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# AN INTIMATE ENCOUNTER WITH ENGLISH COINAGE IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES: THE CASE OF WULFRIC OF HASELBURY

GILES E.M. GASPER AND SVEIN H. GULLBEKK

WULFRIC of Haselbury is perhaps best known as one of a number of anchorites, early in the English medieval tradition, who became the subject of Latin *Lives*.<sup>1</sup> He lived as an anchoritic priest attached to the parish church at Haselbury Plucknett in Somerset, from 1125 to his death in 1155.<sup>2</sup> Almost all that is known of Wulfric derives from the *Life* composed by the Cistercian monk John of Forde (c.1140–1214). Forde Abbey had been established in 1136, as a daughter-house of Waverley Abbey, and John became a monk there, possibly in 1165.<sup>3</sup> Wulfric had been a prominent figure for the monks at Forde, and many stories about his life were preserved within the community and among its friends.<sup>4</sup> The testimony of Henry, abbot of Tintern and then of Waverley, was particularly vivid. In the *Life* itself Henry visits Wulfric five times. Wulfric was also famous in wider society, lay as well as religious, most prominently in the south-west but also farther afield. William fitzWalter, who encouraged Wulfric's move to Haselbury, proved a consistent patron, and his family remained dedicated to Wulfric's memory. William's son Walter emerges as an important source for the *Life*. Wulfric was known to the baronage of the West Country, and at the courts of Henry I and Stephen; both monarchs visited him personally, although Stephen visited him before he became king.<sup>5</sup>

The *Life* appears to have been compiled at some point in the 1180s, drawing on a rich lode of oral testimony. It is a complex work, whose three-part structure does not follow a strictly chronological approach: Book 1 introduces the conversion of Wulfric to holy life, Book 2 concerns his mystical experiences and a wider range of characters with whom he interacts, and Book 3 is a less structured series of meditations on Wulfric's actions (cursing, prophesying, healing), and an account of his death. As is not unusual in eleventh- and twelfth-century hagiography, John of Forde's writing is inclusive and non-judgmental of the society in which Wulfric's life is played out.<sup>6</sup>

Such a relationship with his sources and with his subject gives John's narrative its sense of immediacy and intimacy. The level of intimacy allows privileged access to many aspects of twelfth-century society. Not least amongst these are what the *Life* reveals about monetary history, and the production and use of coin. *The Life of Wulfric of Haselbury* provides evidence previously underused in a numismatic and monetary context for an important element in Henry I's coinage. It also provides further evidence for the use and understanding of money

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<sup>1</sup> Bell 1933 comprises the current critical edition. The *Life* has been translated as Matarasso 2011. Matarasso notes that Bell's is not a wholly satisfactory critical edition, and will be superseded by that of Kevin Day (Brepols, forthcoming): Matarasso 2011, 81–4. Matarasso consulted the four extant manuscripts for divergent readings in making her translation: these do not affect the passages under consideration in the current context, for which Bell's edition is, for the time being, sufficient. In what follows Wulfric's *Life* is cited by book and chapter number, followed by the page reference for the Matarasso translation; the Bell edition is referenced when appropriate. For more specific literature on Wulfric himself see Mayr-Harting 1975 and more recently Alexander 2002. A recent reassessment of the English medieval anchoritic tradition is Licence 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Licence 2011, 186, n.48.

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent summary of the lives of John and Wulfric see Matarasso 2011, 2–10. On John's place as an author within the Cistercian Order see Holdsworth 1961. Wider dimensions of John's thought are addressed in Costello and Holdsworth 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Further comments on the sources for John of Forde's interest in Wulfric, including two monks of the house alive in the 1180s whom he had known, can be found in Matarasso 1996.

<sup>5</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 2.16; Matarasso 2011, 150.

<sup>6</sup> Matarasso 2011, 76, puts this well: 'Lay men and women . . . here rub shoulders with monks and clerics without any underlining of difference. Those who show themselves to least advantage tend to be monks and clerics, whereas ordinary people are praised as religious, God-fearing and devout.'

in the period, the more striking because it is from a personal point of view. The observations in the *Life* fuel a more complex history of monetary culture, which must take account of the nature of the sources in which references to monetary use are found. John of Forde obviously did not set out to write a history of Wulfric's use of coin. However, when, where and in what context monetary matters are mentioned are significant both in terms of what they describe, but also in terms of how this fits into John's broader literary, spiritual and theological purpose.

