Shwe, Thein (1932–2017)

PAUL TANBAUNAW

Paul Tanbaunaw, Ph.D., is a professor of Religion and is currently serving as vice president for Academic Administration at Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary.

Thein Shwe was a pastor, church administrator, and educator from Myanmar.

Early Life, Education and Marriage

Thein Shwe was born on February 21, 1932, in Myit-kyo village, Ayeyarwady (formerly, Irrawaddy) Region, Myanmar.[1] His parents were Mahn Pah Doe and Gha Taung Zin. He was the sixth of nine children, four of whom died at an early age.[2] After moving to Nathamu Kyaukpya, Thein's parents came in contact with Christianity and converted to Seventh-day Adventism.[3]

Thein had completed the fourth grade at a Christian school when World War II broke out. After the war, the family moved back to Nathamu Kyaukpya in a homemade boat. In June 1946, his parents sent Thein and his sister to the Seventh-day Adventist high school in Myaungmya, where the school principal was Leonard Hare, son of Eric B. Hare.[4]

In 1952, Thein was sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Mission to attend Spicer Memorial College, in Poona, India.[5] Due to financial difficulty, he took a two-year business course at the college and worked at the College Press.[6]

Thein had met Nant Tin Tin Aye while canvassing in Myanmar before going to Spicer. She received midwife training in Yangon and then worked at a government hospital. There she came in contact with the Seventh-day Adventist minister Aye Maung and was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in December 1957.[7] On April 17, 1958, Thein married Nant Tin Tin Aye. The couple had five children, all born at Yangon Seventh-day Adventist Hospital: Rosemary, Robert, Richard, Rita, and Robin. First daughter Rosemary, born in July 1962, survived only a week due to a tetanus infection.

Career and Ministry

Shwe had returned to Myanmar in 1954 and began his career as a teacher at the Seventh-day Adventist high school in Myaungmya, attending summer school at Spicer to complete his training.[8] In 1957, he transferred to Yangon to serve as a cashier at the Yangon Seventh-Day Adventist Hospital.[9] He was later promoted to assistant

business manager and served at the hospital until 1961. Just before the hospital was nationalized by the government in 1962, he was transferred to the Union Book Depot and stayed until 1963.[10]

In 1964 Shwe and his family moved to Mawlamyaing, where he served as secretary-treasurer of South East Mission for three years.[11] On December 18, 1968, he was ordained into the gospel ministry.[12] Shwe then served as president of Ayeyarwady Mission until 1975.[13] In 1975, he was called to be executive secretary of Myanmar Union Mission.[14]

In 1988 Shwe became president of Myanmar Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.[15] During the political turmoil in 1988, he received an anonymous threat on his life over the telephone and spent a night hidden in the church office.[16]

From 1991 until he retired in February 1992, Shwe was senior pastor of Yangon Central Seventh-day Adventist Church.[17]

Later Life

In retirement, after 38 years of service to the church, Shwe was engaged in educating young people, promoting Christian education in Myanmar, and raising scholarship funds.

In 2006, Shwe and his wife moved to the United States so that she could receive cancer treatment. After she passed away, Shwe returned to Myanmar. He died on February 15, 2017 and was buried at Yeway Cemetery.[18]

Contribution and Legacy

Through fundraising locally and abroad, Shwe accomplished the following: established a campsite at Kyaukpya, Pathein; opened two clinics, at Kyaukpya and Padaukkon villages; provided church buildings at Kyaukpya, Padaukkon, Ngayokekaungdaung, Yetho, and Nannatkon; purchased lands for the Ayeyarwady Mission at Padaukkon, Ywathit, and Nanatkon; built a library building and school building at Padaukkon church; and sponsored more than 50 students who graduated from Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary.[19]

SOURCES

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1. Mervin Myat Kyaw, *The Legacy of Eric B. Hare and Tribute to Wonderful Missionaries* (n.p.: n.d.), 201.
2. Thein Shwe, unpublished autobiography, private archive of the Shwe family.
3. Kyaw, 201.
4. Shwe, unpublished autobiography.
5. Ibid. See also Kyaw, 202.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. *Burma Union Committee Minutes (BUCM)*. Myanmar Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, 1954, 732, 745.
9. "Shwe, Thein," *Employees Service Record*. Myanmar Unions Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.
10. *Burma Union Committee Minutes (BUCM)*. Myanmar Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, 1963, 10.
11. *Burma Union Committee Minutes (BUCM)*. Myanmar Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, 1964, 17.
12. *Burma Union Committee Minutes (BUCM)*. Myanmar Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, 1968, 60.
13. *Burma Union Committee Minutes (BUCM)*. Myanmar Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, 1966, 58.
14. "Shwe, Thein," *Employees Service Record*. Myanmar Unions Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.
15. Ibid.
16. . Shwe, unpublished autobiography.
17. *Burma Union Committee Minutes (BUCM)*. Myanmar Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, 1990, 75.

18. Ibid.

19. Shwe, unpublished autobiography.

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