

MEETING HENRY HILLS

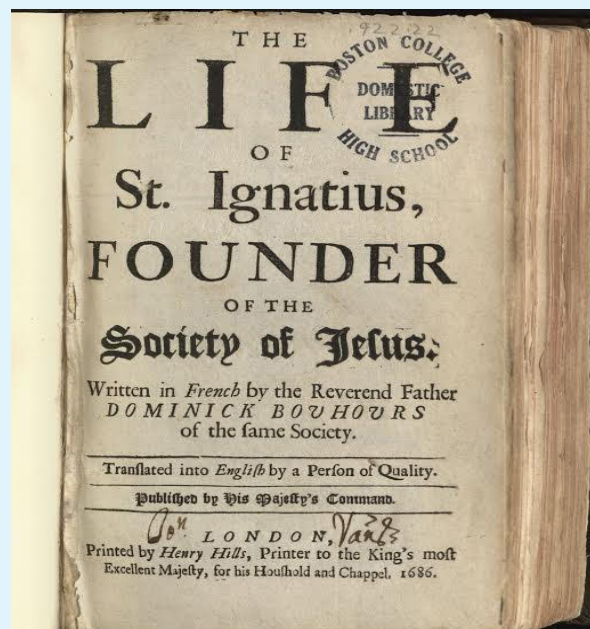
Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty

VIOLET CASWELL

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO STUDY A BOOK? IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD, PRINTED BOOKS CATALYZED THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION, IDEAS, AND CULTURE. THIS INK-STREWN REALM PROVIDED A SPACE FOR THE DISSATISFIED TO MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD AND FOR RULERS TO QUELL THE RUMBLINGS OF REBELLION. A BOOK NOT ONLY CONTAINS WORDS, BUT ALSO CARRIES WITH IT THE STORIES OF A HOST OF INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING PATRONS, PRINTERS, AND APPRENTICES. LIBRARIANS, ARCHIVISTS, AND CONSERVATORS WORK PAINSTAKINGLY WITH EARLY AND RARE BOOKS TO PRESERVE THESE INVALUABLE STORIES. THIS ARTICLE BEGINS WITH AN EXAMINATION OF THE 1686 COPY OF *THE LIFE OF ST. IGNATIUS, FOUNDER OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS*, HOUSED IN THE JOHN J. BURNS LIBRARY AT BOSTON COLLEGE. THROUGH THIS BOOK, THE AUTHOR BRINGS US INTO THE WORLD OF HENRY HILLS, THE WILY CRAFTSMAN WHO REMAINED OFFICIAL PRINTER TO THE CROWN THROUGHOUT THE EXTRAORDINARILY DIFFERENT REIGNS OF CHARLES II, OLIVER CROMWELL, JAMES II, AND QUEEN ANNE.

The 1686 copy of *The Life of St. Ignatius, Founder of the Society of Jesus* housed in the John J. Burns Library at Boston College seems, at first glance, unremarkable. As an English translation “by a person of quality” of Dominique Bouhours’ 1679 *Vie de Saint Ignace, fondateur de la Compagnie de Jesus*, the book appears to be an ordinary seventeenth century work with few noteworthy features or anomalies worth studying. Only the publisher’s imprint, which reads, “Printed by Henry Hills, printer to the King’s most excellent Majesty, for his household and chapel,” hints at the book’s larger historical significance.¹ Far from being an ordinary book, this copy of *The Life of St. Ignatius* is an enduring testament to the ways in which James II, England’s last Catholic monarch, attempted to use the printed word to bolster his legitimacy in the volatile years between the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution. It also invites an examination of the life of Henry Hills, his official printer, whose opportunism and business acumen earned him a degree of notoriety experienced by few contemporary members of the book trade.

