

Conflicts and Continuity in the Eleventh-Century Religious Reform: The Traditions of San Miniato al Monte in Florence and the Origins of the Benedictine Vallombrosan Order

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Studies of the ecclesiastical reform of the eleventh century have often highlighted conflict between reforming monks and simoniac clerics. This was especially true in the urban contexts of Milan and Florence, cities that played a leading role, at the time, in the history of Italian religious life. Through the presentation of an exemplary case study, this paper shows how around an important Florentine monastery, an episcopal foundation, the conflict between 'conservatives' and reformers did not obliterate the genesis and permanence of long-term devotional and cultural traditions. Although these traditions emerged in a context of conflict, they were able to overcome it and develop into a new and enduring form of religiosity that lasted from the Romanesque period to the Early Renaissance.

Medieval historiography has often described protagonists of the ecclesiastical reform movement of the eleventh century as 'revolutionaries', *in primis* those who belonged to the so-called reformed Benedictine monasticism (Cluniacs, Cistercians, Camaldolese, Vallombrosans). In both early hagiographic sources and modern scholarly literature some of the founders of these religious movements (Stephen Harding, Romuald of Ravenna, John Gualberto) have taken on the roles of persecuted champions in the struggle against corrupt prelates and the

arrogance of secular authorities (were they German emperors or local lords) who were unduly involved in the government of the Church.¹

The engagement of these men in the search for salvation and for the regeneration of ecclesiastical hierarchies was presented in primary and secondary sources as a profound break with the past, a grass-roots effort aiming at a palingenesis that sought to eradicate the very serious sins of simony (buying bishop's and abbot's dignities from landlords and sovereigns²), concubinage, nicholaism and other 'abominable' behaviour, like sodomy. According to this interpretation, the reformers' aim was to create a 'new' Church, and thus, in a broader sense, a new society inspired by the earliest Christianity.³

Through a specific but highly illustrative case study – namely the relationship between the monastic reformers later called Vallombrosans and San Miniato al Monte in Florence (founded in 1018), this article demonstrates that, according to their hagiographers, the eleventh-century founders of that order were actually very conservative. They were not breaking with their past, as much as they were trying to retrieve what they believed had been lost in the evolution of the religious life.

In particular, the article will demonstrate that reform was based on recovering the earliest monastic traditions. Focusing on the connections between a monastery devoted to St Miniato, Florence's legendary first

¹ See R. I. Moore, *The origins of European dissent*, New York 1977; *The formation of a persecuting society: power and deviance in western Europe, 950–1250*, Oxford 1987, 13–19; and *The first European revolution, c. 970–1215*, Malden, MA 2000, 13–19; G. Constable, 'Past and present in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: perception of time and change', in *L'Europa dei secoli XI e XII fra novità e tradizione: sviluppi di una cultura*, Milan 1989, 135–70; C. Violante, 'Il secolo XI: una svolta? Introduzione ad un problema storico', in C. Violante and J. Fried (eds), *Il secolo XI: una svolta?*, Bologna 1993, 7–40; Ph. G. Jestice, *Wayward monks and the religious revolution of the eleventh century*, Leiden 1997, esp. pp. 128–69, 210–47; and I. Robinson, *The papal reform of the eleventh century: Lives of Pope Leo IX and Pope Gregory VII*, Manchester 2004.

² On the linguistic and theological complexities involved in defining simony see J. Th. Gilchrist, 'Simoniaca haeresis' and the problem of orders from Leo IX to Gratian', in his *Canon law in the age of reform, 11th–12th centuries*, Aldershot 1993, 209–35.

³ E. Werner, *Pauperes Christi: Studien zu sozial-religiösen Bewegungen im Zeitalter des Reformpapsttums*, Leipzig 1956, esp. p. 308, and 'Alla ricerca del dio nascosto: eretici e riformatori radicali nel secolo XI', *Studi storici* xxii (1987), 61–79; J. Van Engen, 'The "crisis of cenobitism" reconsidered: Benedictine monasticism in the years 1050–1150', *Speculum* lxi/2 (1986), 269–304, esp. p. 273; J. Leclercq, 'San Giovanni Gualberto e il Concilio Vaticano II', in V. Cattana (ed.), *Momenti e figure di storia monastica italiana*, Cesena 1993, 589–603; G. M. Cantarella, *Il sole e la luna: la rivoluzione di Gregorio VII papa, 1073–1085*, Rome–Bari 2005, 124–9; M. C. Miller, *Power and the holy in the age of the Investiture Conflict: a brief history with documents*, Boston–New York 2005, 12–16; M. Cullinan Hoffman (ed.), *The Book of Gomorrah and St Peter Damian's struggle against ecclesiastical corruption*, New Braunfels, Tx 2015, 5–23. On these issues see the important historiographic considerations in O. Capitani, *Tradizione ed interpretazione: dialettiche ecclesiologiche del sec. XI*, Rome 1990, 11–48.

martyr, and radical figures emerging from it, as narrated in hagiographic texts of the late eleventh and twelfth century, it will demonstrate that the conflicts between reformers and conservatives often targeted specific individuals and were not wholesale attacks on religious communities (especially prestigious Benedictine communities with ancient aetiological and legitimating traditions).

Since eleventh-century Florence, together with Milan and certainly more than Rome, played a leading role in Italian ecclesiastical reform, especially through some of its Benedictine religious,⁴ the study of its first reformers, who also came into contact with the Lombard *Pataria*, and the analysis of their legacy in one of the most important monasteries in Florence can contribute to defining the real nature of the conflicts that affected both the local and the universal Church.⁵

The sources on which these arguments are based will be mainly the three oldest *Vitae* of John Gualberto, the founder of the Vallombrosans

⁴ See F. Salvestrini, 'Religious orders and cities in medieval Tuscany (10th to 14th centuries)', in F. Sabaté (ed.), *Life and religion in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 2015, 202–18, and 'Monachesimo e vita religiosa a Firenze fra IX e XI secolo', in T. Verdon (ed.), *Firenze prima di Arnolfo: retroterra di grandezza*, Florence 2016, 73–9.