The *Life* begins with Wulfric's conversion to a strict religious life. As a priest he enjoyed hawking and hunting, but while so engaged:

... a fellow appeared – a poor man by his dress and aspect – who begged him meekly for a new coin. There was a fresh minting in England then, in the days of King Henry I, but being new the coins were still uncommon.<sup>7</sup>

This is probably the oldest literary reference to a recoinage in English history. Recoinage in England had a considerable history by the first third of the twelfth century. Eadgar introduced the system of recoinages in a monetary reform c.973, and from this date English coinage was renewed on a regular basis. This process continued after the Norman Conquest, and in the reign of Henry I (1100–35) recoinages were undertaken on fifteen occasions. Recoinage involved the withdrawal of coins in circulation and their replacement by new, fresh, coins with different designs. The reference in the *Life of Wulfric* includes not only a general comment on recoinages [*nova moneta*], but makes further observations on the distribution of a new coinage at a moment when these new coins had not yet become generally available and they were still a novelty and something of which people would take notice. The rarity of these new coins offers a rare insight into how the process of recoinages impacted upon the coin circulation in a period of transition between old and new types.

Haselbury was close to several significant centres of power: Exeter is some 65 miles to the west, Winchester slightly nearer to the east some 60 miles away, and the major royal castle of Corfe was only 26 miles south. Within the Anglo-Norman realm too, the Dorset coastline was important in cross-Channel communication. Geographical, economic and political isolation may or may not account for Wulfric's lack of coin. The potential issues in distribution of coin which the passage highlighted may point to is the more general issue of the volume of coins in circulation in twelfth-century England, and the question of the effects of a relatively low volume of coin on payment and exchange; individual coins had to 'work', arguably, much harder. Whatever the case and whether or not this passage reflects a first hand account (although the individuals concerned were dead at the time when John wrote, his source had known Wulfric personally) it surely suggests an author familiar with the nature of recoinages. For an author writing in the 1180s the wide-reaching monetary reforms of Henry II in 1180 would have been a natural point of reference.

The opening episode of the *Life* continues with use of the same level of detail and familiarity, with particular reference to a halfpenny.

When Wulfric replied that he did not know whether he had a new coin about him, the other said: 'Look in your purse and you'll find tuppence halfpenny there'. Left speechless by this reply, he searched in his pouch and, finding just what the other had said, devoutly offered what was being asked.<sup>8</sup>

The halfpenny or *obol* was not uncommon in German and French society in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and it was minted in Anglo-Saxon England in the ninth and tenth centuries. The reintroduction of round halfpennies after the Norman Conquest can be attributed to Henry I (1100–35) in c.1108.<sup>9</sup> This was recorded by the chronicler John of Worcester (writing c.1131) and by subsequent medieval authors, but the first to identify a halfpenny of Henry I

<sup>7</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 1.1, Matarasso 2011, 97; Bell 1933, 13: 'Quadam namque die, dum de huius generis exercitio quiddam haberet in minibus et huic insaniae cui manus dederat non segniter militaret, affuit vir ex insperato vultum et habitum perferens pauperis qui et ab eo novum nummum in eleemosynam supplex expetiit. Habebat autem tunc temporis in Anglia nummum novum in diebus Henrici regis primi, sed rarum adhuc prae novitate nummismatis'.

<sup>8</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 1.1; Matarasso 2011, 98; Bell 1933, 13–14: 'Cui cum ille nescire se diceret si nummum novum prae minibus haberet: "Respice," ait, "in marsupium tuum et duos in eo et semis invenies." Quo ille response obstupescens inspexit loculum suum et ita ut dictam erat inveniens, quod petebatur devotus obtulit'.

<sup>9</sup> Blackburn 1990, 63.

was Peter Seaby in a lecture to the British Numismatic Society in 1950.<sup>10</sup> On the basis of the documentary references to round halfpennies and the style and fabric of the coin concerned, Seaby concluded that it must have been struck during the reign of Henry I. In an article by W.J. Conte and M.M. Archibald from 1990 another five Henry I halfpennies were identified.<sup>11</sup> Since then eight more examples have been found, of which the most recently published was found in 2010.<sup>12</sup> These halfpennies are still, then, extremely rare. Smaller denominations, such as halfpennies and farthings, were normally provided by simply cutting pennies along the lines of the cross on the reverse. The cutting is often done with remarkable precision, a fact that may suggest that this was a practice carried out at the mints. On the basis of find evidence in recent years the share of cut pennies in the currency in circulation was probably higher than that of uncut pennies.<sup>13</sup> This gives a significant insight into the nature of English coinage and use of money in daily commerce.