The King’s Printer was a significant player within the crowded and competitive printing industry in seventeenth century London. During their reigns, English monarchs customarily appointed multiple printers to work concur-



THE 1686 COPY OF *THE LIFE OF ST. IGNATIUS, FOUNDER OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS* (TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR)

rently in the royal printing house. These master printers shared the position as equals, and each could refer to himself as the “King’s Printer,” on all works produced.² In the 1680s, Henry Hills, whose publisher’s imprint appeared on the title page of *The Life of St. Ignatius*, worked out of a Printing House located “on the Ditch-side in Black-Fryers,” with his partner Thomas Newcomb.³ These men were not the holders of an honorific title but were rather active employees of the King, enjoying exclusive rights to printing royal statutes, proclamations, and injunctions.⁴ Both Charles II and James II kept their printers busy, commissioning works with such titles as *A proclamation for the apprehending of robbers or highway-men, and for a reward to the apprehenders* and *A proclamation, whereas upon information we have received against Charles Earl of Macclesfeild, we have thought fit to direct our warrant for apprehending the said Earl for high treason*.⁵ The sheer volume of letters, parliamentary proceedings, speech transcripts, and other kinds of governmental documents that they required would have kept any printing house in business.⁶

Outside the walls of the royal printing house, the King’s printers found themselves embedded within a large and diverse community of book tradesmen. In the 1680s, London was home to an estimated 55 printers whose shops tended to cluster together on certain streets and neighborhoods. The printing industry thrived in the central London neighborhood surrounding the King’s Printing House in Black-Fryers, located a few blocks north of the River Thames and northwest of the Tower of London.⁷ Although the King’s Printing House dominated the industry as one of four printing houses that produced forty-four percent of all of the city’s printed material, its printers were by no means the only ones profiting from royal patronage. Indeed, King’s printers constantly interacted with other book printers, binders, and sellers and often collaborated with their fellow tradesmen.⁸ Henry Hills, for instance, sometimes printed books for private booksellers and occasionally even entered into partnerships with them.⁹ Moreover, upon completing a text block, he likely followed the conventional practice of “sharing operations” by sending pages to a separate bindery for completion.¹⁰ Of course, in addition to being a collaborator, Hills was a competitor, albeit one whose unique position all but ensured the survival of his business.

The King’s Printing House had, and still has, the sole authorization to print the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, which have historically been two of England’s best-selling books. Hills’ position as the official

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printer to the King therefore entitled him to the printing industry's most lucrative royal patents. The patent to the King James Bible, or the Authorized Version of the Bible, was the most sought-after in the industry. Printers that were able to produce this 774,746-word book in various sizes without a single error would certainly attain industry-leading reputations. The rights to the Book of Common Prayer containing the authorized form of the Church of England's liturgy were also coveted, since the book was frequently used in public and private worship. The profits secured from the production of these two expensive, high-demand texts were among the most significant and reliable in the printing industry.¹¹ The bible patent was, for Henry Hills, the *raison d'être*. He understood that the King's Printer was in a unique position to make the most money in the book trade, even if the reigning monarch was not a Protestant. During his tenure as official printer to King Charles II, an Anglican who converted to Catholicism on his deathbed, Hills printed several bibles for the Church of England. Surprisingly, he continued to print these Bible editions, which do not contain the deuterocanonical books of Sirach, Tobit, Wisdom, Judith, Maccabees, and Baruch, throughout the reign of the Catholic monarch James II.¹²

The types of books that James II commissioned during his reign are evidence of his struggle to balance his position as the traditional head of the Church of England with his own Catholic faith. Even as the monarch continued to allow his official printer to print Anglican bibles and Books of Common Prayer, he began to patronize distinctly Catholic books such as *The Life of St. Ignatius*. James II used the printed word as a medium to demonstrate to his subjects that his faith was in continuity with his predecessor's religious beliefs. In 1687, Hills printed “by His Majesties Command” *Copies Of Two Papers Written By The Late King Charles II*, a book which claimed to contain evidence that Charles II was secretly a Catholic long before his death in 1685. In an unusual attempt to influence public opinion, James II presented two diary-like essays filled with Catho-

lic devotion, as he wrote, “This is a true Copy of a Paper I found in the late King my Brother's Strong Box, written in His own Hand.”¹³ Hills faithfully published this book, despite its questionable veracity, along with the medley of other Catholic and Protestant books that the King commissioned. Ever the opportunist, he recognized that “printing to both sides” increased his pool of potential buyers and, consequently, his profits.

