

***Religious Pluralism and the Danger of Tolerance:
The English Nation in Livorno in the Seventeenth
Century***^{*}

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Firstly, because foreign people from various parts come here [to Livorno] as a free port to trade, we recommend you to be vigilant that no one introduces a sect contrary to our holy Catholic religion, but rather it is to be hoped the opportunity [their presence in this

* This essay is largely based on some of my previously published articles on the early modern English presence in Livorno: “«Cum scandalo catholicorum...». La presenza a Livorno di predicatori protestanti inglesi tra il 1644 e il 1670,” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, VII (1999): 9-58; “L’histoire religieuse de la communauté anglaise de Livourne (XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles),” in *Commerce, voyage et expérience religieuse (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, sous la direction de Albrecht Burkardt, avec la collaboration de Gilles Bertrand et de Yves Krumenacker (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 257-274; “Religione e politica: le comunità protestanti a Livorno nel XVII e XVIII secolo,” in *Livorno dal Medioevo all’Età contemporanea. Ricerche e riflessioni*, edited by Daniele Pesciatini (Pisa-Livorno:

place] might serve to bring them back in the bosom of the Holy Church and in the true religion.¹

Banco di Sardegna, 2003), 36-64. See also Stefano Villani, "Protestanti a Livorno in età moderna," forthcoming in the proceedings of the conference *Protestanten zwischen Venedig und Rom in der Frühen Neuzeit* organized by the Deutsches Studienzentrum in Venedig, Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom, Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinde in Venedig, Institut für Europäische Geschichte Mainz in Venice, 2-4 June 2010; Idem, "Una finestra mediterranea sull'Europa: i "nordici" nella Livorno della prima età moderna," in Adriano Prosperi (ed.), *Livorno 1606-1806. Luogo di incontro tra popoli e culture* (Livorno: Allemandi, 2009), 158-177; Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, Stefano Villani, "'People of Every Mixture'. Immigration, Tolerance and Religious Conflicts in Early Modern Livorno," in Katherine Isaacs (ed.), *Immigration and Emigration in Historical Perspective* (Pisa: Edizioni Plus, 2007), 93-107; Stefano Villani, "'Una piccola epitome di Inghilterra.' La comunità inglese di Livorno negli anni di Ferdinando II: questioni religiose e politiche," in *Questioni di storia inglese tra Cinque e Seicento: cultura, politica e religione. Atti del seminario tenutosi presso la Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa l'11 e 12 aprile 2002*, edited by Stefano Villani, Stefania Tutino, Chiara Franceschini (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2006) (also online: http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/8_2003/villani.html, Web. 30 Oct. 2012). I wish to thank Lisa Lillie for her comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

¹ "In prima vi ricordiamo di avvertire che, con l'occasione della gente straniera che da diverse parti come a porto franco vi comparisce et vi pratica con mercantie, non vi s'introduca qualche setta in dispregio della nostra santa religione cattolica, ma che più tosto serva questa comodità per ridurre nel grembo di Santa Chiesa et alla vera religione, come pure vi è spesso intervenuto et interviene, quelli che sendone alieni vi capitano," Archivio di Stato di Firenze (State Archives of Florence, from now onwards ASFi), *Mediceo del Principato*, 1814, ff. 494-498, part. f. 495r-v; see Paolo Castignoli, *Livorno dagli archivi alla città*, edited by Lucia Frattarelli

Thus began the instructions given to Jacopo Inghirami and his successor, Giulio Barbolani da Montauto, when they were appointed governors of Livorno in 1618 and 1621 respectively.²

When these instructions were issued, Livorno had already for several decades been witnessed the establishment and development of many foreign communities. Jews, Greeks, Corsicans, French, Armenians, Dutch, Germans and the English crowded the streets of the city, giving it a distinctive and lively multi-ethnicity characterized by the communitarian cosmopolitanism so effectively described in a recent book by Francesca Trivellato.³

Fischer e Maria Lia Papi (Città di Castello: Belforte & c. editori, 2001), 42, 79.

² On Inghirami and Montauto, see Marcella Aglietti, *I governatori di Livorno dai Medici all'Unità d'Italia Gli uomini, le istituzioni, la città* (Pisa: ETS, 2009), 44, 50.

³ Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Jews who moved to Livorno in 1591 and 1593 were granted extensive political and religious freedoms, including the possibility to have a synagogue and protection from religious persecution.⁴ The situation was different for Protestant foreigners who decided to live permanently or at least stay for some time in the city. In theory, in the seventeenth century, all foreign Protestants who were in a Catholic country were prosecuted as formal heretics. This meant that, at least theoretically, a Protestant who happened to be tried by the Inquisition could only choose between “conversion” to Catholicism and being condemned as a unrepentant heretic, which would be followed by delivery to the secular arm, which would carry out a death sentence. But while the legislation precisely and dramatically excluded any possibility for “heretics” to travel, trade and settle in a Catholic country, in reality, things worked quite differently. From the end of the sixteenth century, draconian rule was accompanied by flexible practices that actually left totally undisturbed

⁴ On the Jewish presence in Livorno, see Renzo Toaff, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591-1700)* (Florence: Olschki 1990); Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, *Vivere fuori dal ghetto. Ebrei a Pisa e a Livorno (secoli XVI-XVIII)* (Torino: Zamorani, 2008).

“heretic” travelers who acted with prudence. Clearly, the fact that rigid legislation was still in force, even if normally unapplied, left ample scope for an arbitrary and arrogant discretionality, and therefore, over the years, the Protestant countries tried, often successfully, to secure a guarantee of protection for Protestants travelling in Catholic countries.⁵ After the approval of the peace treaty between Spain and England in 1605, whose provisions regarding the protection of British travelers from any persecution by the Spanish Inquisition were extended also to countries where the control of heresy was exercised by the Roman Inquisition, the Mediterranean became more accessible to openly non-Catholic merchants.⁶ The

⁵ On the foreign protestant presence in early modern Italy see Peter Schmidt, *L’Inquisizione e gli stranieri*, in *L’Inquisizione e gli storici: un cantiere aperto. Tavola rotonda nell’ambito della conferenza annuale della ricerca (Roma, 24-25 giugno 1999)* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2000), 365-372 and Irene Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero. Forestieri e inquisizione a Roma in età moderna* (Rome, Viella 2011). See also the entry “Stranieri, Italia,” in Adriano Prosperi (ed.), *Dizionario storico dell’Inquisizione* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010), III, 1509-1510.

⁶ On the Treaty of London, signed on 18/28 August 1604 and ratified by the king of Spain on 5/15 June 1605 see Frances G. Davenport, Charles Oscar Paullin, *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies* (Clark, N.J.: Lawbook Exchange, 2004) 246-257.

only conditions they had to abide by were to refrain from any form of religious propaganda and avoid scandalizing Catholic sensibilities (which meant not expressing in public their adherence to a denomination different from the Catholic Church).

This praxis, common to all the Catholic countries that had a Protestant presence for commercial reasons, was also applied in Livorno, in a manner most favorable to merchants residing in the city. It was still a limited and controlled tolerance, which did not allow freedom of worship, religious proselytizing, nor the possibility to bury with decorum and dignity those who died outside the Catholic Church. On the contrary, it bowed to Catholic propaganda seeking to bring the Protestants back “in the bosom of the Holy Church and the true religion,” as stated in the instructions issued by the Grand Duke and quoted at the beginning of this paper. The history of the English community of Livorno in the seventeenth and eighteenth century is thus also the story of the conflicts that this community had with the Tuscan political and religious authorities to establish the right for Englishmen to express their religious beliefs openly. The protagonists of this struggle to obtain wider religious freedom were the British community on the one hand and, on the other,

the Grand Duke's central and local state authorities, the Tuscan religious authorities and the Inquisition. Over the course of the seventeenth century, these subjects, who often had divergent interests, wrangled over two main issues: the right of the community to have a Protestant minister who could attend the spiritual needs of his countrymen and the possibility of having a cemetery for the burial of merchants who died in Livorno.