The reference to a halfpenny (*semis*) in John of Forde's *Life of Wulfric* may or may not reflect a specific element within Henry's coinage, namely the round halfpenny. The other possible interpretation of *semis* in this context is a penny cut in half. The text might be used to provide additional evidence, alongside the archaeological and numismatic, that halfpennies were a part of the monetary economy.

Wulfric's reminiscence of a key moment on his path to the anchor-hold provides additional evidence for Henrician coinage. Henry's concern for his coinage is well known. The first surviving major legal text concerning coinage since the reign of Cnut (1016–35) is Henry I's instructions to the shires in his writ *de moneta falsa et cambiatoribus* issued at Christmas 1100, of which only the text sent to Worcester survives. False coin was condemned, and the punishment for those responsible for its appearance was the removal of the right hand and the testicles (*de dextro pugno et testiculis*).<sup>14</sup> Further steps were taken against forgers in about 1108, as recorded in the contemporary witness of Eadmer of Canterbury's *Historia Novorum*, and repeated by William of Malmesbury and others.<sup>15</sup> The *Historia*, written to contextualise the ecclesiastical career of Anselm as Archbishop of Canterbury (1093–1109), was composed between 1109 and 1115, with a further two books added in the 1120s.<sup>16</sup> The account given of the reform is from the first period of composition, and is to all intents and purposes a contemporary witness:

Then again, spoiled and false coinage was harming many people in many ways. Accordingly the King ordained that this practice should be cured by such severe punishment that anyone who could be caught making false coins should lose his eyes and lower limbs without any option of saving himself by any money payment. Moreover, seeing that very often when coins were picked out they were bent or broken and so rejected, the King determined that no penny or half-penny should be perfect. From this great good resulted at once to the whole Kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Seaby 1949–51; Grierson and Brooke 1949–51; Thorpe 1848–49, II, 57.

<sup>11</sup> Conte and Archibald 1990.

<sup>12</sup> *BNJ Coin Register* 2011, no. 124 (cited by Allen 2012, 347, n.5); information from Dr Martin Allen.

<sup>13</sup> Allen 2012, 347–8. Matthew Paris, who describes the recoinage of 1247–50 in his *Chronica Majora*, explains the introduction of the new Long Cross design as a measure to control the widespread cutting of coins. In this connection he draws the reverse side of the sterling to show the long arms of the voided cross in contrast to the Short Cross type that had been current until then. The thought was that the long arms of the cross would prevent further cutting of the coins. (Vaughan 1993, 61).

<sup>14</sup> Davis, Johnson and Cronne 1913–69, II, 4, no. 501; Johnson 1983, 9–10; Kinsey 1958–59; Stewart 1992, 69; Allen 2012, 370.

<sup>15</sup> Blackburn 1990, 62–3; Stewart 1992, 66; Allen 2012, 370.

<sup>16</sup> Southern 1963, 298–9.

<sup>17</sup> Bosanquet 1964, 206; Rule 1884, 193: 'Item moneta corrupta et falsa multis modis multos affligebat. Quam rex sub tanta animaadversione corrigi statuit, ut nullus qui posset deprahendi falsos denarios facere aliqua redmptione quin oculos et inferiores corporis partes perderet iuvari valeret. Et quoniam saepissime dum denarii eligebantur, flectebantur, rumpebantur, repuebantur, statuit ut nullus denarius vel obolus integer esset. Ex quo facto magnum bonum ad tempus toti regno creatum est'. Eadmer's words were mostly repeated by John of Worcester (McGurck 1993, III, 112–15, *s.a.* 1108: 'King Henry of England established a strict peace by legislating that anyone caught theieving or robbing should be hanged. He also decreed that spoiled or false coinage should be reformed with such severe force that anyone caught making forged pennies should be blinded and lose his lower limbs without the option of saving himself by a monetary payment. Furthermore since very often pennies when selected were found to be bent or broken and so rejected, he decreed that no penny or halfpenny (which he also ordained should be round), and no farthing should be whole. This was of great benefit to the whole kingdom, the king acting to relieve the sufferings of the land in secular matters. (*Rex Anglorum Henricus pacem legemque talem constituit, ut si quis in furtu uel latrocinio deprehensus fuisset, suspenderetur. Monetam quoque corruptam et falsam sub tanta animaduersione corrigi statuit, ut nullus qui posset deprehendi falsos denarios facere, aliqua redemptione quin oculos et inferiores corporis partes perderet, iuvari ualeret. Et quoniam sepiissime dum*

