

Title: Reading 2 Timothy 1:1-7 through a Livity Gospel Hermeneutic, giving voice to silence in the text and the church.

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Abstract

The Pastoral Epistles provide a glimpse into the world of the Early Church as they sought to make life for themselves in the Greco-Roman World. In 2 Timothy the silent voices of Lois and Eunice serve as a reminder of the importance of women in the Christian nurture of children. I argue, that the activity of these women among their young people could be viewed as subversive and provide a useful test case for the creation of a “Livity Gospel Hermeneutic” which reads the text for “life in Christ Jesus”.

As the church realized that the immanent return of Jesus was no longer urgent, they learnt how to live the resurrection life Christ promised within their social and cultural context through an assimilation of the Gospel and an animation of the “promise of life in Christ Jesus.” Lois and Eunice in 2 Timothy 1:1-7 act as witnesses who embodied this “life in Christ Jesus” through their “sincere faith”.

While these two characters remain largely silent in the text because of the paucity of details given by the author, their presence in the text provide a stimulating backdrop for reading texts with young people through creative actualization that gives voice to silent voices in both the text and the church’s history.

Introduction

Knitted together in a diverse tapestry of culture, ethnicity, language, and politics, the Caribbean region is spread across mainland and island nations located in and near the Caribbean Sea. The Caribbean is often described as more than spatial boundaries but rather as “an idea driven by history” (Baugh, 2017). Edward Baugh, in his definition, underscored the fact that nations comprising the Caribbean all share a foundational experience of colonization, and this has influenced the expression of Caribbean personality within a global community.

It is out of our colonial experience that the aspiration for freedom became an inexorable part of the Caribbean’s historical and religious. However, despite our proclivity towards fighting for freedom, the residual effects of our history are still evident in our society. Yet in an age of crisis, God persists in offering new life in Christ Jesus.

This paper will establish some key definitions and highlight the principles informing a re-reading of 2 Timothy 1:1-7 as a test case for a Livity Gospel Hermeneutic. It will then explore some of the silence in the text while rereading it with the silent voices of Lois and Eunice in 2 Timothy 1:1-7. Finally I will offer some closing comments into, how the use of the Livity Gospel Hermeneutic

can serve as one among many other ways of promoting life in Christ when bombarded by news of crisis in the Postcolonial Caribbean.

Key Definitions

The term Livity Gospel Hermeneutic (LGH) was birthed out of my research journey at the University of Birmingham (UoB). The word “livity” originates from the Rastafarian religious movement and describes a person’s “lifestyle” (Case et al., 2013, Bamikole, 2017), in relation to God and the Judaeo Christian scriptural heritage. In this paper the term is adapted to capture the holistic and life-giving encounters with Jesus of the Gospels. It acknowledges that such life-giving encounters are somehow connected to “life in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1) which comes with the Kingdom of God in one’s personal and social life. Livity resonates with John Wesley’s sermon on “New Birth” (Wesley, 1797) where he expounded on the mysterious experience of God that gives life to our souls as human beings and restores God’s characteristics of righteousness, genuine holiness and love.

This vision of the Kingdom of God is more than the rule of God on earth. It is reproduced through intimate and life-giving connections. One of the most intimate and life-giving connections forged in human existence occurs in the space shared between mother and child or adoptive mother and child. Building on the work of Karen Wenell (2024) I argue that this Kingdom of God and the life-giving experience is not only a reflection of God’s rule but is an “emplaced” (Wenell, 2024) reality within Christian community that is repeated and kept alive in all Christian communities through its representatives, especially in the space shared in the intimate connection between women and young people.

Livity therefore describes a lifestyle that promotes the liberty that comes with God’s emplaced Kingdom. It is one’s “New Birth” experience that makes such a Livity possible.

The Gospels are a unique section of the church’s canon that give witness to the earthly life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are themselves theological reflection by first and/or second-generation witnesses of God’s work and revelation through Jesus. His life, ministry, death, and resurrection expresses “Good News”, and provides an embodiment of the Kingdom of God on earth (Blount, 2016). The Gospel writings provide resources for locating and performing the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed in the Gospels (Wenell, 2014, Wenell, 2017).