It is possible that in the first few decades of the 1600s some Anglican chaplains had occasionally lived for a period of time in the homes of wealthy English merchants residing in the city, but it was only in the 1640s that the question of the presence of an English minister in Livorno was formally addressed. That this question arose at this point is not casual. In the previous decades the community had grown economically and numerically, and had a score of merchants, most of whom had also brought their families to Livorno. The need for someone to give them spiritual assistance and to celebrate (and record) baptisms, marriages and funerals according to Protestant rites was thus becoming urgent. Moreover, in those years, debate was ranging in England on religious issues and freedom of conscience (the Civil

War that led to the beheading of Charles I in 1649 was still in progress). This was the situation when, in 1644, the London weekly *Certaine Informations from severall parts of the Kingdome, and from other places beyond the Seas* published, with some emphasis, the news that a Protestant minister had baptized a child in Livorno. The article did not fail to point out, in millenarian tones, that the baptism had taken place on the doorstep of Rome at a time of serious conflict between Tuscany and the Pope (the two states were at war for Castro). At the time of publication of this news, the minister who had celebrated the baptism was living at the home of Robert Sainthill, the English king's agent in Tuscany, then residing at Livorno. It was evidently not a coincidence that the news had been broadcast with such emphasis in England: in all probability it was believed that the clash between the Pope and the Grand Duke was so bitter as to open up opportunities for Protestant activity in Tuscany.⁷ From the evidence we have, it is clear that Sainthill had informed the Grand Duke in advance of the arrival of

⁷ «Certaine Informations», num 54 (Jan. 1-8 1644): 396-7. See also Archivio della Curia Arcivescovile di Firenze, *Sant'Offizio*, 6 (tra il foglio 42v e 43r). On Sainthill, see Stefano Villani, "I consoli della nazione inglese a Livorno tra il 1665 e il 1673: Joseph Kent, Thomas Clutterbuck e Ephraim Skinner," *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, 11 (2004): 11-34.

this minister. It is also clear that Ferdinand II had certainly given some form of consent to his presence. But Sainthill soon learnt at his own expense the complexities of the Italian religious-political situation. News of the publication of the article arrived in Rome, and the Congregation of the Holy Office was asked to investigate the matter. A formal protest was presented by the Inquisition, and on 7 May 1644 the grand-ducal authorities wrote to the governor of Livorno that because Sainthill had “abused the kindness” (“abusato la benignità”) of the Grand Duke, not only for allowing the minister to preach “so openly to the Nation” (“tanto scopertamente alla nazione”) but also for spreading “these rumors about the permission to exercise their religious worship” (“queste voci circa l’esercitare il culto della lor religione”), the Grand Duke wanted the preacher to be removed as soon as possible. To make matters worse, in April, some workers employed by Sainthill, prompted by Catholic clerics, denounced to the Inquisition the presence of the Protestant minister in his house, describing in great detail what went on during the Sunday religious meetings of the English congregation (one of the workers spied on them from the room above the one in which the English had assembled, peeping through the hole from which the

lamp was hanging). And so, in May 1644, the preacher was forced to leave Livorno.⁸

Despite this expulsion, at the end of the same year Sainthill put up another Protestant minister in his home, a certain Richard Weller, formerly Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. But just a few months

⁸ For the quotations, see ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2158, cc. n. n., May, 7 (minute). For an analytical reconstruction of these events, see Villani, “«Cum scandalo catholicorum...»,” 9-20. For the interrogation of the workers employed by Sainthill, see Archivio Arcivescovile di Pisa, *Inquisizione*, 14, cc. 575r-595. For an ample summary of this Inquisition dossier see the unpublished undergraduate thesis of the University of Pisa: Concetta Casella, *Inventariazione del fondo del Tribunale dell’Inquisizione pisana (anni 1642-44, 1672-74)*, Tesi di Laurea, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell’Università degli Studi di Pisa, Corso di Laurea in Lettere, a. a. 2002-2003, relatore Luigina Carratori: 62-67. The minister who lived in Sainthill’s house is referred to only by his first name “Tommaso” in the Inquisition documents. It is perhaps possible to identify him with Thomas Doubty, indicated as “our Minister here residing” in the testament of an English merchant written in Livorno in February 1644, see Matteo Giunti, “Is 1644 the foundation date of the Old English Cemetery of Livorno? The Testament of Daniel Oxenbridge of Liverne.” *Leghorn Merchant Networks Project Blog*. 26 Apr 2011. Web. 30 Oct. 2012. <http://leghornmerchants.wordpress.com/2011/04/26/daniel-oxenbridge-1643/>

later, in March 1645, the minister was forced to leave the city following the formal protests of the Inquisition to the Grand Duke. Significantly, as in the previous cases, in all the Tuscan and Roman documents he was not described as a “predicatore”, preacher, but with the derogatory term “predicante” (perhaps translatable as “preachifier”) to suggest that he was not a true Christian minister.⁹

