Thomas Becket may be one of the most controversial Christian martyrs. Though accepted as a worthy martyr, most notably by Geoffery Chaucer in his renowned *Canterbury Tales,* Becket received more than his fair share of the blame for a controversy that split the politics of England in two. Though his conflict with the King provoked questions of the quantity of political power that belonged to the church, Becket never overstepped authority that, at the time, was allocated to his position.

When Becket’s firm resolve to use his authority for God’s glory and not necessarily for betterment of political position conflicted with the king’s desire for him to use his powers as archbishop for political maneuvers, he was exiled after a disastrous council. Years later, the king called him back, but as Thomas settled back into his position as archbishop, his actions, though loyal to God, upset the king. He was cruelly murdered in his own church at Canterbury by over-zealous knights of the king.

The account of Becket’s martyrdom is clear. Over seven eyewitnesses wrote narratives over his death, and all agree on the story. Becket was killed without a fight in the church as monks fled the scene, and his body was cruelly mutilated. There is no confusion of his stance, for he upheld the laws of the church and all agree that he was loyal to his office.

Although his dispute with the king was controversial, most of his biographers concur on Becket’s undying devotion to the Lord. He submitted to the king in all save what was not to the glory of God. His biographers agree on his role as archbishop – he never overstepped that role, but fulfilled it completely, guarding and holding onto the authority of the church, and using that authority to remove evil from the land.

Ultimately, Becket was loyal to both his earthly king and his heavenly King. He faithfully served the church by pronouncing judgment on evildoers who were in office solely because of royal “fiefs” or favors, yet he humbly submitted to the king in all matters that did not conflict with God’s Word. He did not fear death, but submitted to the trials that God laid before him. Thomas Becket was a living example of virtue, as his behavior in conflict, as archbishop, and through death demonstrated.

Becket was caught between an aristocratic political shift and a hierarchical religious power system that placed tradition over practicality. By trusting in God rather than new pragmatic systems or traditional ideals, Becket maneuvered his power for the glory of God. Since he is such a prime example of a man who placed God first, any account of his life and death is well worth reading.

Since Becket conducted himself so admirably, we ought to praise his life and the accounts of it, as well as those men who so painstakingly write out the narratives of men who truly are saints.