

“A Lawyer’s Method for sharing Christ with Buddhists”

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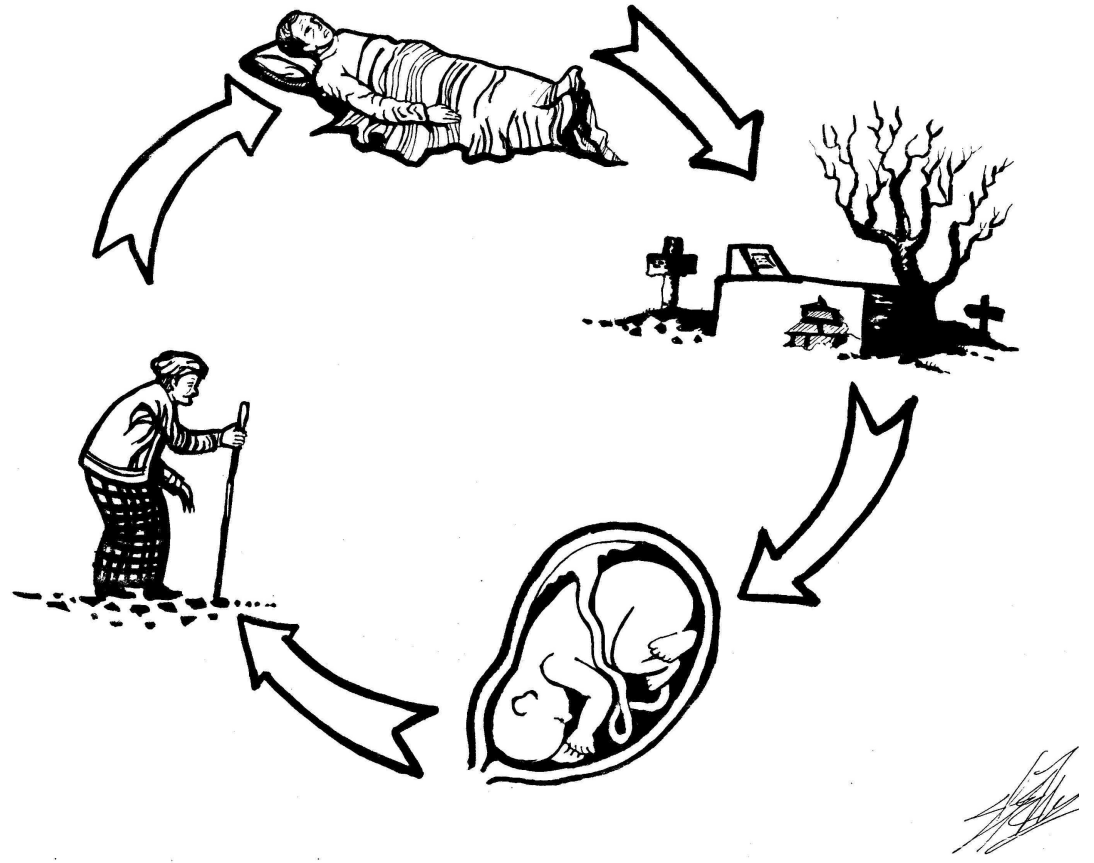
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Over the past 9 years, 721 new churches have been planted throughout 6 unreached people groups of Myanmar with 8,741 baptisms. 479 of these new churches have been started from Sept. 2010-Dec. 2011. The Majority of these churches use the method described below. From 2002-2007 J.P. was the Rakhine Strategy Coordinator with the International Mission Board. From June 2008-March 2009 J.P. and wife A. were Relief workers, helping feed thousands of Burmese victims of Cyclone Nargis.. J.P. is now a Church Multiplication Coach.

