



History

Paper 2A (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 2

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 26/02/16

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

Both sources are valuable as evidence for understanding the dispute of criminous clerks, but it is A's objective writing style that makes it more valuable than B.

In terms of provenance, source B can be said to be solid at first glance. Being written during and with Bosham present at the events of this particular dispute, it would make sense to assume that the information presented is accurate and the author has first-hand knowledge of the dispute and the conflicting ideals of both parties. This makes it particularly reliable as a source as when weighing up the arguments of both Henry and Becket, the source is more likely to offer a view taking into account both the desire to keep church matters private from Becket and the fear of losing control of 20% of his own people in Henry's kingdom from his perspective. Furthermore, Bosham was a close friend of Becket and was with him when he was in exile after the Council of Westminster. This means that Bosham can offer a very personal insight into the mind of Becket and give a clear idea of his viewpoint and therefore when analysing the dispute, we can draw a lot of detail regarding Becket's feelings towards the King and the situation as a whole at this time. Source A can also be seen as quite a strong source. William of Newburgh was a canon in the Church, and due to the dispute being very close to the Church and it is arguable that it was a formative event in the Church's history, the author is likely to have an intimate knowledge of the events, despite not being there, and is therefore a strong reference for the events of the Council of Westminster.

Source A's provenance is also quite weak as it can be argued that being written long after the events, and so far away from London, the exact details of the dispute and what was said exactly at the council are likely to be made up or exaggerated from already existing sources by William. This is also possible due to its medieval origins, a time when historical writings were more for moral lessons on Christianity and personal holiness rather than being factually accurate when discussing what happened and why.

This also ties in to a flaw in both sources of them being biased by one source of interference or another. Source A is written by a clergyman after Becket's death and importantly after his canonisation as a saint in 1173 making it likely to be written from the perspective of a man who will have a view of Becket influenced by his legacy rather than his character. Source B is also potentially disrupted in its accuracy by the writer being a close friend of Becket's thus meaning that his potential for having first-hand experience of Becket's character is made creditable by his prejudice in favour of Becket's case, likely sharing his views during this crisis.

Bosham is also likely to be prejudiced in this case as he is clerk himself. The treatment of criminous clerks would probably differ in the ecclesiastical courts compared to the king's court, and therefore he would have an opinion on the matter depending on which court system he would prefer to be judged

in. This means that with this personal conflict surrounding the issue, his perspective on the dispute is likely to be warped in either the King's or Becket's favour.

The provenance of both sources has its strengths and weaknesses, but although B is in theory a first-hand account of what happened, Bosham's personal relationship with Becket is likely to distort the overall message and thus factual accuracy of the source. Despite being written far away from the events both chronologically and geographically, this is able to provide a more objective view on the matter at hand and outweighs possible distortion by the author's position in the Church after Becket's canonisation

The content of source A is very strong in many ways, firstly in that it directly mentions the kinds of crimes that crimmous clerks were often charged with, 'Rape, theft and murder'. This provides evidence for why Henry was so protective of the punishment of crimmous clerks, as such serious crimes would need to be punished heavily, and as part of his coronation vows were to maintain justice in his judgements. A king unable to punish those who disobey his laws is a king that is warrants less passionate following, and is more vulnerable to being usurped, losing his position. Therefore he is more likely to fight for the right to judge the clerks under his own control, and adds reason to his side of the debate.

A also has a much more analytical and fairly impartial language, not attacking Becket for disagreeing ('the Archbishop of Canterbury refused') or Henry for fighting for what could be argued as out of date regalian rights ('The King was deeply distressed that the bishops paid more attention to defending the privileges of the clergy than to correcting their vices'). In this regard it shows no prejudice against either side of the argument, making the source more reliable when discussing why the dispute erupted rather than who was right or wrong, making it valuable as a source.

Source B has a strength in that it uses some of the specific reasoning Becket had for his side of the argument, providing a deeper idea of why the dispute arose and why each side so fiercely defended their corners.

Source B's content also is strong as it discusses Becket's reasons for disputing the Constitutions of Clarendon, specifically how 'The Archbishop pleaded for the rights of the clergy under canon law', which was a strong basis for the entire dispute. The king, wanting to keep his ancient Regalian Rights intact was, in the eyes of the clergy, going over the head of the Church and disrespecting God's representatives on Earth, hence why the clergy initially opposed Henry in his attempts to judge clerks in his own courts. Bosham presenting this accurate argument, therefore, makes the source quite reliable in its factual accuracy.

Source A has weakness as well in its content, as although it has quite an impartial writing style when discussing the events of the Council itself, there are still moments where the tone of the source leans slightly towards Henry's side of the argument. An example of this in the source is when it says that Henry 'had raised the Archbishop to his position through his personal patronage and friendship'. Although it is true to claim that the two were very close friends and there could have been some bias in Henry appointing him as Archbishop as an Archbishop close to the king increases both their power, Becket was also Chancellor from 1155 to 1162 (when he was appointed Archbishop). Therefore it is wrong to imply that Becket was raised through the ranks wholly on the basis of 'patronage and friendship', as experience in positions of power would be a strongly desired qualification when choosing someone to be in a position so powerful. This statement also makes it seem as though Becket is completely in the wrong and that Henry only raised him to his position out of the good of his heart. It can be argued that the entire point of investing a person close to you as

Archbishop is a partially selfish act, as a closer Archbishop will be more likely to use their spiritual and political powers to make you stronger as king and a more powerful political figure. Therefore, arguing that brotherly love was the only reason to create Becket as bishop is a loose enough argument that it lowers the reliability of the source in discerning why Becket and Henry quarrelled.

Source B has weaknesses in its content also, most notably in its general tone and the way it is written, with subtle hints towards sympathy for Becket. Bosham implies repeatedly that Henry was particularly violent in these negotiations, acting 'uncompromisingly', such as when 'the angry King demanded that the bishops obey his royal customs'. This isn't a fair representation of how Henry acted during his various arguments with Becket, notably during the meetings between the two in 1169-70 when Becket acts stubborn enough to stymie all attempts to create a peace between the two. Therefore, an accusation on Henry that he didn't understand Thomas' perspective and didn't want to give concessions to him is an argument that makes the source less reliable in this context as it doesn't give a correct view on how either man acted during their numerous arguments, and therefore makes it harder to identify reasons why they quarrelled.

Overall, although both arguments have strengths in their provenances, the more impartial tone of A makes it more reliable as a source, despite William of Newburgh not being present during the Council, and source B's strong prejudice for Becket against Henry makes it less reliable as a source through which to understand the quarrelling nature of Becket and Henry II.

Commentary – Level 4

This is an effective response, with detailed and balanced consideration of the significance of the provenance of the two sources and how the differences influence judgement as to value and with some useful, if not fully developed, assessment of content. Further contextual detail would have strengthened the response and comments are somewhat speculative in places, but this is a good Level 4 answer.