In January 1649 news spread that another minister who was staying in Livorno at the home of another English merchant (Samuel Bonnell) had celebrated a marriage (his name appears in Italian documents as “Duerim”). Also in this case an immediate expulsion order was issued, which was enforced in early February.¹⁰

⁹ See ASFi, 2160, c. 34, 70, 95, 97, 104; ASFi, *Auditore dei Benefici Ecclesiastici*, 34, cc. 591r-v, 610r-v., Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede (from now onwards ACDF), S. O., *Decreta*, 1645, c. 16v (feria V, 26 gen. 1645); c. 21r (feria IV, 1 feb. 1645); c. 24v (feria V, 9 feb. 1645); c. 31v (feria IV, 22 feb. 1645); c. 41r (feria V, 9 mar. 1645); c. 45r (feria V, 16 mar. 1645). On Weller’s presence in Livorno, see Villani, “«Cum scandalo catholicorum...»,” 12-13.

¹⁰ ASFi, *Auditore dei Benefici Ecclesiastici*, filza 38, cc. 721r e 734r-v (1 gen. 1649). On this minister, see Villani, “«Cum scandalo catholicorum...»,” 17.

New problems arose in 1658, due to the presence in Livorno of two Church of England ministers, Daniel Harcourt (who stayed until about February 1658) and Eleazar Duncon (who died in Livorno at the beginning of 1660). Their presence was reported by the Irish priest William Mergin, a long-term resident in the city. By then, however, the political weight of England was quite different from what it had been ten years earlier. In the 1640s England had been torn by civil war, and in 1649 had just seen the birth of a new regime unanimously considered in Europe to be very fragile. The Grand Duke was well aware that the expulsions of 1644, 1645, and 1649, which he had only reluctantly agreed to following pressure from the religious authorities, would only create problems in his relationship with the English community of Livorno and not with the English state, which was preoccupied with other issues. In the late 1650s, by contrast, England was a major European power: victorious in the war against Holland, and an ally of France, at that time triumphing in its war against Spain. Ferdinand II therefore adopted a procrastinating and ambiguous attitude, and the two ministers were in fact able to stay undisturbed for several months in Livorno. They were even joined by other Anglican ministers, such as Robert Le Grosse, former rector of a parish in London, who was given hospitality by two royalist merchants in

Livorno, James and George Man (while he was in Livorno, Le Grosse received news of the Restoration of Charles II in 1660).¹¹

With the Restoration of Charles II, things changed once again. In May 1665, John Finch, a prominent intellectual who, after studying at Cambridge and Padua, taught anatomy at the University of Pisa between 1659 and 1664, was accredited as a the English king's representative at the Medici court. Finch, who had moved to Tuscany in the late 1650s just when the presence of two or three Protestant ministers in Tuscany was to all intents and purposes tolerated, asked London to proceed with the formal appointment of a chaplain for the British Factory of Livorno, thinking that what had been granted to a Puritan "usurper" such as Cromwell could not be denied to a legitimate sovereign, whose

¹¹ ASFi, *Auditore dei Benefici Ecclesiastici*, 38, c. 722r, 722v, 733r, 725r, 723r; ASFi, *Mediceo Princ.*, 4237, cc. n. n. On these events, see Villani, "«Cum scandalo catholicorum...»" 23-25.

religious sympathies towards Catholicism were well known in Continental Europe.¹²