⁵ See G. Miccoli, *Pietro Igneo: studi sull'età gregoriana*, Rome 1960; S. Boesch Gajano, 'Storia e tradizione vallombrosane', in A. Degl'Innocenti (ed.), *Vallombrosa: memorie agiografiche e culto delle reliquie* (1964), Rome 2012, 15–115; W. Goetz, 'Reformpapsttum, Adel und monastische Erneuerung in der Toscana', in J. Fleckenstein (ed.), *Investiturstreit und Reichsverfassung*, Sigmaringen 1973, 205–39; Y. Milo, 'Dissonance between papal and local reform interests in pre-Gregorian Tuscany', *Studi Medievali* xx (1979), 69–86, esp. pp. 69–70; H. Leyser, *Hermits and the new monasticism: a study of religious communities in Western Europe, 1000–1150*, London–New York 1984; K. Elm, 'La congregazione di Vallombrosa nello sviluppo della vita religiosa altomedievale', P. Golinelli, 'I Vallombrosani e i movimenti patarinici' and A. Benvenuti, 'San Giovanni Gualberto e Firenze', in G. Monzio Compagnoni (ed.), *I Vallombrosani nella società italiana dei secoli XI e XII*, Vallombrosa 1995, 13–33, esp. pp. 23–30; 35–56, esp. p. 55; 83–112; M. Ronzani, 'Il monachesimo toscano del secolo XI: note storiografiche e proposte di ricerca', in A. Rusconi (ed.), *Guido d'Arezzo monaco pomposiano*, Florence 2000, 21–53; O. Zumhagen, *Religiöse Konflikte und kommunale Entwicklung: Mailand, Cremona, Piacenza und Florenz zur Zeit der Pataria*, Cologne–Weimar–Vienna 2002, 93–201; K. G. Cushing, 'Of locustae and dangerous men: Peter Damian, the Vallombrosans, and eleventh-century reform', *Church History* lxxiv (2005), 740–57; M. Ronzani, 'Pietro Mezzabarba e i suoi confratelli: il reclutamento dei vescovi della "Tuscia" fra la morte di Enrico III e i primi anni del pontificato di Gregorio VII (1056–1078)', in S. Balossino and G. B. Garbarino (eds), *L'organizzazione ecclesiastica nel tempo di san Guido: istituzioni e territorio nel secolo XI*, Acqui Terme 2007, 139–86; N. D'Acunto, *L'età dell'obbedienza: papato, impero e poteri locali nel secolo XI*, Naples 2007, 85–176; F. Salvestrini, *Disciplina caritatis: il monachesimo vallombrosano tra medioevo e prima età moderna*, Rome 2008, 159–66, and 'La prova del fuoco: vita religiosa e identità cittadina nella tradizione del monachesimo fiorentino (seconda metà del secolo XI)', *Studi Medievali* iii/57 (2016), 88–127; and G. Melville, *Die Welt der mittelalterlichen Klöster: Geschichte und Lebensformen*, Munich 2012, 87–8.

(end of the tenth century–1073): those of Andrew of Strumi (eleventh century–after 1100), the ‘Anonymous’ (first half of the twelfth century) and Atto of Pistoia (†1153). Andrew of Strumi was a Lombard, an adherent of the Milanese *Pataria* and biographer of its main representative Arialdo (†1066).⁶ He fled to Tuscany after 1075 following the death of Erlembaldus, the movement’s last leader. The life of John Gualberto that he composed dates back to about 1092.⁷ Unfortunately, almost nothing is known of the so-called Anonymous, perhaps a monk of the Florentine abbey of San Salvatore a Settimo.⁸ Finally, Atto, abbot general of the Vallombrosan order and then bishop of the city of Pistoia, was a prelate close to the court of Matilda of Canossa, grand countess of Tuscany (†1115). As John Gualberto’s biographer, Atto tried to soften the strongly critical approach to the Florentine ecclesiastical hierarchy attributed to John by his first, Patarinic, hagiographer, and to place himself as an effective mediator between the new Vallombrosan monasticism, the political power of *Tuscia* and the Church of Rome.⁹

Use will also be made of documents concerning the monastery of San Miniato al Monte preserved in the *Diplomatico* of the State Archives of Florence and Lucca, and in the Archive of the Monastery of Monte Oliveto Maggiore (Siena), in Luciana Mosiici’s edition.¹⁰

John Gualberto may have been born in Chianti at the end of the tenth century.¹¹ According to his biographers he entered the monastery of San Miniato as a novice when very young, and there he discovered that his

⁶ Andrea da Strumi, *Arialdo: passione del santo martire milanese* (BHL 673), ed. M. Navoni, Milan 1994; cf. P. Nagy, ‘Collective emotions, history writing and change: the case of the *Pataria* (Milan, eleventh century)’, *Emotions: History, Culture, Society* ii/1 (2018), 132–52.

⁷ Andreae Strumensis, *Vita s. Iohannis Gualberti* (BHL 4397), ed. F. Baethgen, MGH, SS, xxx/2, Lipsiae 1934, anastatic repr. Stuttgart 1976, 1076–104.

⁸ *Vita auctore Iohannis discipulo anonymo* (BHL 4399), *ibid.* 1104–10.

⁹ Attonis Ep. Pistoriensis, *Vita altera S. Iohannis Gualberti* (BHL 4398), *ibid.* 1076–104. On these authors see S. Boesch Gajano, ‘Giovanni Gualberto e la vita comune del clero nelle biografie di Andrea da Strumi e di Atto da Vallombrosa’, in *La vita comune del clero nei secoli XI e XII*, Milan 1962, ii, 228–35; A. Degl’Innocenti, ‘Le vite antiche di Giovanni Gualberto: cronologia e modelli agiografici’, *Studi Medievali* xxiv (1984), 31–91; ‘Analisi morfologica e modello agiografico nelle Vite di Arialdo e Giovanni Gualberto’, *Medioevo e Rinascimento: Annuario del Dipartimento di studi sul Medioevo e il Rinascimento dell’Università di Firenze* i (1987), 101–29; and ‘Attone, agiografo e santo nella memoria vallombrosana e pistoiese’, in *Vallombrosa: memorie agiografiche*, 203–18.

¹⁰ *Le carte del monastero di S. Miniato al Monte (secoli IX–XII)*, ed. L. Mosiici, Florence 1990.

¹¹ On the possibility that John Gualberto came from the Chianti region see F. Salvestrini, ‘San Michele Arcangelo a Passignano nell’*Ordo Vallisumbrosae* tra XI e XII secolo’, in P. Pirillo (ed.), *Passignano in Val di Pesa: un monastero e la sua storia, I: Una signoria sulle anime, sugli uomini, sulle comunità (dalle origini al sec. XIV)*, Florence 2009, 59–127, esp. pp. 62–4, 111–12.

abbot had purchased his title. On the advice of the hermit Teuzone, his spiritual father who lived in the centre of Florence, John denounced his superior to Bishop Atto (c. 1032–6), discovering, however, that he too was simoniac. Disappointed at the immoral behaviour of his superiors, John decided to break his vow of stability to his house of profession and, with some followers, left the monastery and after lengthy journeys reached the *Vallis Ymbrosa* (Rainy Valley), in the mountains east of Florence, where he founded a new monastery.

According to the early hagiographers, and following the example of St Anthony of Egypt, enemy of the Arians, John returned to the city in about 1067 to fight against the simony of which the new bishop of Florence, Peter Mezzabarba, was also guilty. As reported in a letter sent officially by the Florentine clergy and people to Pope Alexander II in February 1068, John arranged for a trial by fire aimed, through recourse to God's judgement, at determining whether the bishop was really guilty. The test was passed brilliantly thanks to the fact that Peter, one of John's followers later known as *Igneus*, passed unscathed through the pyre.¹²

The rebellious monks persuaded the Holy Father to depose the bishop. Thus Florence became the first city in Italy whose pastoral guidance had been completely freed from heretical simony.

On the one hand, John triggered a traumatic conflict when he left the monastery of San Miniato.¹³ On the other, according to his hagiographers, he also gave rise to a new and deeply felt devotion to himself, which continued in the local regular community for centuries to come. In fact, even though hagiographies presented the young reforming monk's disobedience with regard to his superior, the *callidus et ingeniosus*¹⁴ Abbot Ubertus (1034/37–1072/77),¹⁵ as the correct reaction to a simoniac prelate, the rest of the local religious community, devoted to the ancient martyr who gave his name to the monastery, profoundly inspired the leader of the 'not yet Vallombrosan' movement.¹⁶ But let us return to the beginning.