The church has recognized the Gospels as accurate portrayals of Jesus’ earthly ministry through different lenses. The Gospels help to not only enliven hope for the Kingdom but give impetus for its realization in the present (Wenell, 2024). The Kingdom of God, also called the Reign of God is animated throughout the Pastoral Epistles as the people learned to live in God’s Reign, giving witness to God’s presence in the present through their repetition and reanimation of Kingdom values in home and community. It is with this in mind that one’s Livity as a Christian should be informed by the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and energize the aspiration for the Kingdom’s realisation in the present.

The Pastoral Letters, while they are different from the Gospels in narrative style and theological disposition; reflect how the New Birth community persevered in their pursuit of life, in God’s Kingdom.

The word 'hermeneutics' describes what, for some, is an art and or process whereby individuals or communities compose meaning in their use of a particular mode of communication (Thiselton, 2009). In the context of this paper the mode of communication is the Bible. The development of hermeneutics in the field of Biblical Studies involves theological, philosophical, literary, and historical interrogation of the biblical text as well as the reflexivity of the reader as interpreter. One's approach to the text as a source for building knowledge can impact their world view, how a person reasons and subsequently the conclusions and responses one makes considering their understanding of the truth (Jasper, 2010). It is commonly accepted that interpretation is informed by one's historical, cultural, and social narratives, all of which combine to shape what we understand through engagement with any text and subsequently apply to the context in which we live (Sælid Gilhus, 2011, Thomas, 2010, Smith, 2023). This therefore means that our reading of the text should consider not only what we read in the text but also the reader and the unique conditions that inform such readings.

Positionality

Given my approach to hermeneutics as a Caribbean Christian woman, who sees the value in Caribbean, Womanist, and Postcolonial (these will be expounded on below) lenses for creative readings of text, it is necessary to state my positionality. I read the text as a heterosexual woman who knows both the middle and lower class realities in the Caribbean. My approach to the text is also influenced by my vocation as a Methodist Minister who has benefited from higher education and believes that the mystery of the "New Birth" experience is available to all. Therefore, the possibility of living the transformed life as one restored in the likeness and complete love of God is always a possibility.

Principles Informing Re-Reading of Text

Caribbean Hermeneutics

The use of Caribbean Hermeneutics takes into consideration some of the key contributions from Caribbean hermeneutists that prioritize: liberation (Roper, 2012), resistance (Thomas, 2010). As someone serving Jesus' "New Birth" community in the region, it is necessary to validate Caribbean identity and justify ways of being Caribbean and Christian while using the biblical text as a contested space for promoting the full flourishing of Caribbean people in the 21st Century.

As a subaltern space, the Caribbean, while it has a unique experience, whose people have come to know what it means to live in hope. This hope has survived despite the different types of trauma the region has endured (Turner, 2024). Caribbean Liberation Hermeneutics (Roper, 2012) and Caribbean Resistance Hermeneutics (Thomas, 2008) offer some helpful resources for thinking about how Caribbean culture, along with the region's political as well as historical experiences, should inform how we read and shape meaning from the scripture. Rather than literal interpretations of texts, these perspectives emphasize the need for those who read the Bible to do so with Caribbean contextual and historical realities in mind. Such realities include but are not limited to the following:

1. That most of the inhabitants of the Caribbean are descendants of formerly enslaved

- peoples or indentured workers, as well as descendants of former colonizers and in some cases a mixture of all the above.
2. While the Bible is considered an authoritative source, the Caribbean is a multireligious context with other sacred texts (e.g. the Vedas, Quran, Holy Piby) that serve Caribbean people.
 3. Race relations are still a dubious discourse, given the region's heavy reliance on tourism to sustain already volatile economies.
 4. The pursuit of Euro-Western standards as a normative ideal (in legislature, education, and beauty) demonstrate the pervasive effects of colonialism which have still not been fully resolved.

Inside the text, as well as inside the reader and their context meaning is created. The ongoing dialogue between reader, text, and their context can help to address some of the attitudes that facilitate disconnect between text and the context of the reader or enable those who use the text to become participants in the type of emancipatory life that Jesus in the Gospels offered. For Garnet Roper (2012), who saw the Gospels as reflective of the liberating ministry of Jesus, suggested that our readings of scripture need to ensure that we repeat the liberating mantra of Jesus in the Gospels, not just within the sphere of the church but as a public response to socio-economic/ systemic evils, and ecological crises that continue to challenge the region.