While awaiting the arrival of the officially designated minister, the former chaplain to the English ambassador in Constantinople, Benjamin Denham, who happened to be in Livorno, preached to the merchants of the British Factory. Even Finch, as Sainthill had found out twenty years earlier, would learn at his own cost the complexities of Italian politics. In fact, following the firm protest of the Inquisition, the Grand Duke expelled Denham in September 1666. Another Anglican clergyman named Thomas Wilson, who, with greater caution than his predecessor, had exercised his religious ministry in Livorno in the spring of that year, departed in July 1667, just before another formal expulsion order was issued. To make a long story short, other ministers arrived in Livorno in 1668 and 1670, fresh controversies ensued, and yet more formal expulsions were enforced. After Finch's failure to get a minister

¹² On Finch, see Stefano Villani, "Between Anatomy and Politics: John Finch and Italy, 1649-71," in Margaret Pelling, Scott Mandelbrote (eds.), *The Practice of Reform in Health, Medicine, and Science, 1500-2000* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 151-166.

for the British community in Livorno, we have reports that, around 1677, the English merchants made another request, also unsuccessful, to the Grand Duke.¹³ Then, after a quiet decade, in 1685 a major new conflict broke out between the Tuscan religious authorities and the English community of Livorno.

On 14 September 1685, it reached the ears of the grand duke that “a certain” William Upton, an English merchant in Livorno, wanted to ignore the custom hitherto practiced by British residents of baptizing their children in the city’s main church or Duomo, and to have his child “baptized at home by a heretic preacher” whose arrival was imminent (“di farlo battezzare in casa propria da un predicante eretico”). A letter was immediately sent from Florence to the governor of Livorno, exhorting him to be vigilant in preventing such an abuse from happening. Despite his promise to the curate Bruni that he would send his child to the Duomo for baptism, Upton, in the company of others of his countrymen, took his son on a British ship in the port of Livorno. There he was

¹³ On the presence of these ministers in Livorno in 1660s and ‘70s, see Villani, “«Cum scandalo catholicorum...»,” 25-36.

baptized by a Presbyterian minister, a Mr. Inglis, who, according to the Livornese authorities, had fled from England (he may have left Britain after the accession to the throne of the Catholic James II in February 1685). Between late September and early October, the Presbyterian minister was arrested and Upton was formally asked to bring his son to the Duomo to have him re-baptized according to Catholic rites. From Florence, Francesco Panciatici, First Secretary of State, wrote to the governor of Livorno, Marco Alessandro del Borro, that if objections were raised by the British in Livorno, he should tell them that they had no grounds to complain: in doing what they had done, they had contravened “the custom which was practiced not only there but also elsewhere that heretic children were sent in Catholic churches to receive the holy baptism” (“contravenuto al costume che si pratica non solo costì ma anche altrove di mandarsi i bambini eretici nelle chiese cattoliche a ricevere il santo battesimo”). The secretary of state told the governor he could threaten the British: if they were reluctant to obey they would be “rightly treated with much greater rigor” (“giustamente trattati con rigore molto maggiore”). Their Protestant preacher would be released only when the child had been taken to the Duomo (or at least there was a clear evidence of the will to do so quickly). The English community

presented a letter to the Grand Duke in which, while admitting that Upton's behavior had contravened a well-established custom, opposed a new baptism of the child. But eventually they had to give up. On the morning of 9 November, 1685, Upton finally brought his baby to the church. Three days later, the British minister was released from prison.¹⁴

This episode clearly shows how the freedom granted to Protestants living in Livorno was directly and immediately bound up with politics. The harshness of the measures adopted by the authorities, with the arrest of the minister and the unprecedented decision to re-baptize a child who had already been baptized, was obviously intended to be exemplary, and had no precedent in the practice of previous years. When, as we have seen, about forty years earlier a child had been baptized according to Protestant rites at the home of Robert Sainthill, and the news was reported with great emphasis in England, where it was explicitly charged with religious and political meanings that transcended the episode itself, the Grand Duke had assumed a much

¹⁴ ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2206, cc. n. n., Panciatichi to del Borro, 14 Sept. 1685 (minute). Cfr. anche *Ibid.*, 18 Sept. 1685 (minute).

