

OXFORD COLLEGES' HISTORY APTITUDE TEST

5 November 2008

Answer **ALL** parts of **BOTH** questions. You have **TWO HOURS** for this test. We recommend that you read the entire paper before beginning to write your answers. Spend about a third of your time on reading, thinking and planning, and the rest of the time writing. Question One should take about twice as much time as Question Two.

If you find the texts difficult and unfamiliar, don't worry: the exercise is intended to be challenging, but we hope you will also find it thought-provoking. There is no 'right' answer to many of the questions: you will be judged on the intelligence of your case, how clearly you make it and how effectively you support it. You should use your own words in answering the questions.

Please do not turn over until you are asked to do so.

QUESTION ONE (70 marks)

This is an adapted extract from an essay about the relationship between political ideas and political action. It focuses on the example of the opposition led by the Tory peer, Viscount Bolingbroke, against the Whig Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, in early eighteenth-century England. Read through the extract and think about what it is trying to say. You do not need to know anything about the topic or the period to answer the questions below.

I have insisted that it does not follow from the fact that Bolingbroke's professions of principle were merely retrospective justifications for his actions that these principles ought to be by-passed when we come to explain his political behaviour. My aim has been to argue, on the contrary, that for at least two reasons it must be essential to refer to Bolingbroke's professed principle of patriotism, and to explain why he chose to profess it, in order to explain his actual courses of political action. First, I have sought to show that the range of actions which it was open to Bolingbroke and his party to perform in opposing Walpole's Ministry was limited to the range of actions for which they could hope to supply recognisable justifications, and was thus limited by the range of recognised political principles which they could plausibly hope to suggest as favourable descriptions (and thus as justifications) for their actions. Secondly, I have sought to show that the principle which Bolingbroke and his party actually chose to profess in this attempt to justify their behaviour then made it rational for them to act, and thus directed them to act, only in certain highly specific ways.

The general belief I have thus been concerned to isolate and criticise is the belief that it is only if an agent's¹ professed principles can be shown to have served as a motive for his actions that it is necessary to refer to those principles in order to explain the agent's actions. The agent's principles will also make a difference to his actions whenever he needs to be able to provide an explicit justification for them. This will make it necessary for the agent to limit and direct his behaviour in such a way as to make his actions compatible with the claim that they were motivated by an accepted principle and that they can thus be justified. This in turn means that such an agent's professed principles invariably need to be treated as causal conditions of his actions, even if the agent professes those principles in a wholly disingenuous² way. What I have thus been concerned to establish, by reference to the specific case of Bolingbroke versus Walpole, is the sense in which the explanation of political action essentially depends upon the study of political ideology – and thus with the way in which it is essential, and not optional, for any political historian to be a historian of political ideas.

¹ i.e. a person taking action (such as Bolingbroke, in this passage).

² i.e. dishonest, insincere.

(a) In not more than two or three sentences, describe the view that the author is arguing against. Use your own words as far as possible.

(10 marks)

(b) Summarise the argument of the extract, in your own words, as briefly as you can. Do not write more than fifteen lines.

(20 marks)

(c) 'It is essential, and not optional, for any political historian to be a historian of political ideas'. Write an essay of two or three sides discussing this statement in relation to a period or topic with which you are familiar. (Note that 'political ideas' may include any ideas which could be invoked in politics, including, for example, religious ideas, ideas about society, ideas about race and nationality etc.)

(40 marks)

PLEASE TURN OVER FOR QUESTION TWO

QUESTION TWO (30 marks)

The following extract from *The History of the Franks* was written by Gregory, bishop of Tours, and completed in 594 AD. The events he describes occurred about ninety years before he wrote. Tours was in the territory ruled by the successors of Clovis.

You are not expected to know anything about Clovis or the period. You must read carefully and critically, and use your skills of historical analysis to interpret the extract.

While Clovis¹ was in Paris, he sent secretly to Chloderic, the son of Sigibert², saying 'Your father is old. If he were to die, his kingdom would come to you of right and my alliance would come with it.' Chloderic was led astray by his lust for power and began to plot his father's death. He set assassins on him and had him murdered, so that he might gain possession of his kingdom. By the judgement of God, Chloderic fell into the same pit that he had dug for his father. He sent messengers to King Clovis to announce his father's death. 'My father is dead,' said he, 'and I have taken over his kingdom and his treasure. Send me your envoys and I will gladly hand over to you anything that you may care to select from this treasure.' 'I thank you for your good will,' answered Clovis. 'I ask you to show all your treasure to my messengers, but you may keep it ...' [The envoys came, saw the treasure and encouraged Chloderic to finger the gold in a chest] As he leaned forward to do this, one of the Franks raised his double-headed axe and split Chloderic's skull. This unworthy son thus shared the fate of his father. When Clovis heard that both were dead, he came to Cologne himself and ordered the inhabitants to assemble. 'Chloderic, the son of your King, my brother, was plotting against his father and putting it out that I wanted him killed. As Sigibert fled, Chloderic had him murdered. While Chloderic was showing his father's treasure, he in turn was killed by somebody or other. I take no responsibility for what has happened. It is not for me to shed the blood of one of my fellow kings, for that is a crime. But since things have turned out this way, you should turn to me and put yourselves under my protection.' The men of Cologne clashed their shields and shouted their approval; they raised Clovis on a shield and made him their ruler. Thus he took over both the kingship and the treasure and submitted Sigibert's people to his own rule. Day in day out God submitted the enemies of Clovis to his dominion and increased his power, for he walked before him with an upright heart and did what was pleasing in his sight.

What does this extract tell us about kingship among the Franks in the 6th century? (Write about one to two sides.)

(30 marks)

End of paper

¹ Clovis was King of one of the branches of the Frankish people, with his major base at Paris. The Franks were one of the Germanic peoples who entered and occupied what had been the Roman Empire. Clovis had recently converted to Christianity.

² Sigibert was King of the Rhineland Franks.