The ways in which we read the text should help those being transformed by its use to also expose, like Jesus our liberator, those agents in our context whose aim is to depersonalize and distort one's human dignity. To do this effectively, Roper proposed that one pay attention to the "subtexts" or "hidden transcripts" (Scott, 1990, Horsley, 2004, Roper, 2012a). These subtexts and hidden transcripts are for Roper the things that are not immediately apparent yet present both inside the text and the context of the reader which add value to one's experience with the Bible as sacred text. For Oral Thomas (2008) the focus is on examining the ways in which we read and interpret the text to either perpetuate the historical oppression of the region or to resist the hierarchical dispositions in the Caribbean that maintain the privileged position of those who knowingly or unknowingly benefit from maintaining the status quo. This paper therefore builds on the work of Thomas (2008) and Roper (2012), taking into consideration the use of both historical-critical methods as well as contextual readings of text to promote life giving interpretations of text among young people in the region.

The work of both Roper and Thomas complement each other by highlighting the need for Caribbean readers of the text to read the Bible out of their own contextual realities and ideological interests so that the oppressive conditions that are upheld by the status quo no longer dictate the region's interpretation of the text and the living out one's Caribbean Christian witness authentically. However, both Roper and Thomas also affirm in their use of historical critical data that still has merit for meaning making with the Bible in the region.

Womanist Hermeneutics

Building on Feminist frameworks, Womanists hermeneutics incorporated concerns around race and gender in addressing the African American religious experience of survival in America. How the text is interpreted and who gets to interpret its true meaning in the church context was a multilayered task that privileged (Cannon, 1985, Kirk-Duggan, 2014, Cannon, 2014) some voices above others. Feminist readings of the biblical text exposed the pervasive nature of subjectivity in knowledge construction and the use of the Bible as a sacred text. Their interest in the understanding and application of sacred texts to the lived experiences was further explored

in womanist readings of scripture (McKenzie, 1999). As an offshoot of Feminist hermeneutics, Womanist hermeneutics expands on these ideological concerns by highlighting the use of the Bible as a tool which women of African descent used for survival in an often racist and patriarchal America.

Insights from the first wave of Womanist theology are useful in my construction of meaning with the text for a Livity Gospel Hermeneutic. I agree with Delores Williams (1993) who used the experiences of marginalized black women for rereading text. She stated that, "Rereading does not mean changing the text as it appears in the Bible or adding "characters" to ... stories that do not appear in the biblical accounts. Within the context of African-American interpretation, rereading can mean bringing in more nontraditional sources to aid in the interpretation than have been used by such leading Western exegetes..." (Williams, 1993). My rereading of the text therefore will use the experience of Methodist slave women alongside the experience of Lois and Eunice as silent voices in the text.

Womanist readings of text help to expose the diverse ways in which themes of dominance, patriarchy, and colonialism intersect and have been reinscribed through our interpretations of the Christian Scriptures (McKenzie, 1999, Pui-lan, 2009). The first wave of Womanist hermeneutics challenged interpretations that silenced the voice of women and other oppressed groups in the historically male interpretations of the Bible. The womanist lens is used because it raises important considerations for reading the text to ensure that our traditions do not limit the text's potential to promote more holistic and emancipatory encounters with the Bible as a religious resource in the Caribbean region (Erskine, 2008) and especially so among young people. Womanist approaches validate the reader's experiences in community and seeks to articulate an interpretation that is both relevant and life giving for one's wellbeing and community survival.

Postcolonial Biblical Criticism

The development of Theology in the Global South has cultivated an appreciation for the voice of those in the subaltern/postcolonial contexts. Postcolonial Biblical Criticism examines the ways in which the Bible was used among formerly colonized people and using this authoritative source alongside other texts to forge new pathways for meaning. This method of reading texts often acknowledge that the powerful read and interpret scripture based on their subjective realities even if this is not always stated (Sugirtharajah, 2016). As a result, interpretations of the Bible have often conformed to the Euro-Western white male ideals which often silence the voice of those who hold no socio-economic power.

