

Examination 2013

The civilization of China - as everyone knows, is based upon the teaching of Confucius who flourished five hundred years before Christ. Like the Greeks and Romans, he did not think of human society as naturally progressive; on the contrary, he believed that in remote antiquity rulers had been wise and the people had been happy to a degree which the degenerate present could admire but hardly achieve. This, of course, was a delusion. But the practical result was the Confucian system, like other teachers of antiquity, aimed at creating a stable society, maintaining a certain level of excellence, but not always striving after new successes. In this he was more successful than any other man who ever lived. His personality has been stamped on Chinese Civilization from his day to our own. During his life time, the Chinese occupied only a small part of present-day China, and were divided into a number of warring states. During the next three hundred years they established themselves throughout what is now China proper, and founded an empire exceeding in territory and population any other that existed until the last fifty years. In spite of barbarian invasions, and occasional longer or shorter periods of Chaos and Civil War, the Confucian system survived bringing with it art and literature and a civilised way of life. A system which has had this extraordinary power of survival must have great merits, and certainly deserves our respect and consideration. It is not a religion, as we understand the word, because it is not associated with the super natural or with mystical beliefs. It is purely ethical system, but its ethics, unlike those of Christianity, are not too exalted for ordinary men to practise. In essence what Confucius teaches is something very like the old-fashioned ideal of a 'gentleman' as it existed in the eighteenth century. One of his sayings will illustrate this: 'The true gentleman is never contentious.....he courteously salutes his opponents before taking up his position so that even when competing he remains a true gentleman'.

Questions:

- (1) Why do you think the author calls Confucius' belief about the progress of human society as a delusion? (04)
- (2) How did Confucius' thought affect China to develop into a stable and 'Proper' China? (04)
- (3) Why does the author think that Confucian system deserves respect and admiration? (04)
- (4) Why does the author call Confucian system a purely ethical system and not a religion? (04)
- (5) Briefly argue whether you agree or disagree to Confucius' ideal of a gentleman.

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Ans 1 The author opines that Confucius' disbelief in natural progress of human society is a delusion. Confucius believed that ancient rulers and people were prudent and happy respectively than their contemporary counterparts.

Ans 2 Confucius' thoughts brought the warring states of China under one flag. It gave China the art, literature and a civilized nation. Consequently, China emerged as a proper, and stable nation.

Ans 3 The Confucian system enabled China to survive in the face of existential threats based on its inherent pros. Based on this, the author thinks that it deserves respect and admiration.

Ans 4 The Confucian system lacks the beliefs in meta-physical things and mysticism; therefore, it is not a religion. On the contrary, it is exclusively an ethical system.

Ans 5 Yes, I agree with Confucius' ideal of a gentleman. Indeed, a true gentleman is the one who is inclined

to peace than war. He
is gracious and polite even
in dealing with his opponents.