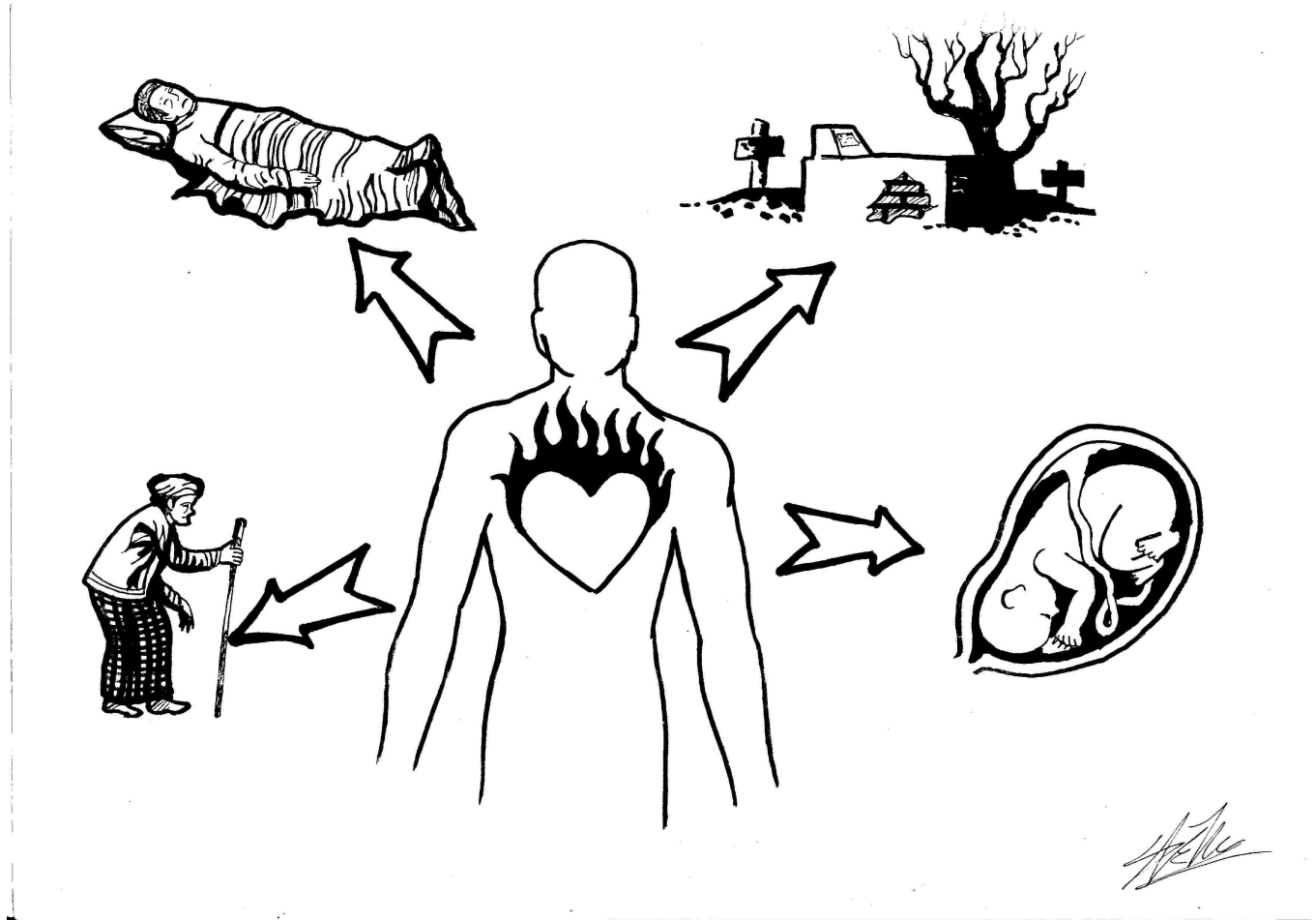
When sharing the following with Buddhists it is suggested to ask the following questions to clarify the beliefs and worldview of your friends. Although most Buddhists cannot share their beliefs they will recognize this as the major points of the Religion. Buddhists monks understand that following the Eightfold Path is impossible but often proclaim, “but you must try to be 100% sinless.” These monks therefore major on the minors yet minor on the majors. The core teaching of the Four Noble Truths is taught in all 3 main branches of Buddhism.

The Four Noble Truths “The Law of Buddha.”