There is a need therefore for readers from postcolonial contexts to modify their approach to the text by bringing to their readings of the Bible their own ideological concerns which are often left unexamined. Fernando Segovia (1999) made the point that historical criticism sought to mask its subjectivity with positivism. He helps us to appreciate that the long feared personal voice in the task of hermeneutics should be embraced since the Euro Western white male values themselves reflect the subjectivity of the contexts from which Historical Criticism originated (Segovia, 1999). It is with this in mind that we consider the incorporation of the experience of those who are often silent in the biblical text (particularly the Pastoral Epistles) and the church.

Important Considerations

While I employ the postcolonial lens in engaging the text, I also see the value of historical critical details that help create meaning with text. The Pastorals are accepted as pseudepigrapha and therefore references to the characters such as Paul and Timothy are as fictive representations. The following details, however, help us to understand some useful historical critical cues for further engagement with the text.

Ritual Space in the Household Church

The use of the Greco Roman literary devices helped the writers of the Pastorals to fertilize seeds of faith that constructed a different type of outlook alongside the assimilated Greco – Roman norms in their household and social settings. In the Pastoral Epistles, the use of the narrative relationship between Timothy and Paul set the stage for reenacting the Pauline tradition for the young church in the late second century.

The church was becoming one that challenged the role of status and hierarchy in the Greco-Roman context even as it was being fashioned into a hierarchical structure (Ephesians 5:22-6:9). Texts such as these become ritual space for weaving Greco Roman household norms into the fabric of Christianity. This was accomplished in the use of the household model for describing the church.

While in recent years much attention has been given to the place of women within this household church setting, I wish to focus some attention here on the place of women and their role in the moral education life of young people in the Christian home as potentially postcolonial in nature. Female leadership in the Early Church while it could be contrived as limited, existed in a subversive way through the education offered to their children. The ritual learning spaces for discipleship and moral instruction for children were created by women. Could this have been a space for engaging young people in the mysterious journey of faith and discipleship?¹ The ways in which women engage spiritual practices have been recognised as different from men. Therefore, I would suggest that the discipleship offered by Lois and Eunice would have differed significantly from what was offered by Paul.

Lois and Eunice facilitated ritual spaces within these letters even in their silence. They demonstrated by their presence in the Pastorals the ways in which women were serving as powerful examples of God's presence in the life of the Early Church. And they reinforce the significant role that women still play in the contemporary church. As leaders, in the case of Lois and Eunice, they reflected the spirit of the Gospels in their authentic and generous service not only in their families but possibly in their household church/faith community.

The new image of God's people on earth was being fashioned around the ritual space of a household. While it is true that the Greco Roman ideals pertaining to the family and the

¹ Jin Young Chin (2015) in her Postcolonial articulation of discipleship in the Gospel according to Mark offers a different outlook on the perception of discipleship for persons operating within a colonial and postcolonial framework. She suggests that discipleship is a mysterious encounter with Jesus Christ who offers "life and meaning" that can be embodied in and outside the constructs of empire. See CHOI, J. Y. 2015. Postcolonial Discipleship of Embodiment: An Asian and Asian American Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Mark. New York, UNITED STATES: Palgrave Macmillan. Her argument is useful as it presents a different approach to one's spiritual life that moves past confinement to dogma to meaning making with scripture that takes into consideration one's being in the present.

household were used by the Early Church, it is important to note that while these ideals were adapted into the household church experience they used to preserve the life of the church. This adaptation sustained the vision of God's reign as the primary objective the Christian outlook of the household of God.

Paradigms for Constructing Order

One can concur that the ritual space presented an avenue for Christians in a young religious movement to formalize its structure and order around the broader mission and vision of the church. In the Pastoral letters we see how such structure and order was being created around Greco Roman household codes. While the result of this ordering resulted in the prioritization of male leadership above female leadership, I agree that this was not the kind of order that was initially intended. Elisabeth Fiorenza (1994) helps us to see, in recovering the experiences of women in the Early Church that there were female characters whose presence in the New Testament demonstrated an empowering presence that acted against the patriarchal norms of the Greco-Roman society.

The Pastorals can be considered as a later edition to the Pauline corpus which give us a purview of how ritual space was being ordered. Jorrun Okland (2022), admits in her work, that the Corinthian church dynamics and Paul's creation of sanctuary space in the Early Church were extraordinarily complex. Building on the Pauline tradition, this paper proposes that the Pastoral Epistles show us how such complexities were being resolved.

