John Michell Encyclopedia Article

John Michell

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John Michell

1724?-1793

British geologist and astronomer who theorized about the origin of earthquakes, estimated the velocity of seismic waves in Earth's crust, and proposed various methods for determining earthquake epicenters (1760). His most significant achievement was his 1767 argument that double stars are binary systems because the number of doubles observed is too great to have resulted from random distribution alone. Michell is also remembered for making the first realistic estimate of stellar distances (1784).