¹² The Florentines' letter is reported in full in the *Vitae* by Andrew of Strumi and Atto, as well as in some miscellaneous French manuscripts dating back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and was mentioned in a life of Gregory VII written by Paul of Bernried, in the *Dialogi* of Desiderius from Montecassino, and in a *Libellus* by Bernoldus of Constance (Desiderii, *Dialogi de miraculis sancti Benedicti*, ed. G. Schwartz and A. Hofmeister, MGH, SS xxx/2, Lipsiae 1934, anastatic repr. Stuttgart 1976, 1111–51: lib. III, ch. 4, 1146–8; *Libelli Bernoldi presbyteri monachi*, XII: *De solutione iuramentorum*, MGH, *Libelli de lite imperatorum et pontificum saeculis XI. et XII. conscripti*, II, Hannover 1892, 146–9). See also Salvestrini, 'La prova del fuoco', 100–1.

¹³ G. Miccoli, *Chiesa gregoriana: ricerche sulla riforma del secolo XI*, 2nd edn, Rome 1999, 75–6, 85–6; D'Acunto, *L'età*, 86, 93, 135–6.

¹⁴ *Le carte del monastero di S. Miniato al Monte*, introduction at p. 15; document 5, pp. 120–4.

¹⁵ This qualification is applicable to the monastic communities of John Gualberto only after his death, since documentation first gives the definition *monasterium*

According to the Anonymous, church reform began in Florence when Guarinus, abbot of San Salvatore a Settimo (c. 1011–34),¹⁷ attacked Hildebrand, the founder of San Miniato (1008–24), accusing him of concubinage and nicholaism.¹⁸ At the time, the monastery was one of the most significant regular communities in the city, and played a leading role in local religious life (it also later received further endowments from bishops Lambertus and Atto).¹⁹

At first, the words of Andrew of Strumi and Atto of Pistoia (the second reprises the first to a large extent) seem to suggest a complete overlap between the community of San Miniato and the episcopal power that protected it. In this sense, the simony of the abbot Ubertus and the bishop Atto, both ‘discovered’ by John Gualberto and then publicly denounced by him, seem to be manifestations of the same immorality.²⁰

Actually, a careful reading of the earliest biographies and a review of the traditions that developed during the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries suggest a more complex picture. In particular, the *Vita* written by Atto (c. 1130) portrays the young, still secular, John receiving, in a church that was later identified as the Basilica of San Miniato, a sign of divine approval for having pardoned the man who murdered his brother. It is widely recounted that the Christ figure on a crucifix in the church had miraculously bowed its head in assent; thus, with a gesture destined to

vallumbrosanum only in 1084, in relation to the Pistoiese monastery of Forcole: Salvestrini, *Disciplina*, 210.

¹⁷ See *Carte della Badia di Settimo e della Badia di Buonsollazzo nell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze* (998–1200), ed. A. Ghignoli and A. R. Ferrucci, Florence 2004, nos 2–5, 8–18.

¹⁸ *Vita Iohannis Gualberti auctore discipulo eius anonymo* 2, pp. 1104–10 at p. 1105. On this issue see R. Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur älteren Geschichte von Florenz*, Berlin 1896, 47–60; S. Boesch Gajano, ‘Storia e tradizione’, 59, 87–9; Moore, *The first European revolution*, 78–80; and Salvestrini, ‘La prova del fuoco’, 95–6.

¹⁹ *Le carte del monastero di S. Miniato al Monte*, documents 8, 9, 12, 14, 22, pp. 86–98, 105–10, 112–20, 141–5; M. P. Contessa, ‘An episcopal monastery in Florence from the 11th to the early 13th century: San Miniato al Monte’, in Sabaté, *Life and religion in the Middle Ages*, 184–201. On the monastic ‘policies’ of Italian bishops during the Saxon and Salian imperial dynasties see G. W. Dameron, ‘The bishopric of Florence and the foundation of San Miniato al Monte (1013)’, in K. L. Jansen, J. Drell and F. Andrews (eds), *Medieval Italy: texts in translation*, Philadelphia, PA 2009, 31–6, and N. D’Acunto, ‘Monasteri di fondazione episcopale del regno italico nei secoli X–XI’, in A. Lucioni (ed.), *Il monachesimo del secolo XI nell'Italia nordoccidentale*, Cesena 2010, 49–67.

²⁰ ‘Ubertus, qui gloria cupiditatis captus et illectus per pecuniam regimen ab episcopo Florentinae civitatis [Atto], qui illi monasterio preerat, accepit’: Strumensis, *Vita* 8, p. 1081; ‘Eo tempore huic monasterio preerat abbas nomine Ubertus, seculari quidem sapientia pollens, religioni vero non admodum vacans. Quem cum venerabilis Iohannes pro certo comperisset per pecuniam prelationis arripuisse dignitatem, detestabilem perhorrescens heresem meditari cepit, qualiter hanc vitando posset effugere’: *Vita auctore Iohannis discipulo eius anonymo* 1, p. 1105.

have great narrative success, it showed that the young nobleman had heavenly protection.²¹ John's refusal to carry on the feud, as would have been appropriate for his social class,²² was followed by the classic corollary of conversion to the monastic life (that is to say, an ethical and spiritual *conversio de malo ad bonum*), which took place at the tomb of St Minias.²³

John's objections were then aimed at the abbot Ubertus, successor to Leo, who had welcomed him to the monastery.²⁴ Ubertus had obtained his position with money, but the biographical texts did not imply that John condemned the entire community that venerated the relics of the ancient Armenian prince.²⁵ This is borne out by the continuation of the story. After the young monk and some of his companions had left the monastery and the city, which was stunned by their accusations against the abbot and the bishop, the religious rebels resumed action with their strongest and most unwavering denunciation of simony among priests. However, this was not directed against the San Miniato monastic community, which no longer featured in the hagiographers' narratives, but against the new and equally corrupt Florentine bishop Peter Mezzabarba (c. 1062–8).²⁶

²¹ Attonis, *Vita altera* 2, 3, p. 1080. The miracle is not described in the *Vita* by Andrew because this part of the only surviving manuscript has been lost. However, scholars (Miccoli, Boesch Gajano, Degl'Innocenti, Benvenuti, Angelini and Salvestrini) think it possible that the second text included the story, and that Atto borrowed it from Andrew (as he did most of his text). The miracle is not described by the Anonymous, even though it is consistently mentioned in the hagiographies of the following centuries. The earliest hagiographic writings do not explicitly identify the basilica of San Miniato as the church where the miracle occurred: W. Goez and Ch. Hafner, 'Die vierte *Vita* des Abtes Johannes Gualberti von Vallombrosa († 1073)' [*Vita auctore anonymo* (BHL 4401)], *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* (Namens der MGH) xli (1985), 418–37, esp. p. 424; R. Angelini, *La 'Vita sancti Iohannis Gualberti' di Andrea da Genova* (BHL 4402), Florence 2011, 19–20.

²² See A. Zorzi (ed.), *Conflitti, paci e vendette nell'Italia comunale*, Florence 2009, and C. Povolo, 'Faida e vendetta tra consuetudini e riti processuali nell'Europa medievale e moderna: un approccio antropologico-giuridico', in G. Ravančić (ed.), *Our daily crime: collection of studies*, Zagreb 2014, 9–57, esp. pp. 14–23.

²³ The importance of John's forgiveness in breaking the traditional pattern of feud and revenge between families is underlined in Davidsohn, *Forschungen*, 52–3.

²⁴ *Le carte del monastero di S. Miniato al Monte*, introduction, pp. 13–14; document 7, p. 85; document 13, pp. 110–12.

