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# A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2D: Religious Conflict and the Church in England, c1529-1570  
Report on the Examination

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## General comments

Nearly 800 students completed the examination, a pleasing increase which was in line with the growing numbers choosing A-Level History.

Responses to the questions on this year's paper ranged from the convincingly argued, thoughtful and conceptually aware to the generalised and irrelevant. Overall, students coped marginally better with the essays than the source-based question, not least because a choice of questions enabled them to select the topics they knew best. They were thus able to demonstrate their knowledge, even when they found it difficult to construct coherent arguments that explicitly focused on the question. Nevertheless, it can never be stressed enough that success in History at A-level depends on the students' ability not only to digest the historical content of the component, but also to deploy that knowledge in response to questions designed to test their analytical skills and elicit individual judgement.

Both Sections A and B were marked according to the respective generic mark schemes. These offer a range of five levels of attainment, which are carefully graded to assess a combination of understanding and knowledge. Adjustments to the marks within these levels were made according to how well the student's work matched the level requirements. There was little difference seen in the quality of the responses to different areas of the specification content; to this extent, the questions proved effective at differentiating between students.

## Question 1

The compulsory source-based question focused on the power of bishops and archbishops in c.1529. This question requires students to assess three primary sources, analysing their provenance, tone, content and argument, demonstrating contextual awareness in the process, and ultimately reaching a judgement as to their value for the particular purpose in the question.

It is worth reminding centres that these key features do not have to be treated equally in terms of the weight of response. For instance, it is perfectly acceptable that tone (linked to value) is dealt with in one sentence, should this be appropriate in relation to the characteristics of the source. Some answers were too mechanical in style, summarising the source's nature, audience, origin, purpose, tone, content and argument (and other such features) formulaically and without real feeling for the source or its context. Similarly disappointing was the way in which a significant number of students approached provenance, offering largely generic comments that would be true of any source at any time and which showed little contextual awareness. Another issue that reappeared this year was that some students are still overly concerned with the trustworthiness, reliability and the accuracy of the source rather than its value allied to the question.

Nevertheless, there was evidence of a more focused approach to the primary sources than in previous years, even if a lack of contextual background on the position of bishops in the pre-Reformation Church made it difficult for some students to offer a balanced assessment of the sources. Students generally understood the need to consider both the provenance and the content of the source. The more successful answers demonstrated that these two elements need to be assessed in an integrated approach rather than separately.

## Source A

Source A's strength as a source derives from its multiple uses to a historian. The Bishop of Hereford's oath to Henry VIII is a valuable insight to the power relationship between bishops and

their temporal overlord, the king. Its references to ‘your business’, ‘your commandments’ and ‘the earthly possessions which I hold for your grace’ all indicate the different ways in which bishops exercised power in the realm on behalf of the king. The fact that Henry enforced such an oath is evidence of the importance to him of ensuring bishops’ loyalty, which also shows how important they were in their own right.

For all this, many students struggled to glean much value from this source. The bishop’s bland reassurances offered few of the hooks on which students like to hang their analysis. Those with a binary understanding of relations between Crown and Church during Henry’s reign also encountered difficulty. The simplistic idea that before the break with Rome all bishops were loyal to the pope, whereas after the Submission of the Clergy they transferred their adherence to the king, led some students to question the source’s reliability. In fact, the source offers valuable evidence that, long before he assumed total control of the Church, Henry expected the senior clergy to obey him. The most effective answers were able to put this into context, referring to long-standing tensions in medieval Christendom such as the investiture contest. Finally, far too many were also guilty of taking the source at face value. Just because the source is an oath sworn before ‘God and the Holy Gospels’ does not mean that it should be swallowed whole. After all, the Bishop of Hereford had much to gain from appearing loyal to the king. That bishops were not unquestioningly faithful was understood by more perceptive students, who used their contextual awareness – referring, for example, to Bishop Fisher’s brave opposition to Henry’s actions in the 1530s – to challenge the source’s value as a guide to bishops’ power in pre-Reformation England.

### **Source B**

Source B was handled more confidently. Many students demonstrated familiarity with Simon Fish’s ‘Supplication for the Beggars’, the radical pamphlet from which this extract comes. Although a few students were ignorant as to Fish’s status, incorrectly identifying him as a bishop (perhaps confusing him with John Fisher) or a member of the gentry, most knew that he was a radical reformer whose work was presented to the king by Anne Boleyn.

Fish’s excoriation of the bishops, their ‘control’ of legislation and their immunity from prosecution in the King’s courts is valuable not only in identifying the ways in which bishops exerted power c.1529, but also gives the reader insight into how the exercise of such overweening power was viewed. The appeal to Henry VIII to bring these over-mighty subjects to heel was contextualised by students who showed their knowledge of the rising tide of anticlericalism. There were numerous references to the activity of the Reformation Parliament. The ‘Supplication’ was also usefully compared with other arguments for royal supremacy, such as Tyndale’s ‘The Obedience of a Christian Man’.