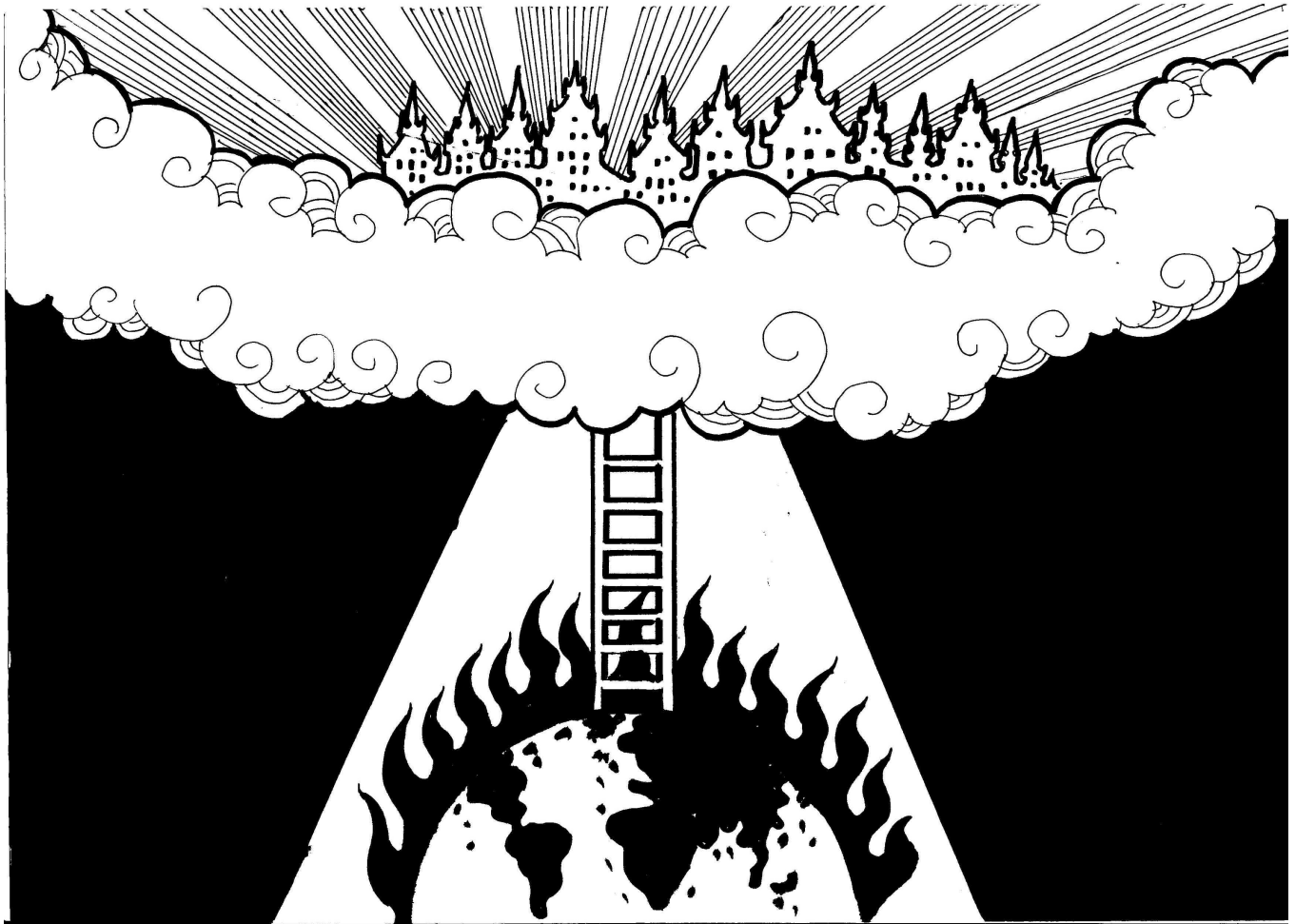
The first law is Death and Suffering (the result of the 2nd law)?



