



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2D (A-level)
Question 03 Student 2
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 2D (A-level): Specimen question paper

03 How important were concerns about religion in the rebellions of 1549?

[30 marks]

Student response

1549 was a year of rebellion, the Prayer Book Rebellion in Devon and Cornwall, Kett's Rebellion in East Anglia and the wider commotions which affected at least 25 counties. The rebellion in the South West has traditionally been seen as the result of the religious policies of the Edwardian government. The other disturbances have been seen either as the result of social and economic dislocation, or the result of Somerset's meddling. However, there was also social and economic discontent in Devon and Cornwall and Kett's rebellion began as a result of a riot over Wyndham Abbey on the feast day of St. Thomas Becket.

The demands of the western rebels were mainly concerned with religion and defended traditional doctrine and liturgy against the legislation introduced by Edward's government to dismantle Catholicism. An example of this would be the suspension of the Six Articles. The rebellion was a direct response to the introduction of the new prayer book in 1549. The rebels demanded that: the mass should be in Latin; that the sacrament given should be only the bread, not the wine and then only at Easter; there should be masses and prayers for the dead. A number of the leaders of the Western rebellion were clergy. One of them, Robert Welsh was hung from the steeple of his own church with his sacring bell round his neck. The government was keen to suggest the link between the rebellion and popery.

The role of religion in Kett's rebellion is less clear. Traditionally historians such as Mac Culloch have argued that the rebellion was, if anything protestant. However, Kett himself was sympathetic to the Catholic faith, particularly to monastic institutions. Beckett was seen as some-one who stood out against taxation, but he was also a martyr in the Catholic Church. There are few actual religious demands made by the rebels in East Anglia, except a request for clergy to be present in each parish to teach the laws of God. Yet, it is possible to see the attack on greed and exploitation for profit in both East Anglia and the wider commotions as a defence of the commonwealth – the protestant idea that all resources were God given for the benefit of everybody.

John Hales writing about the evils of enclosure used the argument about the commonwealth. The importance of enclosure to the rebellions in East Anglia and elsewhere has been stressed by historians. A large number of the disturbances were based on breaking down fences and hedges, blowing up rabbit warrens, to impress the concern of the commons against their exclusion from property to which they had traditionally had used. One of the demands of Kett's rebels was against the keeping of doves which would provide food for the wealthy but take corn from the poor.

There are concerns in the demands of the Western Rebels about social and economic concerns. The fact that the demands were written by the clergy means that they have not been

focused on so much. A major concern in the southwest was the tax on sheep introduced by Somerset's government. This was intended to provide money, but also to offset complaints about enclosure. The rebels in the south west were also concerned about the number of servants people kept.

The whole of England was experiencing economic and financial problems. The result of the dissolution of the monasteries was the growth of a profit economy based on using land to create wealth. The fact that the commons could not use the land was made worse by the taxes imposed to pay for the war and the debasement of the coinage which had affected the value of earnings – for those fortunate enough to have a job. All of this was made worse by Somerset's policies and his misguided attempt to negotiate with the rebels.

The rebellions in 1549 had many causes. These were political, social, economic and religious. The rebellions were also due to local issues and particular people. Religion was important, because religion was important to all people in the middle of the sixteenth century. The religiously conservative in the south west wanted to defend their beliefs. For many elsewhere, their view of what was Christian did not include the rich getting richer at the expense of the poor. In the sixteenth century, society, politics and the economy were all seen in through religion.

Commentary - level 4

The answer examines clearly the religious motivation of the rebellion in the South West and the extent to which similar influences were at work in Ket's rebellion. It also considers the role and influence of other factors in the rebellions. It thus has range, relevance and analysis, although the possible importance of geographical location is not brought out and there is some lack of development of key points, especially of the nature of the Edwardian changes which are said to have precipitated the revolt. It is a Level 4 answer.