

Anselm & Becket

Two Canterbury Saints' Lives
by JOHN OF SALISBURY

John of Salisbury (d. 1180), a scholar, author and diplomat, was numbered among the *eruditi*, the learned clerks in service to Theobald and to Thomas Becket, successive archbishops of Canterbury. Indeed, John was a member of Becket's household and present in the cathedral when the archbishop's infamous murder occurred, albeit from a rather ignominious position, concealed in the shadows of the darkening church. Within two years of that fateful event, John composed a brief *Life* of his friend, the martyr. This would be his second biography of a saint. The first was written at the behest of Archbishop Thomas Becket early in 1163 for inclusion in the dossier presented to Pope Alexander III at the Council of Tours petitioning the pope to canonize Anselm (1033–1109), a former archbishop of Canterbury. Although neither of these biographies has secured the universal acclaim that modern scholars have bestowed on John of Salisbury's other writings, both certainly warrant scholarly attention.

This translation of the *Lives of Anselm and Becket* finally makes available in English all the known writings of John of Salisbury. These two works are his only contributions to the genres of biography and hagiography. In them we see how this notable Christian humanist employed his considerable rhetorical skills to create lasting literary memorials to figures of great importance in English ecclesiastical history. His profound concern for the freedom of the Church, his loathing of tyrants and tyrannical behavior, his affection for the classics and Sacred Scripture, are themes woven into his accounts of the lives and activities of two archbishops of Canterbury who endured indignity and exile for the sake of Church liberty. One authored renowned treatises in philosophy and theology; the other suffered a cruel martyrdom and secured undying fame. Both are canonized saints.

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