more moderate attitude, taking care not to offend the community of English merchants resident in his dominions. Admittedly, there was now another grand duke: in 1644 the Grand Duke of Tuscany was Ferdinand II, in 1685 Cosimo III, and even if I don't want to repurpose here an outdated historiographical cliché, there is no doubt that the latter was much more sensitive than his father to the calls of religious orthodoxy. But what explains the different behavior is obviously the fact that a Catholic sovereign was now sitting on the throne of England, and the Protestant merchants of Livorno were considered heretics, not only in Italy but also in their home country. The governor of Livorno stated explicitly that he would imprison the minister, considering that he was nothing but a “private person and rather loathed by his majesty” the king of England (“privata persona e più tosto mal affetto a quella maestà”).¹⁵

The attitude changed after the Glorious Revolution. Lambert Blackwell, grandson of the famous parliamentary General John Lambert, was

¹⁵ ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2206, cc. n. n., Panciatichi to del Borro, 22 Sept. 1685 (minute) and del Borro to Panciatichi (24 Sept. 1685).

appointed British consul in Florence. When in 1697 he was promoted to the rank of resident, Blackwell openly posed the question of having in his house a chaplain who could serve as minister to both the Dutch and the English nations (the two countries were now united under William of Orange, King of England and Staatholder of Holland).¹⁶ But the time was still not ripe, and the English community of Livorno had to wait another ten years before being allowed to have a minister. Indeed, it was only at the end of 1707 – after protracted wrangling between the resident Henry Newton and the Tuscan authorities – that Dr. Basil Kennett was granted permission to reside in Livorno (formally as chaplain to the British resident but in reality to the English community).¹⁷

Following the death of Cosimo III, and the succession to the Grand Duke of Tuscany of the enlightened libertine Gian Gastone, the scope for the Inquisition's intervention against foreign non-Catholics

¹⁶ Villani, "I consoli della nazione inglese a Livorno tra il 1665 e il 1673: Joseph Kent, Thomas Clutterbuck e Ephraim Skinner," *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, XI (2004): 11-34.

¹⁷ On Basil Kennet, see Villani, "L'histoire religieuse de la communauté anglaise de Livourne (XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles)," 266-267.

in Livorno gradually diminished. After the death of the last Medici grand duke, Tuscany was ceded in 1737 to Francis of Lorraine. In 1744, the Government of the Regency suspended inquisitorial activities throughout the state and the Inquisition was only reactivated ten years later – in 1754 – this time with a structure similar to the Venetian one, where the inquisitorial authorities were supplemented by diocesan and State representatives (in other words, three secular assistants had a right of veto over any decision). The Tuscan Inquisition was abolished permanently only on 5 July 1782 by Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo.¹⁸

We have described the difficulties the British encountered in obtaining a minister for their nation. But it was not only living Protestants who were a source of distress to the Catholic institutions. Over the years many dead Protestants were also cause for conflict and friction between the Tuscan religious and political authorities and non-Catholics living in Livorno. The public celebration of Protestant funerals in Livorno always created problems. For example, when, in the summer of 1609, a sailor named William

¹⁸ On the abolition of the Roman Inquisition in Tuscany, see Francisco Bethencourt, *The Inquisition: A Global History, 1478-1834* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 430-431.

Davies buried one of his countrymen in Livorno according to Protestant rites, the Inquisition had him arrested and put into prison.¹⁹ As late as 1648, the nuncio in Florence denounced as unacceptable the fact that many times “the corpses of heretics” (“i cadaveri d’heretici”) had been “conducted with torches to their tombs” (“condotti con lumi alla sepoltura”) and asked the Livornese authorities to punish all Catholics who participated in such burial processions.²⁰ But it was not only the burial rites that worried the Inquisition and the nuncio. What worried them most was the very fact that people who had died outside the Catholic Church could be buried with decorum. The Catholic Church asserted that Protestants who died in Livorno should be buried in an open field and without any memorial erected over their graves, seeking to emphasize, symbolically, their unworthiness. It is clear that these prescriptions were very hard to accept for the rich British merchants residing in Livorno (who often came from gentry families). Therefore, without great fanfare, they began to build stone tombs in a field in the area called Fondo

¹⁹ Algerina Neri, *Uno schiavo inglese nella Livorno dei Medici* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2000).