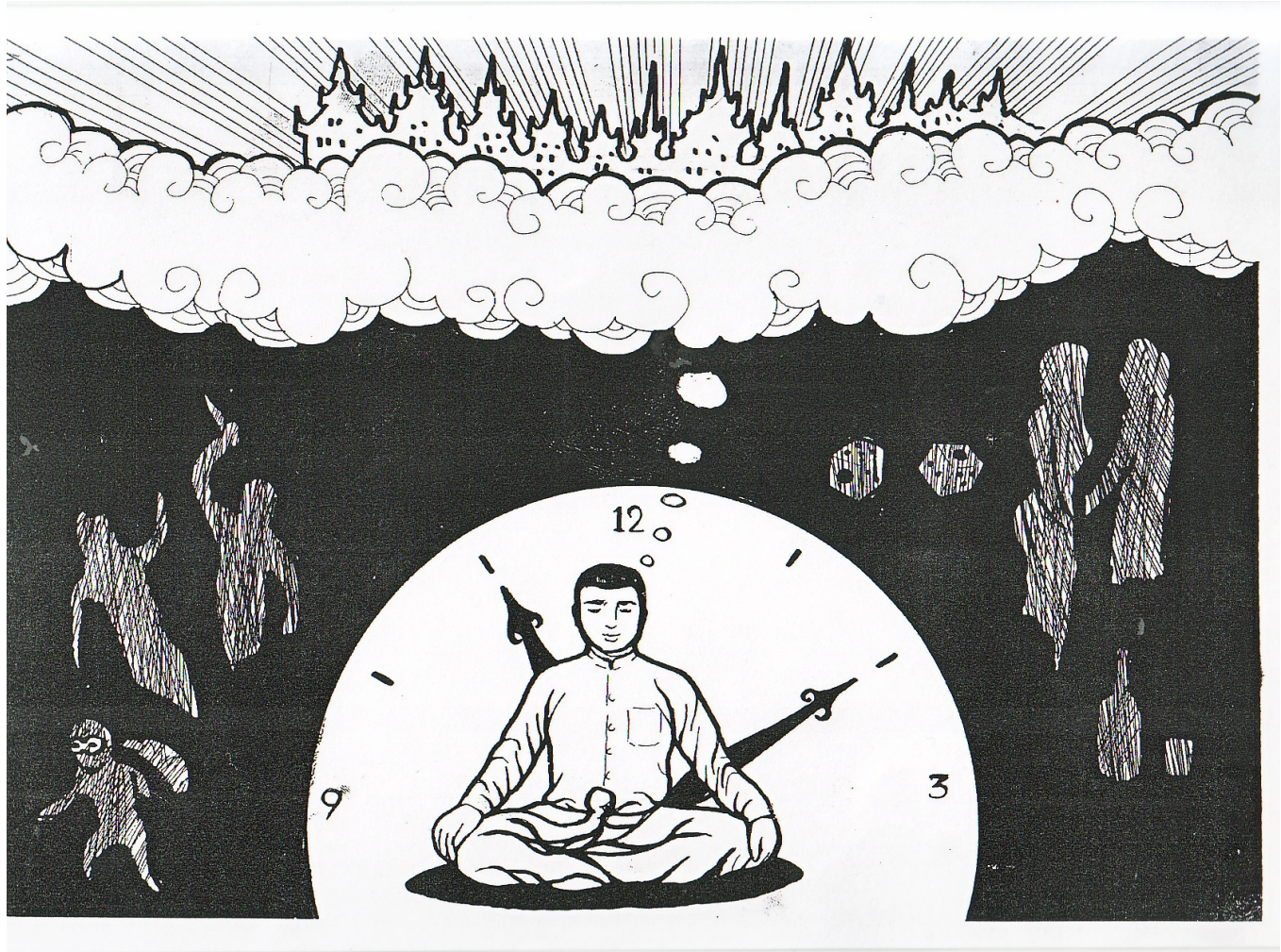
Second is that the cause of death and suffering is sin (Buddha described this as a black fire)?



Third Law: Your goal as a Buddhist is to go to Nirvana? *Ni* means no, *vana* means fire or burning.



Fourth Law: The Way out of Sin and Suffering towards Nirvana is to do eight things (The Eightfold Path). Basically Buddhists must not think about sin and become 100% perfect?



Buddha states that his followers must live a 100% perfect, sinless life if they are to achieve freedom from the cycle of sin and suffering. Jesus agreed, when His disciples bemoaned the Lord's statement that they must be perfect just as their Father in Heaven is perfect. They exclaimed, "This is impossible" Jesus replied, "That is correct, with man this is impossible but with God all things are possible." Matt. 5:48

The Four Noble Truths of Christ "The Law of Christ"

- 1) Suffering and death have an origin (a cause). Suffering and death is the effect of that cause.
- 2) The origin of death is sin. (Give a brief summary of Adam and Eve and their disobedience.
- 3) There is a place where suffering and sin no longer exists (Heaven).
- 4) The Way out of the cycle of sin and suffering is faith in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Christ walks the Perfect Road through His disciples. He makes them perfect in His eyes.

