



History

Paper 2A (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

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 2A (AS): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining why Henry II quarrelled with Thomas Becket?

[25 marks]

Student response

Henry II originally put Thomas Becket into the position of Archbishop of Canterbury, a very influential position in Christendom, the likely reason Henry did this, was to get someone who he trusted into the influential position, so that he would have more control over the Church. Something previous kings and later kings struggle with. Source A, in my opinion is more valuable in explaining why Henry II quarrelled with Thomas Becket. This is because William of Newburgh's spent his life in the north, away from the problem, so he's more detached than Herbert of Bosham, who worked with Thomas Becket. William of Newburgh's also states directly why the king wanted to be able to trail the clerks, and the response of Thomas Becket.

William of Newburgh's, the author of source A, was in the north of England his entire life, whereas the crisis was happening in the south of England. This could mean his perspective is greater, as it is possible he never knew the king or Thomas Becket, meaning he prefers neither. But this also makes his source questionable, as he wasn't there at the time in person to witness anything, it's likely he only knew by word of mouth or by letter. Herbert of Bosham however was in the same household as Becket, making it likely he knew Becket on a personal level to a degree, affecting his perspective of the situation, it was also written in 1160, Becket was still alive and against Henry at this point, meaning its likely Herbert's writing shows Becket as right.

'Rape, theft and murder were often committed by clerks, who could not be prosecuted by secular courts', this directly addresses the main problem, the fact that Henry II wanted to be able to trail criminous clerks. Henry believing this was one of his royal rights, while the church believed only God could trail them. This statement also suggests that William of Newburgh's is slightly prejudice to the clerks, and tilts more to the side of Henry II, suggesting the purpose of his book is to slightly glorify or to be positive about Henry who had died about a year before. This can make the source slightly unreliable, but what he says happens, does in fact happen. 'The king was very angry because he had raised the Archbishop to his position through his personal patronage and friendship.' – We know that the Archbishop did decline Henry's proposal at the Council of Clarendon in 1164, though William was not there, it is fair to assume Henry was in fact furious at the outcome of Clarendon.

Herbert of Bosham portrays Henry as stubborn and as hateful, suggesting that he is most definitely on the side of Becket, though what he has written about the events are valuable. "The king uncompromisingly demanded of the bishops that clerks convicted of crimes should not receive the protection of the church but be handed over to his officers." Though it is clearly written in negative light of Henry, this still tells us Henry's aims at the Council of Westminster, his account also gives some insight into what may have been Henry's logic behind trailing clerks, "He insisted that those found guilty should be deprived of their orders as, since their holy vows obviously no deterrent, then they would not be concerned if they lost them." Then goes on to write, "The Archbishop pleaded for

the rights of the clergy under canon law but they angry king demanded that the bishops obey his royal customs.” This statement is very useful, it gives us both the argument of Becket “canon law” and the argument of Henry “royal customs” showing us a direct clash in opinion between two stubborn people.

In conclusion I believe both source A and source B are valuable and useful. But overall Source A is a little more useful at showing us why the conflict escalated. Due to disagreement over criminal clerks, and what directly started this quarrel, the archbishop not doing what Henry expected him to do.

Commentary – Level 3

There is useful and generally valid comment on the reliability of the two sources in relation to their provenance, but this, essentially, is the only strength of the answer. Thereafter, the response tends more to a summary of what is said in the sources with only indirect and undeveloped deployment knowledge of the context to assess the value of what is said. The contrast between the sources is understood, but the answer is too thin the deployment of knowledge of context. It is a Level 3 response.