That Henry Hills managed to get appointed King's Printer in the first place was a testament to his business expertise and his ability to conform his own religious and political beliefs to those endorsed by the monarch. Like James II, Hills was a professed Catholic in the year 1686, when he printed *The Life of St. Ignatius*. In addition to lives of the saints, he printed liturgical books, including prayer books and breviaries.¹⁴ During the late seventeenth century, when theological debates on controversial religious doctrines were waged in the realm of the printed word, Henry Hills' name appeared time and again on the title pages of passionate defenses of Catholic dogma.¹⁵ Yet it is unlikely that Hills' desire to print these books originated from a sense of personal devotion. He had, after all, only converted to Catholicism in January of 1686 in order to be appointed to the office of King's Printer.¹⁶

No one who knew Henry Hills in his early life could have predicted that the young printer would one day produce a work like *The Life of St. Ignatius*. Hills, who was “known for his republican sentiment” during the 1650s, was a friend of the famous Leveller leader John Lilburne.¹⁷ Not only was Lilburne against any kind of monarchy, but he was also a staunch opponent of monopolies. In 1645, he spoke out against the issuing of an exclusive Bible patent—a practice Hills would engage with later—calling the practice “soulstarving” and “murdering.”¹⁸ He would have been disgusted by Hills' appointment to the office of King's Printer, which promoted elitism and strangled free enterprise. Still, Lilburne knew that Hills was ambitious, and had watched his friend place profits above principles

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between 1653 and 1654, when, in partnership with William Dugard, he served as official printer to Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England.¹⁹

In the early 1650s, Hills initiated a business practice he would continue throughout his life. First, he would identify a prestigious patron: a prominent person or group with power and influence. Then, he would adapt his religious and political principles to those of his target patron. One can trace the origins of this pattern to 1651, when the Anabaptist Congregation of England appointed Hills as its official printer, but only after Hills claimed to find the faith in the wake of an adultery scandal.²⁰ Shortly after this, Hills left his position with the Anabaptists in order to be appointed official printer to a Puritan, Oliver Cromwell. He printed the same kinds of materials for the Lord Protector that he would later print for the restored monarchy, including volumes such as *A Collection Of All The Proclamations, Declarations, Articles, And Ordinances, Passed By His Highness The Lord Protector*.²¹ After the restoration, Hills scrambled to switch religious faiths yet again in order to obtain the position of official printer to the Anglican Charles II. In doing so, he also noted his necessary previous expertise in bible printing, having successfully printed an edition of the King James Bible with John Field in 1656 when there was no monarch to issue a bible patent.²² Finally, in 1686, he converted to Catholicism in order to be appointed official printer to James II, swallowing his hatred for “papists” in order to retain his prestigious position.²³ The 1686 *Life of St. Ignatius*, then, is as much a symbol of Hills’ opportunism as it is of the monarch’s religious faith.

Hills faced a great deal of derision for building his success upon his cunning practices. In 1736, *Gentleman’s Magazine* published a satirical epigram recalling Hills’ opportunistic “conversion” to Catholicism during the reign of James II. According to the story, in order to demonstrate the sincerity of his contrition, Hills declared he would do penance by walking five miles with peas in his shoes. Yet, the account

mocks, the printer boiled the peas first to soften them: “the sly sinner / Resolved to stand upon his dinner; / so boil’d his penitential pease to give both feet and conscience ease.”²⁴ This story, almost certainly apocryphal, was published 23 years after Hills’ death. It speaks to his legacy, and to the fact that Londoners remembered him as an unscrupulous businessman who would have done or said anything to make money. It is also evidence of the printer’s notoriety, since the epigram identified him only as “Hills,” assuming the reader’s knowledge of Hills’ reputation.

