

The life of ahn byung- mu – a cofounder of korean minjung theology

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Ahn Byung-Mu was born on June 23, 1922 in Shinanju, a city in South-Pyongan province that now belongs to North Korea. He was the eldest son of a doctor practicing traditional medicine, Ahn Bong-Shik and Chung Won-Sik. When Ahn turned one, his family moved to Manchuria. Due to Japanese colonialism, many Koreans fled to neighboring countries. Even so, the life there was not any better.

Raised with the values of Confucius, Ahn encountered Christianity during his time as a child and decided to be a Christian when he was in fifth grade even when his father opposed it. He liked that Christianity opposed polygamy and alcoholism; both of which he saw that his father did. This conflict eventually led to his parents' divorce and he and his brother followed his mother. For a year, Ahn worked to earn a living for the family before he started attending a Canadian Presbyterian mission school in Yongchang. Subsequently in 1941, he went to on to complete college in Taisho University before moving on to study Philosophy at Waseda University in 1943 majoring in Sociology.

Refusing the Japanese army's attempts to scout him, he fled once again back to Manchuria and served a church, preaching as a lay person. Finally when the war has passed, Ahn returned to Seoul where he taught English to support himself and his mother. He also managed to resume his studies at Seoul National University (SNU), majoring in Sociology and opted to minor in Religious Studies.

During his time at SNU, he chaired the Korean Student Christian Movement (KSCM). When the Korean War started, Ahn and some students came up with the concept of mission as living in a community that is Christian that is not

necessarily linked to the Church as an alternative for people to better embrace Christianity. His first periodical ran for twelve issues: A Voice from the Wilderness. In 1950, he started to lecture in Chungang Seminary and by 1953; he became a senior lecturer majoring in Sociology and Greek and later on New Testament. Conflicts in the Korean community at that time and his interest in Rudolf Bultmann led to his decision to study in Heidelberg, Germany with Bultmann's student, Günther Bornkamm.

Focusing on his Asian origins, he graduated with a doctorate on the teachings of Confucius and teachings of Jesus in regards to love. Ahn then continued on with his lectures at Chungang Seminary eventually serving as president whilst also being appointed as professor at Hanguk Theological Seminary. Spurred by his cancer-stricken mother's request, he went against his initial ideal of celibacy and got married. Founded in 1973 by Ahn, the Korea Theological Study Institute enabled international theological discourses through the translation of German and English theological materials to Korean. Ahn published two periodicals during that time: Existence and Minjung. The institute served as an ecumenical and interdenominational platform for theological forums. Barred by the government from lecturing at the college in 1975 for his dedication to human rights, he was then also put in jail for at least 9 months in 1976. His experience in prison gave him more cause to further develop a Minjung theology to be able to relate to people from all walks of life.

After a period of political instability, he took up the Dean's office at Hanshin University; retiring in 1987. The writings of Ahn Byung-Mu reveal the

development of his theological thought and Minjung theology. He wrote a total of 918 articles. He published 4 periodicals: A Voice from the Wilderness, Existence, Minjung, Sallim and wrote 28 books and have 6 edited books which includes: In Front of History, Together with Minjung (1986), Discourse on Minjung Theology (1988), The Galilean Jesus (1990), Jesus of Galilee (2004); Jesus and Ochlos in Mark (1982), Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark (1983), Reading Minjung Theology in the Twenty-first Century : Selected Writings by Ahn Byung-mu and Modern Critical Responses (2013).