



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2C (A-level)
Question 02 Student 1
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

Specimen answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 2C (A-level): Specimen question paper

02 How far was the spread of Lutheranism in the years to 1531 due to Luther himself?

[25 marks]

Student response

Most successful movements have a charismatic figurehead and Lutheranism was no exception. Although frequently dressed in humble Augustinian monks' clothing, Luther was a prolific writer, powerful orator and astute leader. These qualities may have been inadequate if the message was unwelcome but to many in the German states – from peasants to princes – the new faith offered a genuine religious alternative to the corrupted Church of Roman Catholicism, with which they were disillusioned, and a chance to understand the word of God in the vernacular. Most certainly, Luther was assisted in his role, both overtly, with help from supporters and the German princes, and unintentionally, by the absence of Charles V, yet, it was due to his zealous drive that Lutheranism spread so quickly in the years to 1531.

Luther was an accomplished academic writer. He produced pamphlets, wrote sermons and defined the new faith in his many publications, but it was outside factors that assisted the spread of these works. Without the great advances the sixteenth century saw in printing, Luther's ideas would not have spread so rapidly. Two hundred thousand copies of the vernacular bible sold in twelve years, showing that Luther was astute in exploiting the printing press and the capability of them to produce material at speed. In addition to printing, Luther used the popularity of woodcuts to reach the illiterate, as they made simple points visually which the uneducated could understand, and music and plays, which were easy to circulate and showed he wanted the new faith to be embraced from all parts of society. Luther wrote over twenty hymns and this emphasises his high level of production in all areas of communication with his followers and also, his ability to utilise as many methods as were available to him, from the modern printing press to the traditional one of preaching.

Frederick the Wise provided Luther with a place of sanctuary to write. It was due to Luther's message resonating with some of the German princes, for religious and nationalistic reasons, that Frederick the Wise offered Luther a safe place and time to write following the Edict of Worms, 1521. During his incarceration, Luther produced the bible in German, as well as other influential religious texts. It could be argued that the German princes did not support Luther due to his religious ideas or charismatic appeal but for their own nationalistic and political reasons. The Church owned thirty percent of lands and had influence over the local peasantry. Many princes resented the Italian papacy's influence in the German states, especially in matters of taxation, and Luther's teachings would reduce the power of both Church and papacy, meaning authority and money could pass from church to secular hands. Therefore, it could be argued that it was the economic and political benefits from supporting protestant teaching, not Luther himself, that appealed to the German princes and was the reason for their support of the new faith. However, Luther's insistence that the movement be directed from above, not from below, is a factor why the princes supported it and therefore its success can be partly attributed to Luther's foresight in presenting the movement in this way.

When the movement started to take on revolutionary zeal in 1520-25, Luther realised it needed guiding from above from people such as princes, preachers and city magistrates. He realised that he needed to control the movement in order to avoid it adopting too political a stance which would lead to its downfall. Under the influence of Karlstadt, the message of Lutheranism had become uncoordinated and radical. Luther realised it required a balanced and conservative approach in order to move forward so took control of the Reformation, as is shown in March 1522 by his deliverance of eight sermons in as many days. By wearing his monks' robes and speaking simply and calmly, these Invocavit sermons resumed control from Karlstadt and showed the reform movement to be respectable. It is due to Luther's abilities that he was able to identify the problem of the movement getting out of control and find a solution. Yet, other Protestant reformers contributed to the spread of the new faith. Philip Melancthon was influential, writing material such as *Loci Communes*, drawing up the Confession of Augsburg, as a statement of Lutheran faith, and whilst Luther was in Wartburg castle 1521-1522, trying to control the influence of Karlstadt. So, like Frederick the Wise, Melancthon was a key player in the spread of Lutheranism, although they offered support to Luther rather than were leaders themselves.

The absence of Charles V between 1521-1529 contributed to the successful spreading of the Lutheran faith. The Holy Roman Emperor could have used force to stop the movement and to have killed Luther but he was focused on problems in other parts of his empire, such as Spain. Needing the support of the German princes for his wars in France and Turkey meant that Charles V could not put down Lutheranism heavily. Lack of money, outstanding debts and fears of disunity in the empire also prevented him from attacking. However, it is his physical absence that allowed the new faith to become established and popular amongst the princes. This factor is not dependent on Luther himself but it could be argued that the movement would not have become so established by Charles V's return in 1529 if it had not been due to Luther's ability to garnish princely support or produce and distribute so many publications. Had the movement been less established in 1529, it would have been easier to crush. Because the Reformation became so widespread – socially, geographically and religiously – it became impossible to turn back when Charles V returned.

In conclusion, Lutheranism spread in the years to 1531 due to a number of factors but they can be summarised as the qualities of Luther himself and the ripe situation around him. Luther's personal qualities attracted many followers and his astuteness meant he could exploit situations. In this way, he cultivated support from the German princes, steering the movement away from radicalism to encourage them and utilised a range of methods to communicate with followers: preaching, printing, music and woodcuts. Outside factors, such as Charles V's absence and general discontent with the established Church encouraged support but without Luther's direction, I believe that these would have been pockets of change in national politics and religious practices rather than a systematic reformation of the whole faith.

Commentary – Level 4

The answer consistently attempts to assess the reasons for the development of Lutheranism showing a clear awareness of a range of appropriate factors. The introduction clearly sets out the argument to be advanced which is then developed in the answer. There are some weaknesses in the response. The spiritual appeal of Lutheranism needs further explanation, other than seeing it just as a reaction to the corrupt Catholic Church and the tensions within the new faith need to be explored. Overall, therefore, given some lack of development, this is a good Level 4 answer.