²⁵ According to some traditions, Bishop Dietrich of Metz acquired the *sacra pignora* of Minias, or a large portion of them, and brought them to his cathedral with the support of the emperor Otto II (†983): *Vita Deoderici episcopi mettensis auctore Sigeberto Gemblacensi*, a. 970, BHL 8054, ed. J. H. Pertz, MGH, SS, iv, Hannover 1841, 476. Minias's fanciful title of Armenian prince is derived from the mosaic in the apse of the basilica: *Le Passioni di san Miniato martire fiorentino*, ed. S. Nocentini, Florence 2018, 7–11, 82; S. B. Montgomery, 'Quia venerabile corpus redicti martyris ibi repositum: image and relic in the decorative program of San Miniato al Monte, Florence', in S. J. Cornelison and S. B. Montgomery (eds), *Images, relics, and devotional practices in medieval and Renaissance Italy*, Tempe, AZ 2006, 7–25.

²⁶ D'Acunto, *L'età*, 101–10.

There is no need to reiterate the details of the famous episode of John's attack on the bishop, and the trial by fire held in 1068 on the fields of the Badia a Settimo, the event that proved the prelate's simony.²⁷ But it is necessary to stress that, despite what has long been maintained, the hagiography produced at Vallombrosa does not speak of the trial and the brothers' action as reflecting on San Miniato itself: Andrew tells us that John and his few followers abandoned their community only because its leader had been contaminated by simony.

After wandering for a long time, John – driven from his community not because he wanted to leave it, but because of his moral integrity – came to the remote Vallombrosa – though it was not literally a hermit's place. John's rejection of the 'cenobiale monasteriorum consuetudinem' cited by the Anonymous²⁸ should, in fact, first of all be interpreted as a withdrawal from the 'new' lifestyle adopted by some reformed cloisters that had abandoned the models presented by the Apostles, by St Basil, and by St Benedict.²⁹ John explicitly rejected the anchoritic life when – according to Andrew of Strumi's very 'Benedictine' version of his story³⁰ – he left his first refuge, the Camaldoli hermitage.³¹ He then created a coenobitic community in Vallombrosa ('eius fervor nonnisi in cenobitali vita erat'), and was elected its abbot in full compliance with Benedictine tradition (that is, the same tradition as at San Miniato).³²

²⁷ See Miccoli, *Pietro Igneo*; Salvestrini, 'La prova del fuoco', and 'Ignis probatione cognoscere: manifestazioni del divino e riflessi politici nella Firenze dei secoli xi e xv', in P. Cozzo (ed.), *Apparizioni e rivoluzioni: l'uso pubblico delle ierofanie fra tardo antico ed età contemporanea*, *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* lxxxv/2 (2019), 472–82.

²⁸ *Vita auctore Iohannis discipulo anonymo* 3, p. 1106.

²⁹ On this issue see P. Henriët, "'Silentium usque ad mortem servaret': la scène de la mort chez les ermites italiens du xie siècle", *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – moyen âge* cv (1993), 265–98, esp. pp. 288–97; Jestice, *Wayward monks*, 227–33; Salvestrini, *Disciplina*, 10, 184–6; T. Immonen, 'Giovanni Gualberto, Vallombrosa e Camaldoli nel secolo xi', in *Il monachesimo del secolo XI nell'Italia nordoccidentale*, 417–45 at pp. 426–42.

³⁰ He was writing during the papacy of Urban II, a pope who was not as close as Gregory VII had been or Paschal II would be to the more radical concepts of Vallombrosan monasticism: D'Acunto, *L'età*, 147–56.

³¹ Strumensis, *Vita* 10, p. 1082; cf. R. Angelini, 'Iniuriam pertulit dell'offesa ricevuta dal beato padre Giovanni Gualberto, fondatore di Vallombrosa, durante il soggiorno a Camaldoli. Testimonianze, reticenze e trasformazioni nella tradizione agiografica', in F. Salvestrini (ed.), *Monaci e pellegrini nell'Europa medievale: viaggi, sperimentazioni, conflitti e forme di mediazione*, Florence 2014, 157–68; N. D'Acunto, 'Monachesimo camaldolese e "monachesimo riformatore" nel secolo xi', and F. Salvestrini, "'Recipiantur in choro ... qualiter benigne et caritative tractantur': per una storia delle relazioni fra Camaldolesi e Vallombrosani (xi–xv secolo)", in C. Caby and P. Licciardello (eds), *Camaldoli e l'Ordine Camaldolese dalle origini alla fine del XV secolo*, Cesena 2014, 21–38, esp. pp. 27–9; 53–96 at pp. 55–60.

³² Strumensis, *Vita* 10, p. 1082; Attonis, *Vita altera* 19, p. 1084; cf. Salvestrini, *Disciplina*, 196, 219–20.

Naturally, there are glaring contradictions between the descriptions of Ubertus contained in the Vallombrosan sources and in the San Miniato documentary tradition.³³ According to the monastic documents, Ubertus was the man who rebuilt the abbey, the one who consolidated the institution's wealth and obtained both papal and imperial protection.³⁴ It was precisely against this backdrop that the clash between the two different visions of good governance and authentic monastic life, as expressed by the reformers and by those who opposed them, took place.

Furthermore, according to Andrew of Strumi, there was a *civis Florentius*, perhaps a judge whom some documentary sources identify as the son of a clergyman ('filio bonae memoriae Florentij qui fuit clericus'),³⁵ who with his talent for speaking ('urbanae quidem eloquentiae verum etiam et civilis'), had sided with Bishop Peter and defended simony. He became ill (a clear sign of the simoniac heresy), fell prey to the devil and only saved himself by joining John Gualberto's followers.³⁶ In the opinion of the 'Florentine' historian Robert Davidsohn, his conversion took place immediately after the trial by fire at the Badia a Settimo (1068).³⁷ However, Nicolangelo d'Acunto suggests that it occurred a few years later (around 1071), when Mezzabarba, accused by the monks, definitively stepped down as bishop of Florence.³⁸ What is most interesting here is that a lay person of a mid-to-high social and cultural standing could remain loyal to the censured bishop, even after the trial by fire. He also entered a 'Vallombrosan' monastery later, but not before having made gifts to Ubertus and the monks of San Miniato. During the 1060s and '70s, Florentines must have viewed John Gualberto's new regular brotherhood and that of his original monastery as two fluid, permeable and ever less conflicted entities.

Much has been written about the rupture that the early 'Vallombrosans' created within the Florentine ecclesiastical institutions and in the overall relations with the Apostolic See. The most evident demonstration of the radicals' disobedience is the so-called 'liturgical strike', the invitation that they addressed to the faithful to reject all actions of those clergy

³³ This contradiction was first pointed out by O. Capitani, 'Imperatori e monasteri in Italia centro-settentrionale (1049–1085)', in *Il monachesimo e la riforma ecclesiastica (1049–1122)*, Milan 1971, 423–89, esp. p. 447.

³⁴ *Le carte del monastero di S. Miniato al Monte*, introduction, pp. 15–17; documents 19, 20, 28, 32, 37, pp. 133–8, 159, 166–7, 177–81. On the papacy's good relations with some bishops and abbots who were attacked by the reformers see Ronzani, 'Il monachesimo toscano', 40–1, 46–8.

³⁵ *Le carte del monastero di S. Miniato al Monte*, document 30, p. 162; document 31, p. 165.

³⁶ Strumensis, *Vita* 50, pp. 1090–1.