Whether or not Hills’ conversion was sincere, he paid dearly for it when William and Mary landed in England and overthrew James II. Hills fled the country after an anti-Catholic mob attacked his Printing House in Black Friars in December of 1688.²⁵ His subsequent fate is difficult to trace due to conflicting accounts. According to a twentieth century dictionary of printers, “Hills fled for his life to St. Omer, where he died shortly afterwards, his will being proved on January 21st, 1689.”²⁶ A Victorian-era dictionary, though, places him in London two decades later, claiming that “Henry Hills and Thomas Newcomb were for a short time (from January 10, 1709) printers to Queen Anne.”²⁷ Newspaper accounts seem to support the latter version of events. One 1713 advertisement announced the imminent publication of a treaty that was “printed by John Baskett, Printer to the Queen’s most Excellent Majesty, and by the Assigns of Thomas Newcomb and Henry Hills, deceased.”²⁸ Newspaper articles still referred to books “newly printed” by Hills even as late as 1710.²⁹ Additionally, advertisements detailing the sale of Hills’ estate indicate that he returned home to Black Friars before his death.³⁰ If this evidence is accurate, the printer from Black Friars managed to retain his position as King’s Printer through the reigns of three English monarchs.

It cannot truthfully be said that Hills’ exceptional skills as a printer merited his lengthy tenure as King’s Printer, and possibly Queen’s Printer. Hills’ critics not only attacked his moral character, but also questioned his professional

work. C.H. Timperley's dictionary of printers described Hills as "a great retailer of cheap printed sermons and poems, which he pirated, and printed upon bad paper."³¹ Examinations of some of Hills' surviving printed books support this description. *The Life of St. Ignatius*, for instance, is not particularly lavish. Its font, while perfectly legible, is of a standard Roman type. Its text is not enlivened by colored ink or supplemented by engraved or woodcut images, as is befitting such a prominent book. Vegetal drop caps at the beginning of each chapter serve as its only ornamentation.³² Even the books that Hills clearly printed for James II's personal use, such as the John J. Burns Library's copy of *Short Prayers For The Use Of All Good Catholics In The Hearing Of The Holy Mass*, are not especially impressive. This book copy, which has the monarch's seal in the center of its ornately gilded cover, contains several careless mistakes. On some pages, the text is crooked; on others, the catchwords at the foot of the page have been cut off.³³ One would expect finer work in a book intended for a monarch, printed by the holder of London's most prestigious printing office.

The John J. Burns Library's 1686 copy of *The Life of St. Ignatius, Founder of the Society of Jesus* derives its importance not from its content or format but from its historical context. Only when the book is considered for its significance as a Catholic book printed by the King's Printer in a traditionally Protestant country does it seem worth examining. Henry Hills, "printer to the King's most excellent majesty," lived through some of England's most turbulent decades. The book is an enduring testament to the ways in which he managed to "reinvent himself" with each wave of political and religious change and to conform his own views to those endorsed by the nation's ruler. Was he an Anabaptist or a Leveller? A revolutionary or a loyalist? A Catholic or a Protestant? Perhaps the only thing that we can know for certain is that Hills was a businessman who was willing to abandon his own convictions and endure the scorn of society in order to secure the most lucrative printing positions.