As Paul tried to create sanctuary space, he did so by conforming to already established social constructs that ordered male and female relations in the public square to protect the women who had previously operated more freely within the context of the household church setting. What this suggests therefore is that while the rhetoric of fictive Paul in the Pastorals changed to reflect what appeared to be a marginalization of women in the more public sanctuary space, this stands in contrast with what would have originally existed in the household church settings (Haines-Eitzen, 2012), where women operated more freely and with greater agency in leading their households in worship which would have included: the reading and teaching from scripture. As the Pastoral Epistles sought to solidify the order of the church through the management of the ritual space (using Greco- Roman norms), did it limit the expansive potential of God's grace in the life of both men and women in the church and give licence to the misogynistic mindset that has haunted the church universal for generations thereafter?

This paper will not attempt to give a complete and thorough historical background to the text. Rather, it will explore only enough background to substantiate a connection between the experience of youth in the Caribbean and the proposal for an approach to scripture that meets their hermeneutical needs. In the text we see evidence of women's embodied faith and moral education practices which aided in the development of faith in the life of a young person. Women in the Caribbean church continue to embody faith and contribute to the moral education of children under their care by using scripture.

The postcolonial re-interpretation of the text (below) therefore serves to reflect further on the test case in support of a Livity Gospel Hermeneutic which aligns with an under rated but valuable lesson from the Early Church experience. While 1 Timothy and Titus suggest that the author of the Pastorals had some misogynistic tendencies, 2 Timothy offers a different picture. It foregrounds the participation of a young apostle in the "sincere faith" of women as the Early Church engaged 'life in Christ Jesus,' for life in the present. It highlights the role of women in

the moral and faith education of a youthful church as characteristic of the ongoing pursuit of life in Christ among Christians. Second Timothy therefore substantiates the conviction that there was much more to the meeting of women than gossip.

Whether formally or informally these women were able to use perhaps their “kitchen table banter” (Westfield, 2011), to provide a solid spiritual foundation for young people in their household. Additionally, while doing so they helped to secure the generational transfer of a lively faith which is also reflective of the postcolonial Caribbean experience today. The letter of 2 Timothy therefore highlights the spiritual life of women alongside the growing faith of young people in the Early Church. Considering the broader context of faith through the Gospels, 2 Timothy displays how the Early Church was shaping guidelines for ritual order which endorsed the value of moral instruction and character as pertinent to the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ. Such moral instruction and character building were being nurtured by women as a necessary part of the functioning of the household church.

Value of Moral Character and the Household of God

Recent commentaries highlight the significance of the Pastorals for the ordering of the Early Church (Towner, 2006, Collins, 2013, Yarbrough, 2018, Smith et al., 2018). I argue that in 2 Timothy teaching for moral character and legitimacy of teachers repeats the theme of ‘order’. Such order is sustained through moral education among young Christians. Luke Johnson (2018) highlights the significance of 2 Timothy 1 as an intimate paraenetic to a youthful Timothy. However, even in this paraenetic the order that is being reinforced moves beyond mere didactic practices and emphasise the roots (2 Tim. 1:3-7) of Timothy’s faith and moral character as one who grew up in a household of God pursuing life in Christ Jesus. These are important considerations in the construction of the LGH because it draws from the experience of a young Timothy who was being reminded of the training received, as a necessary fertilizer for the maturation of his moral behaviour (2 Tim. 1:7). Paul was not the only one using moral teaching to inscribe order in the church nor was he the only exemplary figure of such instruction. Lois and Eunice in their embodiment of the gospel, used the scripture, to promote the value and applicability of good moral character as part of living life in Christ Jesus.

Second Timothy 1 gives great insight into the ways in which women played a role in the preparation and development of young persons’ moral character. The interest in moral character can be compared with the author’s description of Lois and Eunice as women who embodied “sincere faith.” I argue that moral character reflects an expression of the Christian faith that is congruent with authenticity while living life in Christ Jesus. Such authenticity allows a person to follow the ways of Christ as fully themselves while actively embodying Jesus’ love for God and others even as one loves the self. The LGH gleans from such ‘sincere faith’ and advances the position that authenticity of faith among youth in the region can be achieved without denying one’s historical and cultural roots as part of the expression of being fully oneself, and fully alive in Christ Jesus.