The effect of the decree was that all coins were ‘snicked’ with a cut before they left the mint. Many pennies of Henry I’s types 6–15, and some of the round halfpennies, carry such a mark.<sup>18</sup>

After another sixteen years or so, in 1124, the coinage had again reached a low point. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle ‘the penny was so bad that the man who had a pound at a market could not buy twelve penn’orth with it’.<sup>19</sup> Henry I’s justiciar Roger of Salisbury summoned all of the moneyers to Winchester at Christmas 1124, where they were mutilated or otherwise punished by Twelfth Night (6 January 1125).<sup>20</sup> That such a violent response to false moneyers was necessarily short-term, and unsustainable in the long-term, is suggested in the pipe roll of 1129/30, where several moneyers are reported as debtors, perhaps as a result of corporal punishment being converted to fines.<sup>21</sup>

John of Forde’s text is instructive for the wider landscape within which coins and money are located. For John, the new minting is used to make a spiritual point. This episode was the first revelation to Wulfric as to his proper vocation, and, John suggests a deeper significance to the exchange of coin, drawing on biblical imagery. In his words:

There is good reason to believe that this stranger was an angel of the Lord, pointing towards the new man he was asking for in the new currency. Certainly Wulfric himself, harking back to this story, used to say: ‘He was no man, for all he seemed one.’ In the end, what the one had been asking and the other giving was made plain when the stranger took the coin he had requested with the words: ‘He for whose love you did this will repay you. And I in his name foretell to you that soon you will leave this place for another, and thence you will move shortly after to a third; there at length you will find rest and in a narrower dwelling-place persevere with God to the end; and thus at the last you will be called to join the company of the saints’.<sup>22</sup>

The new money pointing to the new man recalls Ephesians 4.22–24.<sup>23</sup> The new man who is created will be created in justice and in holiness of truth. The struggle for truth, how it was revealed in Wulfric’s life, deeds and words, and the greater truth for which he stood as witness, are the themes on which John builds everything else within the *Life*. Nevertheless, John records the details of the new money in a worldly sense, since it was the vehicle for Wulfric’s conversion. The story uses money to make a spiritual point, Christianizing it in the process.

As the *Life* progresses, money is mentioned specifically on a number of other occasions, in which its appropriate use is clearly singled out, as well as its agency in showing up falsehood and wickedness.<sup>24</sup> One anecdote concerns the attempt to bring shame upon Wulfric’s name by Drogo de Munci at the court of Henry I:

Originally from overseas, he was a great man in the household of King Henry. When he heard blessed Wulfric’s name extolled at court and his doings reverently recounted by the courtiers, the wretch began to curse and scoff: ‘The king would do well to send to the cell of this charlatan and confiscate his money, for it cannot be that a man so many flock to has not got plenty stowed away’. The blasphemous words were still on his lips when Satan, to whom he had been delivered that he might learn not to blaspheme, threw him to the ground, where he rolled foaming at the mouth, a mouth that was now twisted round to his ear.<sup>25</sup>

*denarii eligebantur, flectebantur, rumpebantur, respuebantur, statuit, ut nullus denarius uel obolum quos et rotundus esse instituit, aut etiam quadrans, integer esset. Ex quo facto magnum bonum toti regno creatum est, quia ipse rex hec in saecularibus ad releuandas terre erummas agebat.)*

<sup>18</sup> Blackburn 1990, 62–3; Conte and Archibald 1990, 234; Allen 2009, 98–9; Allen 2012, 370.

<sup>19</sup> Swanton 1996, 254.

<sup>20</sup> Blackburn 1990, 64–5.

<sup>21</sup> Stewart 1991; Stewart 1992, 66.