ENDNOTES

1. Dominique Bouhours, *The Life of St. Ignatius, Founder of the Society of Jesus*. (London: Henry Hills, 1686).
2. Hills worked at various times with Thomas Newcomb, John Field, John Bill, and Christopher Barker; see for example, *Anno Regni Caroli II Regis Angliae, Scotiae, Franciae, & Hiberniae, Tricesimo at the Parliament Begun at Westminster the Eighth of May, Anno Dom. 1661, in the Thirteenth Year of the Reign of Our Sovereign Lord Charles, by the Grace of God, of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. : And by Several Prorogations and Adjournments There Continued to the 15th Day of July in the 30th Year of His Majesties Reign, on Which Day the Following Acts Passed the Royal Assent.*, (London: John Bill, Christopher Barker, Thomas Newcomb, and Henry Hills, 1678).
3. For a description of the Printing House's location, see *The Office of the B.V. Mary in English : To Which Is Added the Vespers, or Even-Song, in Latin and English, as It Is Sung in the Catholic Church upon All Sundays and Principal Holy-Days throughout the Whole Year : With the Compline, Rosary, Hymn and Prayers That Are Sung at the Benediction of the B. Sacrament : The Prayers for the King, Queen, Etc. : The Ordinary of the Holy Mass; the Sequence, Dies Irae, Dies Illa, That Is Sung at Solemn Mass for the Dead, All in Latin and English : Together with Several Other Devout Prayers in English.* (London: Henry Hills, 1687). At. Hereafter "Office of the B.V. Mary."; for information on Hills' partnership with Newcomb and others, see P. M. Handover, *Printing in London: From 1476 to Modern Times; Competitive Practice and Technical Invention in the Trade of Book and Bible Printing, Periodical Production, Jobbing &c.* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1960). 87-89.
4. Handover, *Printing in London: From 1476 to Modern Times; Competitive Practice and Technical Invention in the Trade of Book and Bible Printing, Periodical Production, Jobbing &c.* 73-74.
5. Charles II, *By the King. A Proclamation for the Apprehending of Robbers or Highway-Men, and for a Reward to the Apprehenders* (London: John Bill, Christopher Barker, Thomas Newcomb, and Henry Hills, printers to the Kings most excellent Majesty, 1677); James II, *A Proclamation, Whereas upon Information We Have Received against Charles Earl of Macclesfeild, We Have Thought Fit to Direct Our Warrant for Apprehending the Said Earl for High Treason James R.*, (London: Henry Hills and Thomas Newcomb, 1685).
6. See, for example, *Anno Regni Caroli II Regis Angliae, Scotiae, Franciae, & Hiberniae, Tricesimo at the Parliament Begun at Westminster the Eighth of May, Anno Dom. 1661, in the Thirteenth Year of the Reign of Our Sovereign Lord Charles, by the Grace of God, of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. : And by Several Prorogations and Adjournments There Continued to the 15th Day of July in the 30th Year of His Majesties Reign, on Which Day the Following Acts Passed the Royal Assent*; James II, *His Majesties Most Gracious Speech to Both Houses of Parliament, on Friday the 22th of May, 1685. Published by His Majesties Command.* (London: Henry Hills and Thomas Newcomb, 1685).
7. Map 2.3 in James Raven, *Bookscape : Geographies of Printing and Publishing in London before 1800*, (London: The British Library, 2014).
8. James Raven, *The Business of Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). 14-17; 47.
9. In 1686, the year that he printed *The Life of St. Ignatius*, all of his books were "to be sold next door to his House in Blackfryers, by Richard Cheefe." For another example of Hills "sharing operations" see Lewis Sabran, *An Answer to Dr. Sherlock's Preservative against Popery. Shewing, That Protestantism cannot be Defended, nor Catholic Faith Opposed, but by Principles which make*

void all Reform, Faith, Fathers, Councils, Scripture, Moral Honesty. (London: Henry Hills, 1688), “to be sold at Lime-Street Chappel Door.”

10. For a description of the “division of labor” in the book trade see Raven, *The Business of Books*. 351-372.
11. Gary Kelly editor, Joad Raymond editor, and Christine Bold, *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). 499; Handover, *Printing in London: From 1476 to Modern Times; Competitive Practice and Technical Invention in the Trade of Book and Bible Printing, Periodical Production, Jobbing &c.* 73-74.
12. An example of a bible printed during the reign of Charles II is *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments. Newly Translated out of the Original Tongues: And with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised.* (London: J. Bill, T. Newcomb and Henry Hills, 1682); an example of a King James Bible printed during James II’s reign is *The Holy Bible Containing the Old Testament and the New / Newly Translated out of the Original Tongues and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised by His Majesties Special Command ; Appointed to Be Read in Churches.*, (London: Charles Bill, Henry Hills, and Thomas Newcomb, 1687); For information about the religious beliefs of Charles II and James II, see Steve Pincus, 1688: *The First Modern Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2011). 91-117.
13. Charles II, *Copies of Two Papers Written by the Late King Charles II : Together with a Copy of a Paper Written by the Late Duchess of York : Published by His Majesties Command.* (London: Printed by Henry Hills, 1686). A1, 2.
14. Larry Kreitzer, “The Prodigal Printer Henry Hills - The Baptist Publisher of the King James Bible” (Campbellsville: Campbellsville University, 2011).
15. *A Dialogue between a New Catholic Convert and a Protestant Shewing the Doctrin of Transubstantiation to Be as Réasonable to Be Believ’d as the Great Mystery of the Trinity by All Good Catholics.*, (London: Henry Hills, 1686); John Gother, *An Answer to A Discourse against Transubstantiation*, (London: Henry Hills, 1687).
16. Kreitzer, “The Prodigal Printer Henry Hills - The Baptist Publisher of the King James Bible.”
17. Leona Rostenberg, *Literary, Political, Scientific, Religious & Legal Publishing. Printing & Bookselling in England, 1551-1700: Twelve Studies.*, vol. 1, Burt Franklin Bibliography and Reference Series, No. 56 (New York, B. Franklin, 1965). 148; Handover, *Printing in London: From 1476 to Modern Times; Competitive Practice and Technical Invention in the Trade of Book and Bible Printing, Periodical Production, Jobbing &c.* 87.
18. Handover, *Printing in London: From 1476 to Modern Times; Competitive Practice and Technical Invention in the Trade of Book and Bible Printing, Periodical Production, Jobbing &c.* 73-74.
19. Rostenberg, *Literary, Political, Scientific, Religious & Legal Publishing. Printing & Bookselling in England, 1551-1700: Twelve Studies.* 148.
20. “Henry Hills, Official Printer,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 6, no. 5 (January 1932): 215-17; for Hills’ own account of the scandal, see Henry Hills, *The Life of H.H. with the Relation at Large of What Passed Betwixt Him and the Taylors Wife in Black-Friars, according*