Women in 2 Timothy were instrumental in creating ritual space for young persons such as Timothy to develop faith and moral character. Subsequently, the author was convinced that Timothy would embody the faith exhibited in his mother and grandmother. Because little is said about these women in the actual text, creative imagination (Jagessar, 2007, Hartman, 2019) is required, to expound on the ways that these women’s moral character or sincere faith

became such a hallmark in their religious experience and witness in an Early Church setting. As noted, Lois and Eunice being Jewish women, would have been knowledgeable even through oral narratives of the Old Testament Tradition or Septuagint. The combination of this pre-text along with the preachings about Jesus would have given birth to an expression of faith that didn't deny their Jewish roots, but rather permitted a continuation of their faith experience with God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The test case highlights the significance of women in the interpretation of scripture among young people. Womanists such as Kelly Brown Douglas (2001) would have argued that the hierarchical readings that emerge from the socialization of the reader also influences their interpretations.

A womanist and postcolonial approach to this text would suggest that readers should not view the Bible and interpret the scripture through a universalistic lens. Rather, each person must own their own cultural and religious experiences while seeking to generate their own meaning from the text. The sincerity with which Lois and Eunice first encountered the narrative about Jesus Christ alongside their Jewish background expands beyond a mere ordering of life in the Early Church setting. Their faith in Jesus is merged with their understanding of God's revelation among their religious and cultural group to form an embodied faith and an authentic expression of such faith so that the author of 2 Timothy was convinced that it was also inherent in Timothy.

Douglas (2011) argued that, as in Gustavo Gutierrez's "preferential option for the poor" (Groody and Gutiérrez, 2013), God's revelation is most easily manifested and visible among minority groupings and likewise the interpretation of God's presence is most easily recognized by those who characterise minority status in their social contexts. While Gutierrez was not addressing Jewish women in particular, the use of the Bible by these women among youth in their household would suggest that as they used the scriptures, they served to cultivate and embody Christian moral character, through their teaching role in their family and perhaps among those assembled in their home for worship.

Women such as Lois and Eunice reflected not only the embodied teaching role of women in the Early Church but offer substantive support for how interactions with the sacred texts among young people in the Caribbean offer hope for the experience life in Christ Jesus in contemporary home, church and community settings. As Jewish women, the activity of hosting others, provided an embodied space for fellowship reflective of an extension of the kind of intimate religious fellowship that is instituted in the Lord's Supper (Levine, 1991, Kraemer, 1994, MacDonald, 2017, Brooten, 2020, MacDonald, 2021, Parks et al., 2021). It is here that the broken body and the blood of Jesus would have been remembered in a significant way among believers whose conversation during table fellowship allowed for more liberating discourse around what it meant to be a follower of Christ considering a love ethic that circumvented the moral codes of the Greco-Roman world.

The way we receive the text today is not the same way in which first readers of the text in the Pastorals received it. Some would argue that the writing of the text, has the potential to colonize the essence of the message or the intent of the author (Samartha, 2002). The Pastoral Letters contain historical value in understanding the experience of the first readers. While we may not be able to uncover the original intent of the author, what we see on the text, points us to the participation of women in the shaping of faith and Christian morals through their use of the scripture. Sincere faith is not arbitrarily learnt by reading text only but by what is heard, observed, and subsequently replicated in one's life, especially in times of crisis. In postcolonial

settings such as the Caribbean, if the Church is to remain relevant as bastions of faith and moral teaching it is the embodied faith (Thomas, 2022) among its adherents that will serve as one of its greatest asset in an incessantly changing world.