<sup>22</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 1.1; Matarasso 2011, 99; Bell 1933, 14: ‘Nec immerito is angelus domini fuisse credendus est, novum hominem significans et expectens simul in nummo novo. Nam et ipse haec ipsa postea referens ita dicere solebat: “Homo,” inquit, “videbatur sed homo non erat”. Denique cum nummum quem petierat ille accepisset, quid ipse petiisset vel quid ille dedisset aperuit dicens: “Retribuat tibi is pro cuius amore haec fecisti. Et ego in eius nomine pronuntio tibi quia ex hoc loco in brevi ad alium locum migraturus es, et ex hoc ipso itidem ad alium post modicum transitum facies; ubi et requiem tandem inventurus es et in artioris loci habitaculo Deo preseveraturus in finem; et sic postremo ad sanctorum vocandus consortium”’.

<sup>23</sup> ‘To put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And he renewed in the spirit of your mind: And put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth.’

<sup>24</sup> Mayr-Harting 1975, 342, notes that ‘money plays a surprisingly large part in Wulfric’s *Life*.’

<sup>25</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 2.16; Matarasso 2011, 150–1; Bell 1933, 63–4: ‘Nomen illi Drogo de Munci; de transmarinis partibus oriundus inclitus erat in domo Regis Henrici. Hic cum audiret nomen beati Wulfrici magnificari in domo regia et opera eius pie a fidelibus enarrari, coepit miser blasphemare et subsannans dicere: “Bene fecerit rex si miserit ad cellam illusoris huius ad accipiendas pecunias eius, quia fieri non potest ut multa sibi non thesaurizaverit ad quem tam multi conveniunt.” Adhuc verba blasphemiae errant in ore ipsius et a satana, cui traditus erat ut disceret non blasphemare, elisus in terram, ore ad aurem detorto volutabatur spumans’.

Henry came to visit and converse with Wulfric, probably around 1130; the king asked that Wulfric cure Drogo, whom he had brought along, which the holy man did, after repeating the injunction of the Psalms not to touch the Lord's anointed.<sup>26</sup> It is worth noting nonetheless the lack of surprise in the narrative at the notion itself, the non-denial of Drogo's allegation and Wulfric's implicit defence of his monetary resources.

John of Forde confirms Drogo's suspicions in the chapter immediately following. The large amount of money that was given to, and most of it accepted by, Wulfric, is acknowledged.<sup>27</sup> John observes that it would not have been fitting for the rich to have turned up to Wulfric empty-handed. Having received this wealth, Wulfric redistributed it to the poor; he also lavishly furnished the church to which he was attached, and gave generously to the abbey at Forde. From an historical perspective Henry Mayr-Harting has gone so far as to suggest that Wulfric may have acted in some manner as an embryonic banking system, for his locale.<sup>28</sup> In this way Wulfric became an example of how holy men should act in monetary matters, pointing out the altruistic behaviour through redistribution of wealth among the parishioners, especially the poor.

Wulfric's financial dealings were clearly of public concern. As the next example within the *Life* shows, he played a role within the local economy, an economy that was sophisticated, encompassing spiritual as well as material aspects. The episode in question involves the dishonest activities of Wulfric's servant:

One of the holy man's servants, having got himself friends thanks to the reverence in which the saint was held, became seduced by money-making, and was not afraid to keep for himself the things the faithful destined for his master. And, what is more, he betrayed the poor men of Christ, for being a thief he had hiding places where he took things his master was sending to the monks.<sup>29</sup>

Wulfric covered this up as long as he could, but eventually had to release the man from his service.

So when he was driven from the holy man's presence, this fellow walked off into exile, trusting to the riches he had accumulated – numbering sheep and cattle, as well as gold and silver and precious vestments – to keep himself and the whore to whom he cleaved.<sup>30</sup>

Nothing good came from this ill-gotten wealth, however, and the former servant was soon reduced to 'such poverty that he had nowhere to lay his head; indeed publicly exposed to the shame of beggary, he hardly found short breeches to cover his sinful flesh'.<sup>31</sup>

The whole episode speaks forcefully to the many dimensions of Wulfric's value to Haselbury and its hinterland: from the spiritual to the monetary. According to John of Forde, Wulfric released his servant after complaints from those in the locality who felt the man's actions besmirched the reputation of the holy man. Holiness had to be supported with worldly valuables, the theft of which not only reduced their worldly value, but the whole commodity of holiness.