8 Barriers that Hinder Theravada Buddhists understanding the Gospel

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1. Heaven
2. God's Wrath and Justice
3. Sacrifice
4. Eternal Life
5. The Preeminence of Buddha
6. God's grace verses Merit.
7. Sin verses Crime
8. Creation

1. Heaven

In the early 1800s Adoniram Judson translated the concept of Heaven into Burmese as sky. Judson's method of translation can be described as a wooden literal translation and not so much a meaning based or dynamic equivalent translation.

Adoniram's wife, Ann Judson, translated Heaven into the first Thai version of Matthew as *Sawan*. In Buddhism, Satan and other demons¹ resides above the sky. The sky is at the top of our world, *Manussa* level and thousands of demons live in the 6 levels above this world (See diagram on p. 5).² Buddhists translate these 6 levels the higher abodes.³ These higher abodes are filled with Buddhists angels, demons and other creatures who often commit sins. According to Buddhism if a person arrives to these higher abodes and then commit sin then they will fall down the 31 levels of existence. King Lithai summarized the 31 levels in the Thai Buddhist commentary *Traiphum*, as the Three realms.⁴ When Christians say that Jesus is the way to the sky or a higher abode, Buddhists tend to think that Jesus is still caught up in the cycle of reincarnation. The main meaning that our Buddhist friends need to understand is that Jesus came from a place of no sin and no suffering and He promises to take His disciples to this same place. In Buddhism there are 40 words to describe this place.⁵

Jesus showed his disciples that He is preparing a Golden City in which there are no more tears and no more sin.

¹ *Thagyamin* in Burmese *Sakka* in Pali, *Sakra* in Sanskrit or *Phra In* or *Indra* in Thai and Hinduism)

² *Mansussa* is *Manutha* in Burmese

³ *Nat Pyi* in Burmese and *Sawan* in Thai

⁴ also called *Traiphukatha*. *Traiphum* has three categories of levels *arupa loka* or *phum*, *rupa loka* and *kama loka*

⁵ In Burmese, *Thukha Bhum*, *Nibban*, *Shwe Myodaw*, *Shwe Khan Chin*. *Duhka ma shi thaw bum* etc...

2. God's Wrath and Justice

When Buddhists hear how God killed the Egyptians in the Red Sea and how He killed Anaias and Sapphira in Acts 5, they are repulsed. Since a very young age Buddhists are taught "Do not kill."

Many monks teach that it is even wrong to kill insects and fish, however all Buddhists do this all the time and it leads to tremendous guilt. Christians should be aware of this barrier in order to find the appropriate bridges. Different barriers call for different bridges. It may be advisable to say that the evil Egyptians chased God's children into the Red Sea and then the water killed them.⁶ We can let new believers understand God's wrath after they understand His Magnificent love.

3. Sacrifice

A Buddhist man once asked me, "Why did your God die such a terrible death on the cross? Was it because of his sin in his previous life?"⁷ In Buddhism if bad things happen to you it is because you have committed sin. We need to explain through the gospel story that Christ was sinless. Christians should be encouraged to say that Jesus gave His "Life Offering" on the cross for our sins.

Consequently priest was translated as *Yet braw heet* is means one who offers blood to the spirits.

All Burmese Buddhists know the story of the Rabbit King. Buddha was once incarnated as a rabbit and *Thagyamin* came to test him. *Thagyamin* was disguised as a Holy saint, Arahant.⁸ The Rabbit saw that this Arahant was about to die from starvation. Seeing his suffering the Rabbit prepared a fire and was just about to cook himself when *Thagyamin* revealed his true identity.⁹ Jesus gave his Life Offering on the cross for the sin of the whole world.

4. Eternal Life

Buddhists want to be set free from the endless cycle of sin and suffering called reincarnation, *samsara* in Pali. Christians meet this barrier when they offer Jesus as the way to Eternal Life. Eternal life means eternal suffering and sin to a Buddhist. Most westerners are erroneously taught through the media that reincarnation is good

⁶ Buddhists are well aware of the Tripitka story of how the Evil One was washed away with a flood when he came to tempt Buddha under the tree. The story does not say that Buddha cause the flood that washed away Satan. It just mentions that it happened.