The most effective answers were those that provided a balanced evaluation of the source. Although Fish’s testimony is valuable, it represents a minority opinion. Students who showed awareness of the source’s hyperbolic tone were rewarded. Fish’s suggestion that bishops held more power in parliament than the king should have been recognised as an exaggeration.

### **Source C**

Source C contains a list of accusations levelled against Cardinal Wolsey by anticlerical MPs in 1529. Observant students recognised the source’s context: Henry, unhappy at Wolsey’s failure to solve his ‘great matter’, had called what subsequently became known as the Reformation Parliament. This emboldened MPs, who had long chafed at the power and pomposity of ‘this sorry cardinal’, to seek to condemn him by an act of attainder.

Students are clearly well taught about Wolsey and his many misdeeds. Every year, whenever there has been the opportunity to write about him, it has been eagerly grasped. This question, however, presented the problem of applying the particular to the general issue of the power of bishops and archbishops. Wolsey, as many – though certainly not all – students pointed out, was *sui generis*. A source focusing solely on him should have been identified as limited in value. Furthermore, tempting as it was to use this source as evidence of bishops' power, the fact that it tells us of Wolsey's downfall should have led students to a balanced judgement. The lack of such balance prevented many answers from accessing the higher levels.

### Question 2

This was the least popular question and the least successfully answered.

A common error was to confine analysis of social upheaval to the commotions of 1536, ie the Lincolnshire Rising and Pilgrimage of Grace. Some students even omitted the events in Lincolnshire, leading to answers that were extremely narrow in their focus. The question asked students to examine the extent to which the Dissolution of the Monasteries brought about social upheaval in the years 1536 to 1547. It was necessary, therefore, to demonstrate knowledge of the medium-term consequences of the Dissolution.

There were, thankfully, some thoughtful responses to this question. While these also explained the Dissolution's impact on the inhabitants of the North, their focus was broader, including its consequences for education, the economy and the social structure, and for the monks and nuns whose lives were turned upside down. To satisfy the requirements of Levels 4 and 5, analysis must also be balanced. While the Dissolution undoubtedly provoked upheaval in its early stages, it could be argued that its legacy was less transformative than it seemed in 1536. The Lincolnshire Rising was crushed; the Pilgrimage of Grace ended peacefully, and the decapitation of its leadership ensured that it would not be repeated; monastic schools and Oxbridge colleges were re-founded; many monks became cathedral canons and many monastic churches were transferred to parochial use.

### Question 3

This question required students to evaluate the extent to which the Church of England became Protestant in the years 1547 to 1553. It was the most popular essay option, probably because this is a discrete topic that is central to the short reign of Edward VI. It was also mostly well handled by students, who were able to demonstrate wide-ranging and precise knowledge of doctrinal and liturgical reforms. This is an in-depth paper, there is an expectation that students will have, and be able to demonstrate, conceptual understanding. Some answers simply described the reforms introduced by the First and Second Books of Common Prayer. Better were those which explained the theological significance of the Prayer Books' wording, for example that pertaining to the Eucharist.

Although it was reasonable to argue that the Edwardian regime was ultimately successful in creating a Protestant Church, some impressive responses identified its failure to enact the Forty-Two Articles and the *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* as evidence that Protestantism had not been truly implemented in England by the time of Edward's death. Many students also used evidence such as the Western Rebellion to argue that Protestantism had not been fully accepted by the populace. This point was underscored by the ease with which the Lady Mary overthrew the unfortunate Jane Grey in 1553; the alacrity with which she reversed the Edwardian reforms and

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restored England to the Catholic faith suggests that the English Church's Protestantism in 1553 was, at best, superficial.

#### **Question 4**

The final essay option offered the opportunity to discuss opposition to Mary I's attempt to restore Catholicism during her reign, and to assess whether there was 'widespread hostility' to her actions. Those who opted for this question were spoilt for choice, as Mary's project provoked hostility from a range of individuals and groups. These included the Marian exiles in Frankfurt, Geneva and elsewhere, whose overt opposition to Mary was most notably expressed in John Foxe's passionate propaganda. The willingness with which over 280 Protestants submitted to martyrdom was also well understood as evidence of hostility. Many students showed precise knowledge of Mary's parliaments, accurately characterising her first two parliaments as hostile to her plan to restore the monasteries. Fewer, though still a pleasing number, identified hostility as emanating from Rome, at least from 1555. The newly elected Pope Paul IV's antipathy to King Philip and Cardinal Pole hindered Mary's Counter-Reformation, not least in his refusal to invest new bishops.

Less effective answers struggled to include a sufficient range and depth of accurate factual content. While most students questioned the extent to which hostility was widespread, referring to the Queen's popularity, the Third Parliament's surrender to her will and so on, those students who accessed the upper levels of the mark scheme did so by providing detailed evidence, analysis and, crucially, evaluation. Some merely offered a general survey of the Marian persecutions, leaving their relevance to the question implicit. Such answers did not receive high marks.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.