When Isaac Vossius (1618–1689) settled in England in 1670, the principal factors that motivated him were annoyance at the decision by the States of Holland to cease paying his salary as their historian, and the prospect of collaboration with John Pearson (1613–1686), Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, on a new edition of the Ignatian epistles. This work would vindicate their antiquity and authenticity, in turn buttressing claims about the role of episcopacy in the primitive Church, and build on Vossius’ own earlier endeavours as an editor. Despite recent vicissitudes, Vossius was one of the most famous and well-connected scholars in Europe. His pedigree descended from his father, Gerhardus Johannes Vossius (1577–1649), whose scholarship and religious moderation had won him many friends in England, where he had for a time resided. The younger Vossius had forged a stellar path as a scholar of extraordinary promise, in part as a result of manuscript discoveries that he had made in Italy and that soon brought him into contact with leading English theologians, particularly in the circle of...
of James Ussher (1581–1656), Archbishop of Armagh.4 His later career had established him as disciple, friend, or competitor (and sometimes all three at once) of a succession of classicists, historians, and érudits whose reputations shone in the firmament of European, Protestant scholarship: for example, Claude Saumaise (1588–1653), Samuel Bochart (1599–1667), and Nicolaas Heinsius (1620–1681).5 He was famed as a collector as well as a discoverer of manuscripts, and his library of printed books, in part inherited from his father, had already generated one major sale.6 Manuscripts that he owned had led to important editions, in which leading English scholars of an older generation, as well as younger French scholars had played a role.7 His contacts and publications extended beyond the world of humanist letters, into fields of geographical and scientific discovery in which patronage might have proved an even more lucrative prize. During the 1660s, he was in contact not only with the Royal Society of London, but also with the extensive information-gathering network of the French statesman, Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683).8 Although no stranger to controversy or even shady dealing, Vossius in 1670 remained a prince in the Republic of Letters.

Other scholarly projects, however, were also of interest to prospective patrons in England, and had already been canvassed extensively by Vossius

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4 See AUB, Mss J. 90–91; AUB, Ms. E. 121 (James Ussher to Isaac Vossius, 18 February 1648); Rademaker, ‘Ussher and the Vossius Family’; Quantin, ‘L’Orthodoxie, la censure et la gloire’.

5 See Ter Horst, Isaac Vossius en Salmasius; Blok, Isaac Vossius en zijn kring; for relevant correspondence, see esp. AUB, Mss RK III E. 8–9.

6 Blok, Contributions, which must be modified by the discoveries of further sales made by Balsem, ‘Books from Dudith’. See also Balsem, “Libri omissi” and Callmer, ed., Catalogus codicum.

7 Above all, a manuscript of the Greek text of Origen’s commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, now Cambridge, Trinity College, Ms. B.8.10; this also includes another text, De Oratione, attributed to Origen. See also Ms. B.9.10 for transcripts from codices in the Bibliothèque Royale, Paris, obtained by the English scholar, Herbert Thorndike, from Vossius, to whom they were given by Claude Sarrau (on which, see AUB, Ms. RK III E. 8, nos 150–151). Thorndike had been aware of the manuscript of Origen on Matthew since 1659, when he began a correspondence with Vossius about biblical criticism and its sources. See AUB, Ms. RK III E. 9, nos 234–235; RK III E. 10, nos 233, 250, 333–334. The manuscript was edited by Pierre-Daniel Huet in 1668 (see bibliography). See also Mathieu, ‘Huet et Origène’. For Huet’s copying of the manuscript, see PBNF, Ms. Fonds français 3930, pp. 29–30 (Huet to Saumaise, 17 August 1652); Ms. Supplément Grec 434. Cf. LUB, Ms. BPL 885, no. 4 (Isaac Vossius to Huet, 4 May 1660), which describes Vossius’ acquisition of the manuscript.

8 See letters from Jean Chapelain and from Colbert (AUB, Ms. RK III E. 10, esp. nos 48, 50, 52, 85, 128–129); cf. the drafts of letters from Vossius to Colbert (Ms. D. 76) and the material exchanged with Melchisédech Thevenot (Ms. D. 85); cf. Soll, The Information Master, esp. 94–152. See also the contribution by Eric Jorink, below, 121.