³⁷ R. Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze: le origini* (1907), i, Rome 2009, 364–5.

³⁸ D'Acunto, *L'età*, 111, 129–32.

whom John and his followers deemed simoniac and unworthy.³⁹ According to Western Christian doctrine, based on the teachings of St Augustine, the sacraments have validity *ex opere operato*, that is by virtue of the intention of who receives them, and not the legitimacy of who administers them, so putting aside the moral behaviour of the celebrant. Eleventh-century reforming monasticism strictly applied the canons maintaining that schismatics and heretics (and the Italian radicals of the day deemed simoniacs to be heretics)⁴⁰ could not administer sacraments. Thus, during the Roman synod of 1067, the no less righteous,⁴¹ but more legalistic and celebrated cardinal Peter Damian branded the disobedient Florentine monks – accusing their bishop and alleging that the sacraments that he administered were invalid – as rebellious locusts who devoured the fields of the Church ('*isti sunt locustae, quae depascuntur viriditatem sanctae ecclesiae*').⁴²

In this regard it is relevant that the religious who left San Miniato looked to Eastern Christian tradition and its ἀκρίβεια (strict adherence to the letter of the ecclesiastical law) as legitimising their accusations against the simoniac bishop.⁴³ This is shown by the hagiographic reference to the example of St Basil and by the title *archimandrita* bestowed on John Gualberto when he found himself leading a small network of monasteries,⁴⁴ as well as by the trial by fire at Settimo – aimed at removing Bishop Peter from power – which, according to the Eastern custom, was accompanied by hymns and songs.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the fight against heresy was a duty from which early Church Fathers, like St Anthony of Egypt, did not shrink, and that Western champions such as Patrick also followed.

³⁹ On the term 'liturgical strike' see G. Fornasari, 'S. Pier Damiani e lo "sciopero liturgico": problemi di cronologia', 2nd edn, in his *Medioevo riformato del secolo XI: Pier Damiani e Gregorio VII*, Naples 1996, 31–49.

⁴⁰ On this issue see O. Capitani, 'Introduzione', in O. Capitani (ed.), *Medioevo ereticale*, Bologna 1977, 7–28, esp. pp. 11–12, 17–18; M. L. Arduini, 'Intervento precii: Gregorio VII e il problema della simonia come eresia: per una interpretazione metodologica', in *La riforma gregoriana e l'Europa*, II, *Comunicazioni, Studi Gregoriani* xiv (1991), 103–19; H. Vollrath, 'L'accusa di simonia tra le fazioni contrapposte nella lotta per le investiture', in *Il secolo XI: una svolta?*, 131–56, esp. pp. 146ff.; and N. D'Acunto, 'La dimensione carismatica come problema storiografico', in *Il carisma nel secolo XI: genesi, forme e dinamiche istituzionali*, Verona 2006, 13–29 at pp. 24–9.

⁴¹ For his views on priesthood see Petri Damiani, *Sermo lxxv*, *PL* cxliv.924A–D.

⁴² *Vita Iohannis Gualberti auctore discipulo eius anonymo* 5, pp. 1106–7. See P. Cammarosano, *Storia dell'Italia medievale: dal VI all'XI secolo*, Rome–Bari 2001, 322–6; D'Acunto, *L'età*, 114, 118–20, 143–4; and W. D. McCready, *Odiosa sanctitas: St Peter Damian, simony and reform*, Toronto 2011.

⁴³ See R. C. Hill, 'Akribeia: a principle of Chrysostom's exegesis', *Australian and New Zealand Theological Review* xiv/1 (1981), 32–6.

⁴⁴ Strumensis, *Vita* 84, p. 1102.

⁴⁵ See J. Fontaine, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'Occident chrétien: esquisse d'une histoire de la poésie latine chrétienne du IIIe au VIe siècle*, Paris 1981, 127–41.

In any event, such behaviour was not accepted by either the Florentine or the Roman Church. In fact, sermons and aggressive actions such as Guarino's denunciation of the bishop Hildebrand, Giovanni's of Atto and lastly the trial by fire acquired the characteristics of a difficult-to-control and potentially dangerous *Wanderpredigt*,⁴⁶ which Pope Alexander II (who needed the support of the Florentine bishop and of Godfrey, marquis of Tuscany, against the antipope Cadalous-Honorius II) quickly tried to quell insofar as he was able.⁴⁷

However, John's followers, who were closely linked to those of the city's canonical clergy who largely opposed the new Ordinary of the diocese,⁴⁸ were not guilty of the subversive charge that was attributed to them and which evoked unsettling echoes of Donatism. The Cluniac, and perhaps also Nonantolan,⁴⁹ essentially traditionalist matrix of the early Vallombrosan liturgy becomes evident from examining the customs that were codified during the twelfth century⁵⁰ and from a study of other early liturgical books in the Vallombrosan order's motherhouse.⁵¹ The Christocentrism of the Gualbertian hagiography (from the episode of

⁴⁶ See the reconstruction by B. Quilici in *Giovanni Gualberto e la sua riforma monastica*, Florence 1943, 89ff. On the statute of the monastic and hermitic word, and its evolution in the context of church reform, see D. Iogna-Prat, 'L'Impossible Silence: Pierre le Vénérable, neuvième abbé de Cluny (1122–1156) et la pastorale du livre', in R. M. Dessi and M. Lauwers (eds), *La Parole du prédicateur (Ve–XVe siècle)*, Turnhout 1997, 111–52, and P. Henriot, *La Parole et la prière au moyen âge: le verbe efficace dans l'hagiographie monastique des XIe et XIIe siècles*, Brussels 2000, 235–82.

⁴⁷ This is evident from the tone of the letter addressed to the Florentine people and clergy: Alexandri Papae II, *Epistolae* cxx, *PL* cxlvi.1406C; cf. J. J. Ryan, *Saint Peter Damiani and his canonical sources: a preliminary study in the antecedents of the Gregorian reform*, Toronto 1956, 52–3; E. Pásztor, 'Onus apostolicae sedis': *Curia romana e cardinalato nei secoli XI–XV*, Rome 1999, 56–9; D'Acunto, *L'età*, 117–18, 142–6; G. M. Cantarella, 'Pier Damiani e lo scisma di Cadalo', in M. Tagliaferri (ed.), *Pier Damiani l'eremita, il teologo, il riformatore (1007–2007)*, Bologna 2009, 233–57.

⁴⁸ See F. Salvestrini, *Santa Maria di Vallombrosa: patrimonio e vita economica di un grande monastero medievale*, Florence 1998, 45.

⁴⁹ Nonantola monastery (Modena), eighth century.

⁵⁰ See *Manuale precum Sancti Ioannis Gualberti Vallisumbrosae fundatoris*, ed. A. Salvini, Rome 1933; A. Wilmart, 'Le Manuel des prières de saint Jean Gualbert', *Revue Bénédictine* xlviii (1936), 259–99; *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum*, moderante K. Hallinger, VII/pars altera: *Consuetudines Cluniacenses antiquiores cum redactionibus derivatis*, ed. K. Hallinger, 5; *Redactio Vallumbrosana, saec. XII*, rec. N. Vasaturo, comp. K. Hallinger, M. Wegener and C. Elvert, Siegburg 1983, 309–79; and P. Licciardello, 'Il culto dei santi nei manoscritti medievali dell'abbazia di San Fedele di Strumi-Poppi', *Hagiographica* xviii (2011), 135–95 at pp. 138–9.

