

Once Upon a Time: Invoking Lore and Narrative in Memory of Katie Geneva Cannon

Tinyiko Maluleke

ABSTRACT

In this essay, the author responds to Katie Cannon's invitation for fellow scholars to join her in utilising what she called 'embodied pathos,' 'communal logos,' and 'historical ethos' in their analysis of the 'central affirmations' of the Christian faith. To this end the author locates Cannon amidst the galaxy of cutting-edge African scholars within and beyond the discipline of theology, and within and beyond the world of non-fiction scholarship. Inspired by Cannonian pedagogy, the author reflects theologically, on the climatic, pandemic, intellectual, and theological challenges facing African scholarship in the world today.

Approaching Cannon

In two short years (2018 and 2019), we lost Katie Cannon, James Cone and John Mbiti. Thus, ended the innings of the mother of womanist ethics, the father of Black Theology of Liberation and the doyen of African Theology, respectively. From an African, Black and Womanist theologies point of view, the cost of the deaths of these pioneer thinkers is incalculable. In their life work is represented the three most important strands in Black and African theologies. Nineteen years younger than Mbiti and twelve years younger than Cone, Cannon represented one of the freshest, most radical and most versatile expressions of womanist theology. As if the demise of these three icons was not painful enough, 2019 was also the year in which, the literature Nobel Laureate, Toni Morrison died.

Commenting on the deaths of Cone and Cannon, Peter Paris¹ remarked that "like all mortals, their works were not finished. Yet, like few in history, they have both left legacies the meaning and implications of which will nourish generations

1 Peter J. Parish, "Katie Cannon's encounter with Africa," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 35, no.1 (2019), 123.

Tinyiko Maluleke is a Professor of Theology and Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship at the University of Pretoria.

<tinyiko.maluleke@up.ac.za>.