In a third anecdote even more details on how coins might have been understood, used and appreciated in this period are introduced. Monetary value, commodification and a specific mention of coinage in action are to be found in the anecdote, concerning Robert of Cirencester's encounter with Wulfric. Robert met Wulfric in company with a prior of Gloucester, probably Humfrey, first prior of the Augustinian canons in that city, who were established around

<sup>26</sup> As Matarasso 2011, 150–1, notes on this passage the attribution of great wealth to Wulfric by Drogo may have been premature if Henry's visit was only in 1130.

<sup>27</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 2.17; Matarasso 2011, 151; Bell 1933, 65.

<sup>28</sup> Mayr-Harting 1975, 343.

<sup>29</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 3.25; Matarasso 2011, 194; Bell 1933, 109: 'Puer namque viri sancti cum ob reverentiam domini sui amicos comparasset sibi, avertit cor suum in negotiationem avaritiae, et ea quae a fidelibus destinabantur domino suo non timuit ponere sibi. Insuper et pauperum Christi proditor, cum fur esset et loculos haberet, ea quae eis a domino suo mittebantur portabat.

<sup>30</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 3.25; Matarasso 2011, 194; Bell 1933, 110: 'At ille in multitudine divitiarum congregatarum confidens, eo quod oves plurimas et boves habebat, insuper auro et argento et vestibus pretiosis esset locupletatus, sibi et ei cui adhaeserat fornicariae, a facie viri sancti proiectus exsulavit'.

<sup>31</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 3.25; Matarasso 2011, 194–5; Bell 1933, 110: 'tanate iudicium paupertatis incurrit ut non haberet ubi caput reclinaret, sed et publicae mendicitatis opprobrio expositus vix semicinctia quibus carnem turpitudinis suae operiret inveniret'.

1153.<sup>32</sup> Robert attempted to make fun of Wulfric, to no avail, and so decided to find another way to humiliate the saint:

Having tested the mouth, the clerk then set about tempting the saint's heart through avarice, and, holding out two pennies (*duos denarios*), offered them to him. 'Put them there,' said the saint; 'there are those coming who will take them begging for alms.' Abashed, he went away at that, and while he and the prior were staying overnight in the village, two poor women came up to them begging for alms. The clerk repulsed the haughtily: 'Go to the man of God,' he said, 'it's his business to give alms, the more so as he is loaded with money.' Showing him two pennies, the women said: 'That's just where we've been, and look, we took these from his window.' The clerk, having inspected and recognized them, did redden, but not enough to signify true repentance.<sup>33</sup>

Robert did repent fully, in Wulfric's presence, and was later appointed procurator of Glastonbury Abbey, 'with substantial revenues at his disposal', but repeated this story regularly to the monks, one of whom, Walter, relayed it to John of Forde.<sup>34</sup> The description of the clerk investigating the two pennies and recognizing them reflects the nature of medieval minting and coinage. The ability to distinguish coins of the same type stems from the fact that coin dies were hand-made. Coins were, moreover, items of value and on an individual basis of limited possession, and therefore the notion that individual coins might be recognised is plausible.

In this story the coins constitute the narrative mechanism by which the attempt to humiliate Wulfric is subverted. It suits the story to claim that a clerk in the twelfth century made such observations. Whatever its historicity, the reference suggests that the author, and the original teller of the tale, assumed an intimate relationship between the population and to the coins in circulation.

There are a number of monetary features that call for comment here. First, the denomination that Wulfric deemed appropriate for alms-giving. A penny was quite a large unit of currency, as the introduction of the halfpenny itself indicates, and the existence even of cut farthings in the archaeological and numismatic record. It may that Wulfric gave that amount of money to make a point to Robert, and it is equally possible that John of Forde added this detail to the story to underline similarly Robert's foolhardiness in trying to trap the saint into avarice. On the other hand a penny may have been deemed entirely appropriate for use on such an occasion.

