

READING COMPREHENSION – 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 that Confucius, 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 men who ever lived. His personality has been stamped on Chinese civilization from his day to our own. During his lifetime 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, Mongol and Manchu dynasties, and occasional longer or shorter periods of chaos and civil war, the Confucian system survived, bringing with it art and literature and a civilized way of life. A system which has had this extra ordinary 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 supernatural or with mystical beliefs. It is a purely ethical system, but its ethics, unlike those of Christianity, are not too exalted for ordinary men to practice. 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?
2. How did Confucius' thought affect China to develop into a stable and 'Proper' China?
3. Why does the author think that Confucian system deserves respect and admiration?
4. Why does the author call Confucian system a purely ethical system and not a religion?
5. Briefly argue whether you agree or disagree to Confucius' ideal of a gentleman?

~~Q1~~ Answer 1

The author declares Confucian belief as a delusion because he did not consider human society as naturally advanced rather Confucian was on the view that ancient rulers were intelligent and their followers were happy in any condition.

Answer 2

Confucius played an important role in development of China. He struggled for promotion and maintenance of society like ancient teachers. In addition, he gradually extended his reign. Like this, he occupied a major part of China and established a great empire that lasted for years.

Answer 3

Confucian system deserve respect and admiration because it enabled humans to live a good life and saved them from destruction and barbarism.

Answer 4

The author calls Confucian system a purely ethical system and not a religion because it was not linked with mystical beliefs. In addition, its ethics are not as high as Christianity.

Answer 5

Indeed Confucius's ideal of a gentleman is good because he has elaborated qualities of intellectuals in a better way.