⁷ The concept of Jesus death for the sins of others through suffering should not be translated as *yet puzaw* in Burmese. *Yet puzaw* is the same word that Buddhists use to describe the killing of chickens for the worship of household spirits. Burmese Buddhist often pour chicken blood over a bowl of rice and scatter it around the foundations in order to protect the house from evil.

⁸ Arahant or Arhat Sanskrit is called *Yahanda* in Burmese.

⁹ The rabbit was about to *Athet-danna* or *zeewee tat danna* in Burmese or *cheewit tanna* in Thai.

because we get another chance.¹⁰ This is totally contrary to Orthodox (Theravada) Buddhism. Buddhists are slaves to religion because they want to get out of reincarnation.¹¹

Jesus is the God of Freedom. He is Freedom from Reincarnation. We waste time trying to argue Buddhists that reincarnation isn't logical. It may take years of discipleship for new Buddhist Background Believers to understand that reincarnation doesn't exist.

5. The Preeminence of Buddha

Christ claimed several times that He existed before the world was created. He also is the creator of the Golden City. He said, "before Abraham was, I am (I existed)" The prophet Daniel was thrown into the lions' den at the time Gotama was born. When the King of Persia saw how Daniel's God save him from the hungry lions he made a decree. "Every ethnic people in my kingdom must worship the God of Israel. Dan. 6:24-28. The Persian kingdom stretched from North Africa all the way to the borders of Myanmar 600 years before Christ came.¹² For 600 years before Christ came all of Asia learned, "Don't murder, don't steal, don't commit adultery." God told Israel through Daniel that they must obey His commands and that just before the world ends in fire the Savior of the world would come.

This is the message that Daniel preached just up the southern Silk Road from Prince Gotama. It is highly probable that Prince Gotama preached what he learned from Daniel. Gotama proclaimed, "Don't kill, Don't steal, Don't commit adultery." He also told all his disciples that just before the world ended with fire the Savior, Mettreya will come. Therefore Buddha learned the truths of God and His coming Savior through the Persian King and Prophet Daniel in 544 BC.¹³

6. God's grace verses Merit

When Buddhists hear Christians say that Salvation is free of charge they are repulsed. They exclaim, "It can't be that easy! We have to suffer a lot and pay a lot of money to earn our merit." Christians can emphasize the tremendous sufferings that our Savior endured to earn our Salvation. Our salvation was not free. It was so costly and that Christ prayed, "Lord if it is possible let this cup pass from me."

¹⁰ This is misunderstanding is often reinforced by famous western Buddhist like Richard Gear, Tina Turner (from Haywood Co. Tennessee) and Goldi Han, a self-proclaimed Buddhist Jew or *Jewbu*. Even Country Music singers Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash and others perpetuated this error in the song *The Highwayman in the 1980s*.

¹¹ *Thanthi Thuka Chantha* may be a better term than *tawarat athetchin* eternal life in Judson's Burmese translation.

¹² Persian script is found on Rakhine coins in western Myanmar even well into the 17th century.

¹³ For a more complete discussion of the Buddhist concept of a Coming Savior, see the doctorate paper *Origins of Buddhism*, Jay Pratt, 2006 and the book, *From Buddha to Jesus*, by Steve C.

7. Sin verses Crime

Sin is often described to Buddhists as *aphyit* in Burmese and *pid* in Thai. This term is used when describing the actions of criminals. Buddhist claim that only criminals have a *phyit*, however they readily admit that even the most holy man has committed *kelisa* (evil desire) in his heart.¹⁴ *loba, dosa, moha* are the first 3 of the ten fires of *kelisa*. Gotoma described these evil desires as a black fire burning in the heart of all people. Jesus describes sin as the same way in Matthew 5-7.

