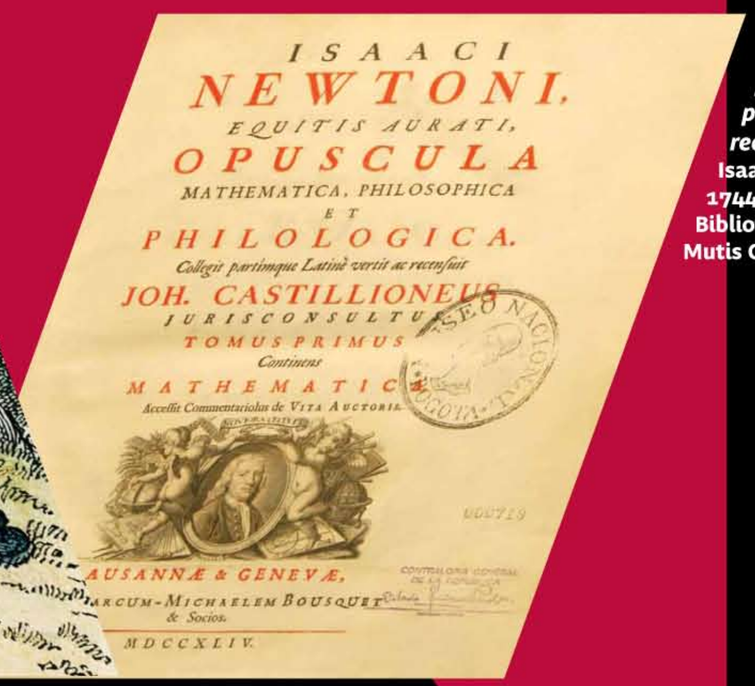


Newton discovers the law of gravity under the apple tree.
Illuminated engraving, Granger Collection, New York



Opuscula mathematica, philosophica et philologica : collegit partimque latine vertit ac recensuit John Castillioneus
Isaac Newton
1744
Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia
Mutis Collection, 2600

Mathematics and *astronomy*

In 1762, José Celestino Mutis inaugurated the chair of mathematics at *Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario* in order to "spread the mathematical and physical sciences, with the important purpose of training youngsters in their philosophical studies", according to his words. The chair also was the space for his students to meet rational mechanics and texts of the most important thinkers of the time. Among them we find *Principia* by Isaac Newton and *Heliocentric System* by Nicholas Copernicus.

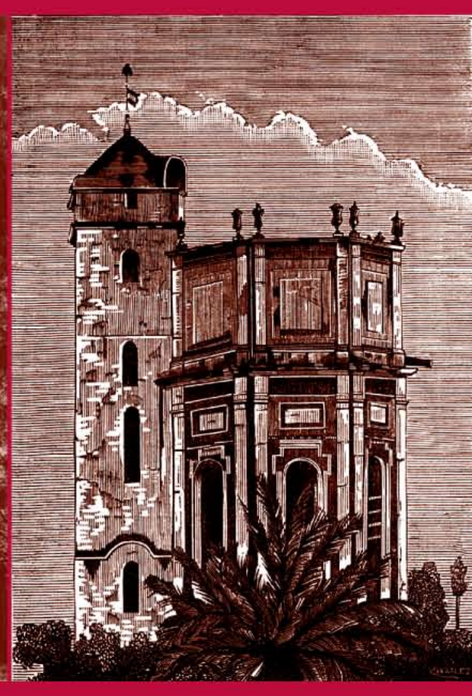
For a naturalist of the 18th century, recognizing the world order was a way of verifying God's work. Mutis was not only satisfied by corroborating it, but it also convinced him to become a clergyman. He was ordained on the 19th of December, 1772. Caucasian, European and scientist, being ordained was a new addition to the series of characteristics that made him a man of privileges in the American world.

He was also interested in astronomy. Thanks to his negotiations and to the support received from Viceroy Antonio Caballero y Góngora, the Astronomical Observatory was built in Santa Fe de Bogotá between 1802 and 1803, America's oldest observatory. Popayán born Francisco José de Caldas, scientist who had joined the Royal Botanical Expedition in 1802 with the task of collecting *Cinchona* barks and plants in the Province of Quito, was appointed as its director.

Mutis, mathematics professor
Pablo Antonio García del Campo (1744-1814)
1801
Oil painting on canvas
198 x 134cm
Colegio Mayor Nuestra Señora del Rosario

Observatorio Astronómico
Photographed by Juan Camilo Segura
2001

Observatorio Astronómico
Drawing by J.J. Crane
Engraving published in the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*
(1881-1887)
Bogotá



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