Rereading 2 Timothy 1:1-7 Exploring the Silence

The mention of Lois and Eunice in the Pastorals signifies an important contribution made by these women in the nascent stages of the Early Church. Although they are silent in the text one can see how they created space and place for Christian ritual and intergenerational thriving in the faith to mature. Similarly, women in the historical memory of the church in the Caribbean and the Americas have served, yet not always as equals. While the history of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas has often been consumed by key male figures such as Nathaniel Gilbert and Thomas Coke, the church's history also consists of a few slave women who are not often credited for their teaching and leadership ministry which strengthened the Methodist movement in the Caribbean church in its early stages (Jagessar, 2007, Reddie, 2024). Their status as slave women causes their own contributions are subsumed into the more dominant narratives of the patriarchal presence. Here, I attempt to reread 2 Timothy 1:1-7 where Lois and Eunice's "sincere faith", bears some resemblance with the experience of the two African-Caribbean female slaves who accompanied Nathaniel Gilbert to England. After their mysterious experiences of "New Life", they returned to Antigua to a slave community where they encouraged faith in Jesus Christ and possibly taught young people under their care.

The two black female slaves referred to above are: Mary Alley and Sophia Campbell. Like Thelca, these slave women were not passive agents in their conversion and witness of Christ in their environs. According to Michael Jagessar (2007), their experience retained their knowledge of God from their Afro-Caribbean religious experience. Building upon their prior knowledge, they became active in the preaching and teaching ministry particularly among the slaves upon their return to Antigua. They were no doubt instrumental in the spreading of the gospel throughout the island, and consequently the region. Like Lois and Eunice, their contributions are not often remembered because of the erasure of slave women's voices and even more so young people and children's experiences in such archival records. These patriarchal records privileged the Euro Western white male ways of thinking which prioritized profits over the humanity of enslaved people and did not value such marginal personalities to offer their experiences any thorough documentation. Here, I will re-read the text (2 Timothy 1:1-7) alongside the experience of these two slave women (Sophia and Mary) with help from Michael Jagessar's imaginative reading of their unrecorded stories. Doing so allows us to see how the use of Caribbean, Postcolonial, and Womanist optics can profoundly affect the ways in which we read text and create meaning that is both innovative and emancipatory for the reader.

On his first missionary journey Paul could have stopped at Crete where he was received by a fledgling group of Christians whose initial encounter with Christianity began on the day of Pentecost, where Jewish pilgrims on their return shared of their experience of the Holy Spirit and the revelation of God through his son Jesus Christ. For many of them, although they had come to accept that this Jesus was the Messiah, there remained a measure of mystery regarding the implications for their life as Jews and Christians. Hearing of this fledgling group, Paul's first missionary journey took him to a household church in Lystra/Derbe where Lois and Eunice possibly leaders or adherents. Paul's testimony detailing his personal encounter with Jesus along the Damascus Road only confirmed the experience of those who had been to Jerusalem a

few years earlier and personally experienced the gift of the Holy Spirit. His teachings connected the teachings of the Septuagint in which Jesus fulfilled Jewish prophecy about the long-awaited Messiah. This revelation gave the believers in Crete the spiritual food which they were hungry to receive in a time when Judaism had been undergoing a decline caused by Roman oppression. In a household church where all are welcome, even a young Timothy would have been exposed to the teachings of Paul and more importantly to teachings led by Lois and Eunice who themselves were scholars of the Septuagint in their own right.

In a similar way, Sophia and Mary's encounter with Wesley in London, had a background of previous religious encounter. Through a speculative and imaginative postcolonial reading, I would liken the sincerity of Lois and Eunice's faith with that of Sophia and Mary. Their experience of God was authentic and is captured succinctly in the minute archival details about their life as slaves. Furthermore, another common feature of their sincere faith, could be their refusal to deny their ancestral roots. There is no evidence to suggest that Lois and Eunice would have denied their Jewish faith as Christians and prior to the introduction of Victorian family values introduced by the missionaries to the Caribbean, and to a limited extent thereafter, women are the cultural reservoirs that sustained the self-worth of the African youth under their care. These women in the Early Church and 18th Century Methodism through their sincere faith merged their spiritual and corporeal epistemologies with their cognitive knowledge sources to reflect an authentic expression of faith that impacted youth of their time.

As 2 Timothy 3:15 implies, Timothy's mother and grandmother taught him the scriptures. In a plantation economy where, young people looked to older women in their community for guidance one can surmise that as Methodists waited for the arrival of a minister Sophia and Mary also taught what they had learnt from the scriptures to both young and old in their community.

