



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2E (A-level)
Question 02 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 2E (A-level): Specimen question paper

02 'Religion was the main reason for conflict between Crown and Parliament in the years 1625 to 1629.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Student response

There were several reasons why the relationship between Crown and Parliament became strained and led to conflict between them. However, religion should not be considered as the main reason; rather, Charles I's own belief in royal prerogative and his 'divine right' as king was likely the biggest cause for conflict.

Whilst not the main reason, religion was undoubtedly partially responsible for the breakdown in relations between Crown and Parliament. There were two main parts as to why religion was an issue: Charles' wife, Henrietta Maria, continuing to practise Catholicism, and Charles himself promoting and advancing Arminianism. Since his first parliament in 1625, religion remained a constant threat to Parliament. There was distrust towards his wife due to her suspected influence on him, and consequently, a lack of trust towards Charles himself. MPs were particularly worried by the rise of Arminianism – so much so, that the puritan MP John Pym launched an attack against a publication ('A New Gag for an Old Goose', by Richard Montagu) promoting Arminianism in the 1625 parliament. However, as this resulted in Charles antagonising Parliament by taking the cleric under his wing, it is safe to say that this strained the relationship. Furthermore, by the next parliament in 1626, the Duke of Buckingham proceeded to add fuel to the fire during the York House Conference; his public support for Arminianism prompted Charles to appoint Arminian cleric William Laud as one of his advisors, angering the MPs who opposed it. Only increasing the tension, since Charles had prematurely dismissed the 1626 parliament immediately prior to this, this led to another issue creating conflict, arguably more significant than religion: taxation.

The issue of taxation certainly played a significant role in the conflict between Crown and Parliament. Firstly, Charles was angered and offended by Parliament's vote to allow him tonnage and poundage for only a year, creating tension from the start. Following the early dismissal of parliament in 1626, also resulted in the introduction of the widely unpopular Forced Loan. The conflict created from this action by Charles was due to the widespread unpopularity of the allegedly voluntary tax, as well as the imprisonment of those who refused to pay it. Relations between Crown and Parliament were further aggravated by the public defiance of the king by the 'five knights', who opposed the forced loans, as whilst Charles and his government attempted to eliminate the resistance, parliament seemed to support it (shown by how they applauded the 'five knights'). Whilst the loans ended up being successful, Charles' disappointment towards the reluctance to pay was evident. Due to the large-scale resistance being labelled as the first outbreak of disobedience across the nation since the sixteenth century, this particularly contributed to the growing polarisation between Crown and Parliament.

Not only did taxation cause strain, it also had a great impact on the success of the nation's foreign policy which, in turn, also caused internal conflict.

Foreign policy was a sensitive topic, and though it wasn't the biggest reason for conflict between Crown and Parliament, it definitely contributed to the tension. Arguably, foreign policy was even more significant than taxation, as without it, taxation wouldn't have been a problem. However, the inadequate funding from Parliament is part of the reason why foreign policy helped to deteriorate relations between Crown and Parliament. The humiliation at the 1625 Cadiz expedition and the 1627 La Rochelle expedition had an immediate and disastrous impact on the morale of the political nation. When compared to the famous successes of previous Elizabethan commanders (like Drake with the Spanish Armada), it was an acute embarrassment for the Crown, and ultimately Charles had to accept full responsibility for the failures. These disasters outraged Parliament and drove a large wedge between them. By the time Charles called the third parliament in 1628, the seething MPs only granted him more funding (five subsidies) on the condition that he sign the Petition of Right, which he did so, albeit reluctantly. Furthermore, Parliament allocated much of the blame for the military failures at the hands of the Duke of Buckingham (who had elected himself as admiral of the fleet), and so they quickly began to attempt impeachment proceedings against him. However, this only exacerbated the situation with Charles. Therefore, not only did foreign policy cause conflict due to military failures, but it also aggravated the MPs attitude towards the Duke of Buckingham, consequently upsetting Charles.