²⁰ See ASFi, *Auditore dei Benefici Ecclesiastici*, 38, c. 725r.

Magno.²¹ The first tomb of this type dates to 1646, and is of the merchant Leonard Digges, who died in October of that year. In 1706, the consul Christopher Crow asked the governor of Livorno, Mario Tornaquinci, to build “a simple wall” to protect the graves from “the insults of dogs and other beasts” (“ingiurie de cani o di altre bestie”).²² Count Anton Maria Fedi, agent of the Grand Duke of Tuscany in Rome, in June of that year reported this proposal to Pope Clement XI. Significantly, the pope agreed to “close his eyes and to tolerate the edification of the wall” (“di chiudere gli occhi e di tollerare la struttura del muro sopradetto”) but added that he did not think it appropriate to the “decorum of the Apostolic See to do over it a positive decree” (“decoro della sede apostolica il fare sopra di ciò decreto positivo”). Moreover he imposed the condition that the wall should be “without ornament of any sort” (“senza ornamento di sorte alcuna”).²³ The Congregation of the Holy Office, which was consulted on the matter, was more rigid

²¹ See Giunti, “Is 1644 the foundation date of the Old English Cemetery of Livorno? The Testament of Daniel Oxenbridge of Liverne.”

²² ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 3421, cc. n. n., 8 giu. 1706.

²³ ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, 3678, cc. n. n. e *Ibid.*, 3421, cc. n. n., *Ibid.*, 2227, cc. 551, 557, 687, 692. See also ASFi, *Micellanea Medicea*, 335 ins. 20.

than the pontiff, and said emphatically that the Grand Duke should not accede to the request of the British in Livorno, fearing that a physical screen might be used to hide Protestant ceremonies. Consequently, in 1706 the cemetery was enclosed just with a low wall and iron fencing, and it was only in 1746, taking advantage of the new climate of religious tolerance of the Regency, that the English cemetery was finally circled by a real brick wall.²⁴

The study of the events I have described clearly shows the interplay between religion and politics that characterized the relationships between the British in Livorno and the Medici of Florence: the British

²⁴ The Dutch, English, and Jewish burial places were outside the city walls and although they were unfenced it was not coincidental that they contained sumptuous funeral monuments, sometimes of marble and artistically sculptured. On the British Cemetery in Livorno, see Stefano Villani, "Alcune note sulle recinzioni dei cimiteri acattolici livornesi," *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, XI (2004): 35-51. Lisa Marie Lillie (Washington University in St. Louis) presented a paper on *Community Ties and Cross-Cultural Relationships in the Old English Cemetery of Livorno* at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting held at Washington, DC on 22-24 March 2012. In this paper Lillie has analyzed in a very innovative prospective the funeral architecture of the tombs of the Old English cemetery of Livorno and we are looking forward for the publication of the results of her investigations.

Factory obtained concessions only when England was powerful. On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that, for the English, demands for religious freedom had an eminently symbolic significance relating closely to their identity and dignity: it was perceived as humiliating for English merchants, some very rich, to bury their relatives in an open field where dogs could roam as they pleased, and to have to send their children to be baptized in a Catholic church. The requests for a minister and a fenced cemetery were clearly motivated more by questions of social prestige than by strictly religious issues.²⁵

But the most interesting aspect of this case study is that it displays the attitude of the Catholic Church towards religious pluralism. It is highly

²⁵ To have a clearer view of the interactions between the English Nation of Livorno and the Tuscan Catholic religious authorities I am planning to conduct a comprehensive study of the abjurations of Protestant people preserved among the Inquisition papers of the Archiepiscopal Archive of Pisa (the fund of the Inquisition is composed of 32 files with documents ranging from 1574 to 1734, but to date only a dozen of them are indexed and calendared). As for the British, it was often sailors and small traders who abjured, and very few women. From a first survey, that must be confirmed with more systematic research, we can estimate that, apparently, of about one hundred and fifty British abjurations preserved in the papers of the Inquisition of Pisa, those by women are fewer than twenty.