⁵¹ D. Frioli, 'Lo scriptorium e la biblioteca di Vallombrosa: prime ricognizioni', in G. Monzio Compagnoni (ed.), *L'Ordo Vallisumbrosae tra XII e XIII secolo: gli sviluppi istituzionali e culturali e l'espansione geografica (1101–1293)*, Vallombrosa 1999, i. 505–68, esp. pp. 530, 532–3, 540ff.; M. Manganelli, 'Il codice Conventi Soppressi 560 della Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana di Firenze', in *Guido d'Arezzo*, 241–4.

the San Miniato crucifix to the trial by fire) echoed the earliest monastic spirituality⁵² and that of Cluniac religious, who championed monasticism as a force against the violence of the nobility, as was manifested in John's original pardon of his brother's killer.⁵³ What is more, John only aimed at reforming the clergy; 'revolutionary' actions involving the lay people remained essentially more subtle.

The problematic aspects of John's actions were accentuated by the image of him conveyed in the rhetoric of his intransigent enemy Peter Damian.⁵⁴ Unlike the Lombard Patarinics, whom the Florentine reformers did resemble,⁵⁵ the Tuscan radicals did not openly encourage liturgical strikes, but only the expulsion of unworthy priests. They did not go very far beyond the limits of the most vehement accusations expressed during the same period by illustrious figures very close to them. These included, for example, Humbert of Silva Candida⁵⁶ (with whom they certainly agreed on the issue of rejecting ordinations performed by simoniac clergymen);⁵⁷ Hildebrand of Sovana (the only person to have spoken favourably about John's followers at the 1067 synod in Rome);⁵⁸ and – in subtler and certainly more personal tones – some Benedictine writers such as the chronicler Lambert of Hersfeld, who denounced the hot temper and wicked behaviour of Anno of Cologne.⁵⁹ The Florentine 'rebels' do not seem to have been involved in the bitter arguments on the eucharist that

⁵² See I. Biffi, *Cristo desiderio del monaco: saggi di teologia monastica*, Milan 1997, 241–54.

⁵³ I. Sciuto, *L'etica nel medioevo: protagonisti e percorsi (V–XIV secolo)*, Turin 2007, 83–4; J. Sonntag, 'Tempus fugit? La circolarità monastica del tempo e il suo potenziale di rappresentazione simbolica', in G. Andenna (ed.), *Religiosità e civiltà: le comunicazioni simboliche (secoli IX–XIII)*, Milan 2009, 221–42, esp. pp. 234–5.

⁵⁴ On this matter see Milo, 'Dissonance', 71–7.

⁵⁵ See G. Spinelli, 'Il sacerdozio ministeriale nella predicazione della Pataria milanese', *Benedictina* xxii (1975), 91–110, and F. Salvestrini, 'Il monachesimo vallombrosano in Lombardia: storia di una presenza e di una plurisecolare interazione', in F. Salvestrini (ed.), *I Vallombrosani in Lombardia (XI–XVIII secolo)*, Milan–Lecco 2011, 3–51.

⁵⁶ In 1058 Humbert had taken refuge in Tuscany along with other reformers who opposed the simoniac pope Benedict x, and here he consecrated the church at Vallombrosa (Attonis, *Vita altera* 22, p. 1086) and the one in the monastery of Coltibuono in Chianti, which was probably already bound to the obedience of John Gualberto, by signing the founding charter of the institution: *Regesto di Coltibuono* (1909), ed. L. Pagliai, Florence 2008, document 27, pp. 15–16.

⁵⁷ Humberti Cardinalis Episcopi, *Libri III. adversus simoniacos*, ed. F. Thaner, MGH, *Libelli de lite*, i, Hannover–Leipzig 1891, 100–253, esp. pp. 198–203.

⁵⁸ *Vita Iohannis Gualberti auctore discipulo eius anonymo* 5, p. 1107.

⁵⁹ Lamperti Monachi Hersfeldensis *Opera*, *Annales Weissenburgenses ad annum 1074*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum xxxviii*, Hannover–Leipzig 1894, lines 3–8, p. 187.

pitted Berengar of Tours against Lanfranc of Pavia.⁶⁰ Their positions were essentially in tune with the monastic morality generally current at the time. The Cluniac monk Ralph Glaber, for example, bemoaned the practice through which in his day one became a prelate ‘thanks to gold and silver rather than by one’s own merits’.⁶¹

It is interesting to note that the accused bishop and his protector, the marquis of *Tuscia*, never tried to formalise an accusation of heresy against the radical monks. This, for example, had happened in the famous case reported (among others) by Ralph Glaber of the canons of Orléans, whom the French king Robert the Pious ordered to be burned at the stake (1022) for having criticised the legitimacy of the sacraments and the miracles recounted in the Gospels.⁶² Clearly, the Roman *curia*, the emperor Conrad II and his son Henry—who in 1038 sent a bishop from his retinue to consecrate the first altar at Vallombrosa⁶³—as well as the local reformers, had a less, and above all less explicitly negative opinion of John Gualberto and his followers than the one expressed in Peter Damian’s fiery letters.

According to hagiographic narratives, the exiled monks firmly condemned the simoniac bishop. However, abstaining from the sacraments administered by unworthy priests must have been more of a consequence than a primary reason for their actions. And, of course, as the hagiographers—including Peter Damian to a certain extent—maintain, the Florentines decided on their own to proclaim the liturgical strike.⁶⁴ The monks’ ‘rejection’ of the sacraments was the result of actions aimed at shaking the

⁶⁰ See O. Capitani, *Studi su Berengario di Tours*, 2nd edn, Spoleto 2013, 65–74, 141–90; J. De Montclos, ‘Lanfranc et Béranger: les origines de la doctrine de la transsubstantiation’, and M. Cristiani, ‘Le “ragioni” di Berengario di Tours’, in G. D’Onofrio (ed.), *Lanfranco di Pavia e l’Europa del secolo XI: nel IX centenario della morte (1089–1989)*, Rome 1993, 297–326, 327–60; and G. Picasso, *Sacri canones et monastica regula: disciplina canonica e vita monastica nella società medievale*, Milan 2006, 119–31.

⁶¹ Rodolfus Glaber, *Historias del primer milenio*, ed. J. Torres Prieto, Madrid 2004, 232. See also R. Romagnoli, ‘La cultura cluniacense tra Oddone e Maiolo nell’opera di Rodolfo il Glabro’, *Quaderni medievali* xxxiii (1992), 6–34, esp. pp. 10–30.

⁶² See Rodolfus Glaber, *Historias*, 176–88; R.-H. Bautier, ‘L’Hérésie d’Orléans et le mouvement intellectuel au début du XI^e siècle: documents et hypothèses’, in *Actes du 95^e Congrès national des sociétés savantes, I: Enseignement et vie intellectuelle (IX^e–XVII^e siècle)*, Paris 1975, 63–88; and R. I. Moore, *The war on heresy: faith and power in medieval Europe*, London 2012, 23–30. For an Italian case (the heretics of Monteforte d’Alba, 1028) see Landulphi Senioris, *Mediolanensis historiae libri quatuor*, ed. A. Cutolo, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, n.e. iv/2, Bologna 1942, 67–9.

⁶³ Strumensis, *Vita* 23, p. 1086; Davidsohn, *Storia*, 264.