In this connection the role that Wulfric played in the redistribution of worldly wealth within his community is striking. The poor women knew whither they should turn and were not turned away empty-handed. Wulfric's role as the personal point of monetary exchange within his locale has been emphasised before, but it is possible to see here, quite clearly, the sophisticated relationship between worldly and spiritual wealth. The holy man, converted in part by the new coin, redistributes coin to the poor in a practical and spiritual manner. The visibility of these parallels between the life of the world and the life of the spirit is due primarily to John of Forde's literary skill. To that extent the image of Wulfric as alms-giver, using coin at the service of spiritual and material gain, in the correct circumstances, may be didactic and aspirational. Even if that were the case, a considerable amount is revealed about the place of money within this society, and the elision of its spiritual and material economies. If the events did occur, then that revelation is the more significant.

The gifts given to Wulfric, and his own largesse, spiritually and materially, make him appear almost as a living shrine. That is to say that he carries out many of the activities associated with sites of holy burial, from mutually expedient offering of gifts from visitors and saint, spiritual protection, and a run of miracles and visionary experience. Money and shrines go together, and so too does money and Wulfric within his lifetime. The character of the offerings in the story of the two poor women is worth noting in this context. Wulfric leaves the two

<sup>32</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 3.30; Matarasso 2011, 197, 241 n. 'a'; Bell 1933, 113.

<sup>33</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 3.30; Matarasso 2011, 197–9; Bell 1933, 114: 'At ille tandem cum tentasset os, apposuit etiam cor illius tentare de avaritia, et duos denarios proferens obtulit ei. Cui vir sanctus: "Pone", inquit, "eos illuc; iam advenient qui tollent eos." Itaque confuses ille recessit, et discumbente eo in villa eadem cum priore supradicto advenerunt duae pauperulae mulieres elemosynam petentes. Quas idem clericus tumide repellens: "Ite," ait, "ad hominem Dei cui opera elemosynarum incumbent, maxime cum pecuniis abundet." At illae duos denarios proferentes aiunt: "Et nos cum eo fuimus et ecce hos de fenestra eius sustulimus." Quibus clericus idem inspectis et recognitis erubuit quidem sed non usque ad condignam paenitentiam'.

<sup>34</sup> *The Life of Wulfric*, 3.30; Matarasso 2011, 198; Bell 1933, 114: 'et redditibus non paucis locupletatus'.

pennies on his window, a liminal space, perhaps recalling the offerings deposited at shrines, as much as it indicates a practical way for the poor to access their alms. The presentation of Wulfric as a living shrine is made all the more potent in the reality of his enclosure, a living saint immured is literally a living shrine. Such a presentation was, again, no doubt John of Forde's intention, but in this case, this was clearly a common rather than an individual appreciation of Wulfric's life.

A final detail in the story of the two poor women serves to underline the familiarity of high medieval English society with coins, but at the same time to reveal something of their status. Both pennies are recognised by their original donor, Robert. An implication might be that coins were inspected and examined by their owners and that they were often sufficiently individual to be recognised. Coins took their place within the broader high medieval economy, but were a distinct element amongst others. Wulfric's servant-thief was wealthy in sheep, vestments and gold, as well as silver.

*The Life of Wulfric* is instructive for several dimensions of the uses and significance of money in the middle years of the twelfth century. Why Wulfric's life has not been used in this context before has clear explanations. A good part of the answer to that is the constraining force of disciplinary perspectives. The *Life* was one of the most popular of John of Forde's works, and, though the exigencies of John's reign cut it off from a more widespread dissemination among continental Cistercian libraries, it remained popular enough in England to the Reformation.<sup>35</sup> Within modern scholarship however, the reception is more limited and more fragmentary. As Matarasso puts it:

The Enlightenment judged it irrational, the Victorians found it unedifying, the modern age categorised it as hagiography, a genre to be approached with caution and a sack of salt. Theologians prefer straight theology, and this has the appearance of a hybrid work, made up of fact worked on by memory and further embroidered with meaning; the theology is there but must be sought. Social historians, dismissing the theology, hunt around in the text like truffle hounds for evidence to lay alongside that of charters, acts, and chronicles.<sup>36</sup>

Taken in the round, it is a complex text, with a large cast of characters, and one which provides an intimate encounter not only with coinage, but with the nature of money within a society not yet fully monetised. Money, including coin, is seen in multiple functions, and, as in so much else in medieval life, reaches physically and symbolically between the boundaries of the present world and that of the world to come.

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<sup>35</sup> Holdsworth 1961, 120.

<sup>36</sup> Matarasso 2011, 2.



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