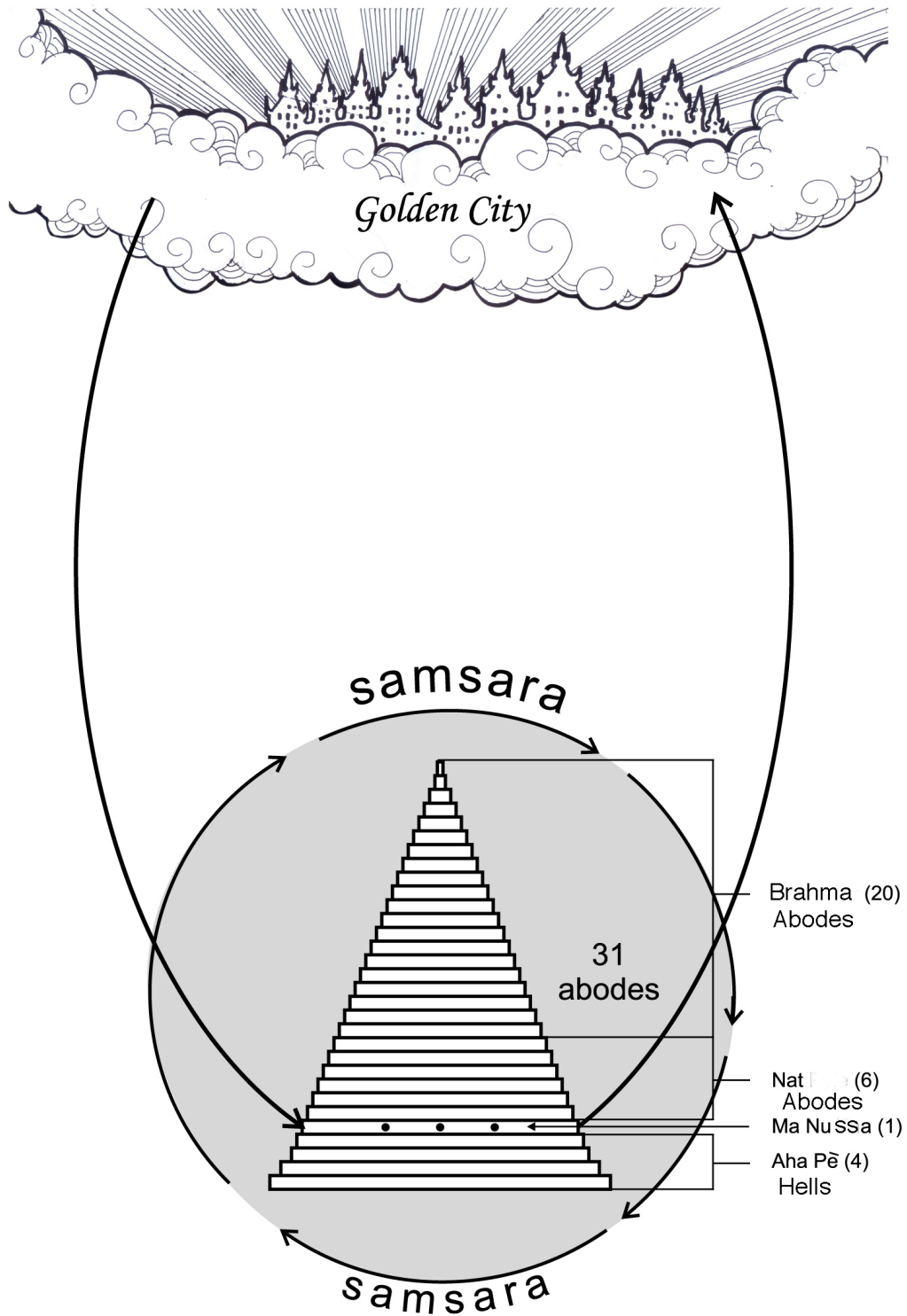
8. Creation

Buddhists ask, "If your God created the universe then why does he create the blind and the deaf? Why is there so much suffering?"

It can be summarized into three categories, Arupa loka, Rupa loka, and Kama loka
Christ came down from Nibban to our world. He sets us from the cycle of sin and suffering and takes us to his City of No Sin and No Suffering.

¹⁴ The Pali term *Kelisa* is *Kelitha* in Burmese and *geleid* in Thai.

A Theravada Buddhist's view of the Cosmos and understanding of Salvation



Samsara means the cycle of reincarnation. It is caused by sin, resulting in death.