⁶⁴ Strumensis, *Vita* 75, pp. 1096–9. ‘Unde factum est, sicut dicitur, ut mille circiter homines huius nugis neniisque decepti sine sacramento dominici corporis et sanguinis ex hoc mundo recesserint’: *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, ed. K. Reindel, MGH, II, Munich 1988, letter 146, p. 539.

consciences of the faithful, rather than the outcome of theological and sacramental considerations.

Furthermore, that Peter Damian's opinions were *parti pris* is demonstrated by his argument against John's spiritual father, the hermit Teuzone, whom he reproached for living in the city and for rarely having taken the sacraments, and never from the priests of his home cloister – the Badia of Santa Maria in Florence.⁶⁵ A rereading of his letters to the Florentine people and clergy (1055–7) suggests that his criticisms mainly sprang from his concern about Teuzone's popularity in the city,⁶⁶ and for the role that he entrusted to Florentine laymen in judging the behaviour of their pastors.⁶⁷ And, even if there were a real conflict between the abbot of the Badia and this monk, it does not mean that the entire regular community disapproved of his behaviour. Furthermore, it is quite possible that the local superior was not in complete agreement with Peter Damian, in view of the fact that Teuzone's presence had brought the Badia prestige and fame. In this regard it is illuminating that the emperor Conrad's 1038 donation to the monastery 'pro Dei amore animae nostrae remedio et pro orationibus Teuzonis ceterorumque fratrum' does not indicate any disagreement between the lone monk and his monastic community.⁶⁸

The testimony of another of John Gualberto's biographers, the Anonymous, who was in some ways less ideologically-driven than the Patarinic Andrew of Strumi, is of interest. This indicates that initially Teuzone had not encouraged the young renegade from San Miniato to denounce his superior's conduct publicly, nor had he encouraged his disobedience to the monastic rule.⁶⁹ Rather, he urged John to work towards a situation where the bishop, responsible for the regular community, might remove the abbot. It was only when faced with the impossibility of achieving that goal that John and his followers decided to leave their monastery, breaking their vow of stability.⁷⁰ This confirms that the monastery of San

⁶⁵ See Miccoli, *Pietro*, 17–21; P. Golinelli, 'Indiscreta sanctitas': studi sui rapporti tra culti, poteri e società nel pieno medioevo, Rome 1988, 157–65; Jestice, *Wayward monks*, 218–23; D'Acunto, *L'età*, 86–9, 93–4; and U. Longo, *Come angeli in terra: Pier Damiani, la santità e la riforma del secolo XI*, Rome 2012, 187–8.

⁶⁶ *Die Briefe*, letters 44, 45, pp. 7–39.

⁶⁷ On this issue see E. Werner, *Religion und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter*, Spoleto 1995, 138, and Salvestrini, 'La prova del fuoco', 92–5.

⁶⁸ *Le carte del monastero di S. Maria in Firenze (Badia)*, I: secc. X–XI, ed. L. Schiaparelli, with F. Baldasseroni and R. Ciasca, Rome 1913, repr. Rome, 1990, document 42, p. 112. As the Gualbertian hagiography tells us, Henry III turned to him when passing through Florence: *Vita auctore Iohannis discipulo anonymo* 1, p. 1105.

⁶⁹ Presupposing obedience, the true basis of the religious life. On the dynamics of this period see D'Acunto, *L'età*, 25–46.

⁷⁰ *Vita auctore Iohannis discipulo anonymo* 1, p. 1105.

Miniato was not in itself the target of the reformer's attack, but only its head, the abbot Ubertus.

The same can be said of the trial by fire, which was very different from a mere ordeal.⁷¹ According to the informative letter sent to Pope Alexander II, like the young Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego cast into the fiery furnace in the Book of Daniel (Daniel iii. 13–97),⁷² John's follower, Peter, went through a pyre unharmed, thereby 'proving' the truthfulness of the rebel monks' accusations against Peter Mezzabarba.⁷³ It was the divine presence at this trial that legitimised the birth of a new monasticism, since only a call from God, who had urged Abraham and Anthony, Jerome, Honoratus, Colombanus and Brendan, to leave their respective countries, families and homes, could sanction leaving the community to which they were professed.

In any event, rather than highlighting John and his followers' clear break from their roots in San Miniato, what happened at the Badia of Settimo, which immediately acquired epochal value, would seem to point to a direct derivation from the story of the ancient Florentine martyr Minias. In fact, the earliest *Passio Sancti Miniati* (BHL 5965, late eighth century)⁷⁴ mentions that one of the trials that Minias faced during the Decian persecutions (250 AD) was a burning furnace. The story in the *Passio*, which John and his early followers certainly knew, and the story in the letter from the Florentine people and clergy which is also included in the Gualbertian hagiography, both bear a striking resemblance to the fiery furnace in the Book of Daniel, which is explicitly referenced in the letter and in one of the versions of the *Passio* itself.⁷⁵

⁷¹ In the sense, for example, described by Moore in *The formation*, 124–30.

⁷² See V. Hamp, 'שׁוּ ('ēš)', in J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds), *Grande lessico dell'Antico Testamento*, Italian edn, i, Brescia 1988, 918–32, esp. p. 930.

⁷³ The narrative can also reflect the early, non-biblical, episode of the young Moses who, after having made the pharaoh's crown fall from his head, gave him proof of his innocence by placing burning coals in his mouth instead of the gold (or a fruit) that had been offered to him: *Midrash Shemot Rabbah*, 1. 26. On the literary tradition of fire tamed by God and revealing saintliness see F. Bougard, 'Le Feu de la justice et le feu de l'épreuve, ive–xiiie siècle', in *Il fuoco nell'alto medioevo*, Spoleto 2013, 389–432, esp. pp. 417–25.

⁷⁴ *Le passioni di san Miniato*, 15–22.

⁷⁵ 'Iratu Decius imperator iussit eum mitti in fornacem ignis ardentis et dixit ei: "crede diis nostris et sacrificia eis et quecumque aliis prodesse possunt. Et nisi ab istorum cultura discesseritis, pariter vos Deus omnipotens perpetuo incendio cruciabit". Imperator dixit: "Minias consule tibi ut gaudeas!". Minias respondit: "tu mihi dicis gaudere, tibi enim gaudium eternum numquam erit": *Le passioni di san Miniato*, 96–7. Before going through fire Peter Igneus (*sacerdos et monachus*) prayed to the Father to preserve him: 'illesum sine aliqua combustionis macula ... sicut quondam illos salvasti tres pueros in camino ignis ardentis': Strumensis, *Vita* 75, p. 1098. The reference to the youths in the furnace is also contained in a version of the earliest *Passio* of St Minias, transcribed in Northern Italy perhaps at the beginning of the tenth century: 'Danielemque de lacu leonum ac tres pueros de medio eripuit

Like Minias, the supreme witness of faith, John Gualberto had yearned for martyrdom ever since – in obedience to the Lord’s design – he had escaped the attack that the marquis of *Tuscia* and Bishop Peter’s henchmen had mounted against him at the Florentine monastery of San Salvi.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the *Passio* of Minias, rewritten by the monk Drugone as requested by Bishop Hildebrand (BHL 5967),⁷⁷ told how the martyr had experienced an unexpected calling,⁷⁸ the same calling that suddenly opened the gates of the cloister to the young and heroic John Gualberto.⁷⁹ Proximity to Minias’s tomb played a contributing part in the young nobleman’s decision.⁸⁰ The text made it quite clear that John was a most worthy successor to St Minias, and certainly better than Ubertus or any other abbot of San Miniato.

