



History

Paper 1A (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 02 Student 2

Specimen Answer and Commentary

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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 1A (AS): Specimen question paper

02 'The crisis of the Byzantine Empire was the main reason for the First Crusade.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

[25 marks]

Student response

The first Crusade was the first of the many Christian expeditions to the East in order to regain land from the Muslims and create states of their own. The crusade began with the letter from the Byzantine Emperor (Alexius Comnenus) in early 1095 and ended with the capture of Jerusalem from the Muslims in 1098/9. Although, the main reason why the crusade started was because of Urban II's speech at Clermont (1095) there were other reasons which led to it as well.

First and foremost, the crisis of the Byzantine Empire was one of the main reasons for the crusade as without the plea of help from the Byzantine Emperor Alexius, the speech at Clermont would not have taken place and the first Crusade would have not begun. This is because the emperor's letter highlighted the struggles the Byzantine Empire was facing, the disaster and after effects of the battle of Manzikert and how the Muslims (Seljuk Turks) were overtaking Christian influence/power in the East. This therefore led to the Pope Urban II making his speech at Clermont thus leading to the start of the first Crusade

Additionally, the Byzantines always requested help from the West because Pope Gregory VII would aid them in any crises that the Byzantine Empire faced. Therefore, the crisis of the Byzantine Empire was one of the main reasons for the first crusade as Pope Urban II followed in Pope Gregory VII's footsteps and as a result could not decline Alexus' plea for help and the first crusade began.

Moreover, the importance of the Byzantine Crisis for the reasons the Crusade began is reinforced through the idea that Christians in the East were suffering. The fact that the Christians were being overtaken by the Muslims or 'pagans' angered Christians in the West as they had this new found desire to "protect their fellow brothers in the East". This shows that the crisis of the Byzantine Empire triggered the beginning of the first Crusade as the Crusaders went because they wanted to kill the 'pagans'. This idea can be linked to that of sanctified violence as the crusaders through that killing the Muslims would not be a sin as they were the "enemies of thy Lord".

In contrast to this, another main reason why the first Crusade started was because of Papal authority. Pope Urban II thought that he was being challenged by the anti-pope and the German emperor so therefore wanted to increase Papal power and authority by calling for the Crusades. This would not only show Papal authority in the West but would also reach the East which is just what he wanted. Therefore, one can contend that the main reason the first crusade started was not because of the Byzantine crisis but rather for an increase in Papal authority.

Furthermore, another reason as to why the first crusade started was because Pope Urban II wanted to unite all of the Christians as there had currently been issues and schisms in the West. Urban II used the idea of the Crusades as an advantage and this can be linked to the idea of Papal authority as one united Christian religion would increase Papal power.

Alternatively, the reason for the first crusade could have been due to the divisions of the Islamic world. This is because the crusaders thought that the divisions of the Muslims (Sunni+Shi'ite) would make it easier to regain territory from the Muslims and therefore the first Crusade began. This would also allow the Christians to regain and liberate Jerusalem so that it could be controlled by the Christians rather than the Muslims. This is shown through an account by a historian which explained that the first Crusade started because of "ideas surrounding the liberation of Jerusalem" from the Muslims.

Lastly, another reason for the beginning of the first crusade could have been due to religion. This is because religion played a vital role within the daily lives of the people in the Middle Ages and the "promise of indulgence" led to many crusaders venturing east in order to gain an "immediate remission" of sins. Religion can also be linked to the idea of liberating Jerusalem as it was a sacred and Holy place to the Christians.

To conclude, I think that religion was the main reason for the first Crusade as Jerusalem played an important role in Christianity and so the threat of the Muslims destroying it motivated them to embark on the Crusading journey.

Commentary – Level 3

The answer attempts to provide a range of reasons for the Crusade, but lacks development of key points and clear and accurate supporting detail. There is a tendency to assert points rather than to develop and support them. It is also not fully clear which of the various reasons was the most important, or, indeed, whether there is a 'hierarchy' of importance that might be developed. It is a solid Level 3 answer.