significant that the key word defining the limits on any possible toleration was “scandal.” From all the documents of the time, it emerges clearly that the Church could turn a blind eye to the concessions made by the State authorities in favoring the establishment of foreign mercantile communities in their territories, provided that these concessions gave no occasion for scandal. A fence could be permitted for the cemetery, but not a wall. The presence of a few ministers of the Church of England could be tacitly tolerated but not public displays of their worship. It could be accepted that parents would educate their children in the Protestant faith but not their baptism with Protestant rites. A builder who was interrogated in April 1644 in relation to the presence of the minister in Sainthill’s house, said explicitly that when the news of the Protestant baptism spread in the city, this gave “not little horror and scandal to the good Christians” (“rese non poco horrore e scandalo a boni christiani”). Significantly he also added that “to transform Leghorn in a new Babel we do not lack other than erecting a mosque so that even the Turks and Moors could exercise their barbaric functions” (“per far Livorno una nova Babelle non ci manca altro che ereggere una

moschea acciò che i turchi e i mori possano esercitare ancor loro barbaricamente la lor funtione”²⁶).

From all the letters exchanged between the religious and state authorities during these years, as with all the Inquisition documents, it emerges quite clearly that the Roman Catholic Church was against any concession, not because they were afraid of possible Protestant proselytism but because they feared the emergence of a spontaneous doctrine of tolerance among the Catholics. They opposed toleration because they sought to prevent the rise of a rustic or plebeian Latitudinarianism. In the sixteenth century in Italy the Catholic Church won the battle against Protestantism. In the second half of the seventeenth century the enemy to fight was skeptical popular indifference towards confessional divisions. Religious pluralism (the new Babel described by the devote Livornese builder in 1644) was dangerous because it could lead

²⁶ Archivio Arcivescovile di Pisa, *Inquisizione*, 14, cc. 575r-595. On the Muslim presence in Livorno, see Cesare Santus, “Il ‘turco’ e l’inquisitore. Schiavi musulmani e processi per magia nel Bagno di Livorno (XVII secolo),” in *Società e Storia*, 133 (2011): 449-484; Stephanie Nadalo, “Negotiating Slavery in a Tolerant Frontier: Livorno’s Turkish Bagno (1547-1747),” *Mediaevalia*, 32 (2011): 275-324.

towards an appreciation of the doctrine of tolerance, which would undermine the confessional compactness that formed the basis of the Church's power. Tolerance was the scandal that the Catholic Church sought to avoid and not the hypothetical conversion of Livornese citizens to Protestantism (apart from anything else, the Church of England chaplains in Livorno were not at all interested in proselytizing).

Any concessions to non-Catholic Christians might popularize the notion that it was socially acceptable to be a Christian without belonging to the Catholic Church, and that Catholic rites were not fundamental to salvation. Essentially, they feared the spontaneous emergence of a conviction that ideas and ways of life diverging from the traditional ones sanctioned by the authorities were equally valid. Even more dangerous in Catholic eyes was the possibility that a belief might spread that liturgical practices and the ecclesiastical organization were of secondary importance. In the 1500s, the Friulan miller Domenico Scandella, also known as Menocchio, became aware of beliefs and customs differing from his own after reading Sir John Mandeville's fantastic descriptions of distant lands, and began to question the foundations of his own beliefs and customs. The discovery that there

were “many different kinds of nations, some believe in one way, some in another” (“di tante e diverse sorte di nazioni chi crede a un modo et chi a un altro”) gave Menocchio what Carlo Ginzburg has efficaciously defined as “a relativistic shock” (“scossa relativistica”), almost identical to what Montaigne suffered when reading reports about the natives of the New World. The Inquisitors of Pisa feared that people in Livorno, seeing so many different religions and manifestations of faiths, might suffer a similar relativistic shock.²⁷

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²⁷ Carlo Ginzburg, *Il Formaggio e i vermi. Il cosmo di un mugnaio del '500* (Turin: Einaudi, 1999, 1st ed. 1976), 53-56 (English ed. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, 45). On the exchange and assimilation of what Federico Barbierato efficaciously calls “fragments of heterodoxy” that the presence of non-Catholic communities favored among the people of Venice, see Federico Barbierato, *The Inquisitor in the Hat Shop Inquisition, Forbidden Books and Unbelief in Early Modern Venice* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012), part. 23.