Thus, it was there – in the place where Hildebrand, to revive the traditional connection between the cult of martyrs, the urban milieu and the bishops’ authority,⁸¹ had created a centre of power for the Florentine bishopric⁸² – that the seed of church reform was planted by the monk who founded Vallombrosa. John’s early biographers separated Ubertus’ abbacy from his community and, above all, from the mythicised story of

ignium’: Stiftsbibliothek, St Gallen, MS 569. It is further to be found in a twelfth-century *Passionale* based on the same: BHL 5966; *Le passioni di san Miniato*, 26–7, 77, 111. See also Salvestrini, ‘La prova del fuoco’, 108–9, and G. Alpigiano, *L’officium S. Miniatis nell’antifonario fiorentino del sec. XII*, Florence 2016, 10–3, 22–6. On the role of fire in the hagiographies of the martyrs stricken by the Decian persecutions see C. Freeman, *A new history of early Christianity*, New Haven–London 2009, 313.

⁷⁶ Strumensis, *Vita* 73, p. 1095.

⁷⁷ On the context in which it was written – dictated in response to the reformers’ attacks on the Florentine Ordinary – see B. Brand, *Holy treasure and sacred song: relic cults and their liturgies in medieval Tuscany*, New York–Oxford 2014, 64–7; Alpigiano, *L’officium*, 28–33; and *Le passioni di san Miniato*, 31–40, 123–41.

⁷⁸ ‘Seviente per universum pene orbem rabie Deciana, multi, quorum mentes divini fervor amoris accenderat, seculi blandimenta contempnentes momentaneasque felici certamine penas vincentes, cum palma martirii ad celi palatium properabant ... vir sanctus, divini amoris calore inflammatus, alacri vultu respondit: “Si de nomine interrogas, Minias vocor, si vero de religionis statu, omnipotentis Dei semper fui et ero cultor”’: *Le passioni di san Miniato*, 143–4.

⁷⁹ Strumensis, *Vita* 5, pp. 1080–1; Attonis, *Vita altera* 4–5, p. 1080.

⁸⁰ On the devotion of John’s social class to Minias and the landlords’ ties to the monastery see G. W. Dameron, ‘The cult of St Minias and the struggle for power in the diocese of Florence, 1011–24’, *Journal of Medieval History* xiii (1987), 125–41, and *Episcopal power and Florentine society, 1000–1320*, London–Cambridge, MA 1991, 32–4; and Moore, *The first European revolution*, 79.

⁸¹ A link justly emphasised for late antiquity and the high Middle Ages by R. L. Wilken in *The first thousand years: a global history of Christianity*, New Haven 2012, 127–35.

⁸² See A. Benvenuti, “Secondo che raccontano le storie”: il mito delle origini cittadine nella Firenze comunale, in *Il senso della storia nella cultura medievale italiana (1100–1350)*, Pistoia 1995, 205–52 at pp. 239–40.

Minias, using the tradition of the venerated prince and his sacrifice to legitimise John Gualberto as his successor.

In this sense, Vallombrosan hagiography connected John directly to Minias, and contributed to making the new monastic movement a perfect continuation of early Christian Florence.⁸³ Thus, the reformer's followers partly removed the ennobling memory of the Cephalophore⁸⁴ from the exclusive purview of the episcopal curia, relativising the importance of the 1018 foundation of the monastery to the advantage of the kratophany that occurred a few years later, when the saint of pardon arrived at the abbey.

That the rebel monk's decisions and protests against Peter Mezzabarba did not imply any opposition to San Miniato on the part of the Vallombrosans is proved by the ongoing devotion (a real *Sitz im Leben*) to the memory of the miracle of the crucifix at the abbey.⁸⁵ And it goes without saying that Minias's feast day, 25 October, is normally observed in the Vallombrosan liturgical calendars.⁸⁶ Neither the hagiographic tradition nor popular devotion viewed the establishment of Gualbertian monasticism as an affront to the Florentine martyr's noble memory. On the contrary, the synthesis of the two stories – of Minias and John Gualberto – was subsequently embraced by the Olivetan monks who arrived at San Miniato in the 1370s.⁸⁷ In fact, it is admirably depicted in the monument which, perhaps more than any other, embodies the melding of their shared past: the shrine that Piero de' Medici (1416–69) and the Arte di Calimala – a powerful guild of Florentine merchants – commissioned from Michelozzo to create a fitting home for the so-called miraculous crucifix of the Gualbertian *metanoia* (1448–52)⁸⁸ (the early surviving cross, that was subsequently found to date from the thirteenth century, is no longer in the Basilica since it was moved to the Vallombrosan church of Santa Trinita in 1671).⁸⁹ The shrine also houses Agnolo Gaddi's *Passion of Christ* and two panels depicting SS Minias and

⁸³ See A. Gunnella, 'Il complesso cimiteriale di S. Felicità: testimonianze di una comunità cristiana fiorentina', in A. Benvenuti, F. Cardini and E. Giannarelli (eds), *Le radici cristiane di Firenze*, Florence 1994, 13–32.

⁸⁴ On Minias's acquisition of this attribute in the eleventh century see P. Lugano, 'San Miniato a Firenze: storia e leggenda', *Studi Religiosi* ii (1902), 222–45, 482–505, esp. pp. 243–4.

⁸⁵ 'Eadem vero crux pro indicio tanti miraculi in monasterio sancti Miniatis nunc usque sub multa cautela servatur': Attonis, *Vita altera* 3, p. 1080.

⁸⁶ See *Le passioni di san Miniato*, 76.

⁸⁷ G. M. Brocchi, *Vite de' santi e beati fiorentini* (1742), repr. Florence 2000, 21–2.

⁸⁸ C. Acidini Luchinat, 'Il mecenatismo familiare', in F. Borsi (ed.), *'Per bellezza, per studio, per piacere': Lorenzo il Magnifico e gli spazi dell'arte*, Florence 1991, 101–24 at p. 123.

⁸⁹ C. De Benedictis, 'La pittura del Duecento e del Trecento in S. Trinita', in G. Marchini and E. Micheletti (eds), *La chiesa di Santa Trinita a Firenze*, Florence 1987, 89–106, esp. p. 89; F. Fiorelli Malesci, 'San Miniato al Monte', in A. Paolucci

John Gualberto (c. 1394–6). John is wearing the scapular of the Black Benedictines and not the brown habit of the Vallombrosans:⁹⁰ without a doubt a tribute to his first monastic home.

The images of the two saints were not necessarily intended to be viewed together as they are today. It is not impossible that they were placed in the shrine after the wooden crucifix had been removed.⁹¹ In any case, the two panels, which are the same size and shape, came from the Basilica, and confirm how strongly the memory of John Gualberto remained alive in the Church where he received his calling, connecting the ecclesiastical reform of the eleventh century to the art and devotion of the age of the Renaissance.

(ed.), *Firenze sacra: arte e architettura nelle chiese fiorentine*, Florence 2003, 302–19, esp. p. 310.

⁹⁰ On the habit see N. Vasaturo, 'Vallombrosani; Vallombrosane (monache)', entries 9, 10, in G. Rocca (ed.), *La sostanza dell'effimero: gli abiti degli ordini religiosi in Occidente*, Rome 2000, 149–51.

⁹¹ See A. Padoa Rizzo (ed.), *Iconografia di San Giovanni Gualberto: la pittura in Toscana*, Vallombrosa–Pisa 2002, 58–9.