

World Religions

Buddhism Questions

(*The World's Religions* by Houston Smith)

Big Raft and Little (pp. 119-127)

1. What do religions invariably do?
2. What are the three questions that have always divided people?
3. What do “classicists” rank highest? What do they seek? What do “romantics” rank highest? What do they seek?
4. What contrast did the philosopher William James make?
5. What did both groups that resulted from the split in Buddhism call themselves? Why did they adopt the word “raft” to describe themselves?
6. What was the name for the group that believed all people should be involved in seeking enlightenment together?
7. What was the original name for the group that believed enlightenment was a full-time job? What did they change their name to? Why? What does the newer name mean?
8. From page 122 through page 125, Huston Smith presents six pairs of contrasts between the two groups. Read through this carefully and make notes on the differences.
9. Copy out the chart on p. 126, which summarizes the differences between the two sects of Buddhism, as a way of remembering them (this chart summarizes the reading from pp. 122-125 that you just did).
10. Define *bodhi* and *karuna* (p. 123).
11. List the Four Noble Virtues of Buddhism.
12. Define *Arhat* and *bodhisattva* (p. 124).
13. Read carefully the story of the four men (last full paragraph on p. 124).
14. Who was Asoka and why is he important in the history of India and Buddhism?
15. Define *sangha* (p. 127).
16. Which countries today are Theravadin? Which are Mahayanist?
17. What part of Buddhism did China reject? What part did it accept?

The Secret of the Flower [Zen] (pp. 128-135)

1. Which Buddhist tradition divided into a number of denominations or schools?
2. What two branches of Buddhism have attracted the most attention in the West?
3. Briefly recount the Flower Sermon. How did Mahakasyapa indicate he understood it?
4. List some of the words and phrases used to describe Zen (top paragraph on p. 129).
5. Zen's essence is that it cannot be impounded in what?
6. What are the three limitations that words have?
7. What two things are the lifeblood of religion (and also art)?
8. Zen is squarely in what camp? What is Zen's uniqueness?
9. What is Zen's attitude towards scriptures and creeds (make sure you know the definition of “creed”)?
10. Why are physical blows sometimes a part of Zen?
11. If Zen is not interested in theories about enlightenment, what is it interested in?
12. What is Zen's double relation to reason?

13. How did Zen “trust its future” if it did not formulate scriptures or creeds in words?
14. What is *zazen*? Where does the bulk of Zen training take place?
15. What is a *koan*? What is the sound of one hand clapping?
16. What are *koans* designed to assist in doing?
17. How is a *koan* like an alarm clock?
18. What is a *sanzen*? What is the role of the teacher/master?
19. What is *satori*?
20. What does Zen refuse to permit?
21. What is the genius of Zen?
22. What is Zen’s object?
23. When is Zen’s business complete?
24. What are the 5 characteristics of a human who has “nothing further to do” in Zen?
25. What is the comment about washing the dishes at the top of p. 138 all about?
26. What 4 ingredients of Japanese cultural life have been indelibly imprinted by Zen?
27. What ceremony represents “Zen at its best?”