31 abodes of Existence
 adapted from Suvano Mahathera
www.accesstoinsight.org

I. The Immaterial World (*arupa-loka*)

31 <i>Neither-perception-nor-non-perception</i> (<i>nevasannanasa</i>)	84,000 Mahakappas (world lifetimes or existences)	The inhabitants of these realms are possessed entirely of mind. Having no physical body, they are unable to hear Dhamma teachings.
30 <i>Nothingness</i> (<i>akiñcaññayatanupaga deva</i>)	60,000 Mahakappas (world existences)	
29 Infinite Consciousness (<i>viññanañcayatanupaga deva</i>)	40,000 Mahakappas (world existences)	
28 <i>akasañcayatanupaga deva</i>	2,000 Mahakappas (world existences)	

II. The Fine-Material World (*rupa-loka*)

27. (<i>akanittha deva</i>)	16,000 Mahakappas (world existences)	These are the five Pure Abodes (<i>suddhavasa</i>), which are accessible only to <u>non-returners (<i>anagami</i>) and arahants</u> . Beings who become non-returners in other planes are reborn here, where they attain arahantship. Among its inhabitants is Brahma Sahampati, who <u>begs the Buddha to teach Dhamma to the world</u>
26. (<i>sudassi deva</i>)	8,000 Mahakappas	
25. (<i>sudassa deva</i>)	4,000 Mahakappas	
24. (<i>atappa deva</i>)	2,000 Mahakappas	
23. (<i>aviha deva</i>)	1,000 Mahakappas	
22. (<i>asaññasatta</i>)	500 Mahakappas	Only body is present; no mind.
21. (<i>vehapphala deva</i>)	500 Mahakappas	Beings in these planes enjoy varying degrees of bliss.
20. (<i>subhakinna deva</i>)	64 Mahakappas	
19. (<i>appamanasubha deva</i>)	32 Mahakappas	

18. (<i>parittasubha deva</i>)	16 Mahakappas	
17. (<i>abhassara deva</i>)	8 Mahakappas	
16. <i>Appamanabha deva</i>	4 Mahakappas	
15. <i>Parittabha deva bhumi</i>	2 Mahakappas	
14. <i>Maha brahma bhumi</i>	1 Mahakappas	One of this realm's most famous inhabitants is the Great Brahma, a deity whose delusion leads him to regard himself as the all-powerful, all-seeing creator of the universe.
13. (<i>brahma-purohita deva bhumi (abode)</i>)	½ Mahakappas	Beings in these planes enjoy varying degrees of bliss.
12. <i>Brahma-parisajja deva bhumi (abode)</i>	1/3 Mahakappas	

III. The Sensuous World (*kama-loka*)

(11) <i>Paranimmita-vasavatti deva heaven</i>	9,216 million years	Mara, the Evil One lives here. Notice that this abode is far above the Christian term for Heaven in all Theravada Buddhist countries
(10) <i>Nimmanarati deva heaven</i>	2,304 million years	These devas delight in the sense objects of their own creation
(9) <i>Tusita deva heaven</i>	576 million years	Bodhisattas abide here prior to their final human birth. The coming Buddhist Messiah, Metteya, is said to dwell here.
(8) <i>Yama devas heaven</i>	144 million years	Ruled by Suyama deva, the devas who here are free of

		all difficulties.
(7) Tavatisma heavens of 33 devas (gods)	36 million years	Sakka (Indra), a devotee of the Buddha, presides over this heaven
(6) Catumaharajika	9 million years	Home of the <i>gandhabbas</i> , the celestial musicians, and the <i>yakkhas</i> , tree spirits of varying degrees of ethical purity. The latter are analogous to the goblins, trolls, and fairies of Western fairy tales.
(5) Ma nu ssa Loka (Human world). According to Theravada Buddhism	<p>↑ The Christian term for “Heaven” in all Theravada Buddhist countries is at the top of this level.</p> <p>70-80 years. You are here, for now! According to Theravada Buddhism</p>	the attainment of <u>stream-entry</u> (<i>sotapatti</i>) guarantees that all future rebirths will be in the human or higher realms.
(4) Asuras (demons)	These “Titans” that dwell here are in constant conflict	
(3) Petas (hungry spirits)	Ghost or unhappy spirits who wander the earth	
(2) Tiracchana (animals)	This realm includes all the non-human forms of life that are visible to us under ordinary circumstances: animals, insects, fish, birds, worms, etc.	
(1) Niraya (Hell) 8 levels of Hell	These are realms of unimaginable suffering and anguish. Should not be confused with the <i>eternal</i> hell proposed by other religions, since one's time here is temporary	