- to the Original : Likewise Particular Remarks of His Behaviour Ever Since, Which Proves (tho Times Change) Him to Be the Same H.H. Still.*, (London: Henry Hills, 1688); for an example of a book printed for the Anabaptist Congregation, see *An Outragious out-Cry for Tithes, and a Deep Charge of Stealing, Cheating, Robbing, &c. for Not Paying of Them (contained in Nine Reasons, Sent Some Few Daies since in Print to Divers) Answered.*, (London: Henry Hills, 1652).
21. Oliver Cromwell, *A Collection of All the Proclamations, Declarations, Articles, and Ordinances, Passed by His Highness the Lord Protector and His Council and by Their Special Command Published, Begining Decemb. 16, 1653, and Ending Septem. 2, 1654* (London: Henry Hills, 1653).
22. Handover, *Printing in London: From 1476 to Modern Times; Competitive Practice and Technical Invention in the Trade of Book and Bible Printing, Periodical Production, Jobbing &c; The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments. Newly Translated out of the Original Tongues & With the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised.*, (London: John Field and one of His Highness’ printers, 1656).
23. Handover, *Printing in London: From 1476 to Modern Times; Competitive Practice and Technical Invention in the Trade of Book and Bible Printing, Periodical Production, Jobbing &c.* 95.
24. Charles Henry Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing: With the Progress of Literature, Ancient and Modern; Bibliographical Illustrations, Etc. Etc* (H. Johnson, 1839).
25. Henry R. Plomer, “HILLS (henry), Sen., Printer in London, 1641-89.” *A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers Who Were at Work in England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1668 to 1725* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922).
26. *Ibid.*
27. Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing: With the Progress of Literature, Ancient and Modern; Bibliographical Illustrations, Etc. Etc*
28. *London Gazette*, May 2, 1713, Iss. 5117, sec. Classified Ads.
29. There is a mention of Hills as an active printer in Roger, “Further Remarks on Dr. Sacheverell’s Rebellious Mobs, and Ther Other Practices of His Party. Henry against Sacheverell; or His Speech against His Sermons,” *The Observer*, March 29, 1710, Vol. 9, Iss. 21. 2.
30. “At the Dwelling House of Mr. Henry Hills,” *Evening Post*, May 29, 1712, iss. 438, sec. Classified Ads.
31. Charles Henry Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing: With the Progress of Literature, Ancient and Modern; Bibliographical Illustrations, Etc. Etc* (London: H. Johnson, 1839).
32. Bouhours, *The Life of St. Ignatius, Founder of the Society of Jesus.*
33. *Short Prayers for the Use of All Good Catholics, in the Hearing of the Holy Mass.* (London: Henry Hills, 1688).

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