A degree of culpability should certainly be placed on the shoulders of the Duke of Buckingham; his close relationship and influence on Charles created a rift between Crown and Parliament. Buckingham was detested because he had dominated the royal family (first with James, and then by latching onto Charles), he monopolised all power at court, and he had corruptly acquired a vast personal fortune. There can be no doubt that his constant presence at the centre of government after 1625 contributed greatly to the polarisation between Charles and the Commons. Due to his large role in organising the Cadiz expedition, and being personal commander of the La Rochelle fleet, he was universally blamed for the foreign policy failures. Parliament was deeply distressed by how much power Buckingham had, both politically and his influence of the king. The fierce hatred towards him therefore drove Parliament to seek to impeach Buckingham for all of his wrongdoing – however, Charles refused to entertain their desires and continued to protect him, ultimately leading to Buckingham's assassination (Parliament were not involved with this). Yet, as relations between Crown and Parliament were still fragile following this event (if not more so), this proves that the Duke of Buckingham was not the main reason for it.

It can definitely be argued that Parliament were to blame for their conflict with the Crown, and to an extent, rightly so. Their belief in parliamentary privilege challenged the fundamental beliefs of the Crown – that being the 'divine right' of monarchs. The original raison d'être of parliament was to grant the king money, through taxation. Their first act of defiance was deciding to allow Charles access to tonnage and poundage for only a year. This, expectedly, angered the king, and thus began the issues of taxation. By 1628, they were much more defiant towards the idea of royal prerogative, and believed they should have more power – this led to the Petition of Right document, which they forced Charles to sign in exchange for granting him money. However, after Charles continued to promote Arminianism (Parliament demanded low-church Calvinist values) and divine right, their relationship crumbled further. It certainly did not help when they were demanding the impeachment of Buckingham. The relationship abruptly, and

finally, collapsed in 1629, following Sir John Eliot's '3 Resolutions' and Charles angrily dissolving parliament for the final time, thus marking the start to his 'Personal Rule'. Therefore, Parliament's growing defiance over the years certainly contributed to the breakdown in relations.

Finally, Charles himself made his own personal, and the most significant, contribution to the emergence and progression of conflict between Crown and Parliament. This was achieved through his unwillingness to question his own wisdom or blame himself, due to his beliefs in royal prerogative and 'divine right'. He had an obsession with absolute loyalty, and so he reacted very badly to any signs of opposition – these insecurities resulted in alienation from his subjects. Association with the Duke of Buckingham only further damaged his standing, particularly with his steadfast refusal to dismiss him. Charles had constantly angered and antagonised Parliament from the start; he always ignored their concerns, he promoted Arminianism, and he allowed the government to be corrupted. Between 1625 and 1628, therefore, a vicious political circle was in place: as his government was attacked, Charles clung tighter to his beliefs and to Buckingham, and so the resultant opposition against him only grew. All of his mistakes did much to shatter the relationship with Parliament, and his refusal to pay attention to the pleas and demands for change only exacerbated the situation. By 1629, a wide chasm had opened up. Without a doubt, Charles' stubborn personality and his unwavering beliefs about 'divine right' and royal prerogative was the key factor which was responsible for the conflict.

To conclude, Charles himself was the main reason for conflict between Crown and Parliament in the years 1625-1629, rather than religion. In the end, each issue that played a part can be traced back to Charles. Certainly, he doesn't deserve all of the blame, but his involvement was undoubtedly the most significant.

Commentary – Level 4

The answer has considerable range, reviewing several causes of the conflict in the period. It substantiates its analysis by well-selected deployment of evidence and has a clear conclusion, as set out in the introduction. Its major weakness is that the treatment of the importance of religion lacks some development and perspective: there is very little about, for example, the extent to which Parliament might be considered as being influenced by Puritan views or whether its position was to maintain the Jacobean compromise of the Church of England. As such, this is a Level 4 response.