For Lois and Eunice, their religious narrative followed faithfully the worship of one God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and King David, whose Messiah they eagerly anticipated as Jews. The specifics pertaining to Sophia and Mary's religious background are not known, the anticipation of freedom through life in Christ, could have served to enable hope in the traumatic experience of plantation slavery in the Caribbean. This was not an escape from the reality, but rather a subversion of it using scripture to affirm the sanctity of their human life even when they may have been treated like animals. From the accounts of their life, Sophia and Mary are most likely literate slave women. Their reading of the Gospels therefore supported their attainment of life from a God who sets captives free which resonated with the unfree.

With creative postcolonial imagination one can suppose that Lois and Eunice had an acquaintance of the Septuagint, and this along with what they had learnt through their interactions with Paul, was able to inform their teaching of the scripture with a young Timothy. They understood that the Messiah had come and had left the gift of the Holy Spirit to be their empowerment for service and their guarantee for Christ's final return. Through their ministry of hospitality, they shared the Good News and moral instruction with the young in their home. This type of fellowship extended into the wider community that had developed around them in their tenement church. Lois and Eunice were widows, therefore despite uncertainty about their means their social status was still tenuous. What could possibly have kept them socially acceptable however was the presence of an adolescent Greek son, Timothy in their household. Their status did not define them because they understood that what they had were in service to God and others.

While Sophia Campbell and Mary Alley, did not have the social means, they shared a similar emotional, corporeal, cognitive awareness that helped them to merge their former religious lives with their newfound faith in Jesus Christ. Their presence within patriarchal and colonial societies do not prevent their agency. Rather they creatively use what they have through material and immaterial ways to share their knowledge of Christ with others. Through their hearing of the Gospel they enliven a faith that is expressive of God's reign among them and others that goes on to surpass their generation.

Through creative postcolonial imagination one can envision that on Paul's second visit to Crete, he was astonished to hear of Timothy's progress and saw in his sincere faith, a reflection of the sincere faith modelled in his grandmother and mother which he thought would serve him well in the mission field. However, not only was Timothy grounded in a sincere faith but also a thorough knowledge of the scriptures through the teachings of his Jewish Mother and Grandmother. His exposure to both Greek and Jewish religious culture, alongside his newfound faith in Jesus, provided a rich background in both Jewish and Greek culture that did not result in disillusionment because of the women around him who embodied the faith they found in Jesus alongside their Jewish identity.

It is a similar embodiment of faith through creative symbiosis of Afro Caribbean Religious experiences with faith in Jesus Christ that allowed the gospel message to come alive in the earliest undocumented stages of Methodist witness in the Caribbean. While Mary Alley and Sophia Campbell did not have the training required for the work, yet, as ordinary readers/hearers of the gospel, their embodiment of the text's emancipatory message shifted the reach of the gospel from among the powerful few to those on the margins as black and minority groupings within the Caribbean who used the text as a means for survival and flourishing.

Timothy's growth as a disciple did not hinge solely on Paul's first visit. Rather, the leadership of his mother and grandmother gave him the foundation that he needed not only for ministry but for life. There was something extra ordinary about these two women who, like Mary and Sophia used their religious knowledge resources to embody the faith they had in Jesus in a substantive way. In a young house church located in Crete, Lois and Eunice were perhaps leaders who commanded enough respect from their community to warrant the author of the Pastorals, mentioning them in his correspondence to Timothy. What he had learnt, expressed through Lois and Eunice, was how to live out the liberating message of the gospel despite colonial oppression. This I call a Livity gospel hermeneutic. A way of reading the life of Jesus alongside other texts. One that reads and interprets the text of scripture alongside one's personal and contextual realities and yet seeks to respond in a way that expresses deep faith in Jesus the Messiah, and his life giving and life enhancing witness throughout the gospel.

How we hear the gospel narrative may sometimes come in the form of fragments or it may come in the form of sacred memory. But what is important is the essence of such stories in sustaining the message of love, justice, liberty, and the hope of "New Life" wherever we are. We see this exemplified in Lois and Eunice as well as in Sophia and Mary.

Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to offer some pointers for the construction of a Livity Gospel Hermeneutic as an approach to reading the scripture for a lifestyle that reflects God's reign. In times of crisis, we can encounter fresh perspectives alongside the Judaeo Christian scriptural

heritage when we engage our historical and cultural resources. The mysterious experience of “New Birth” is an encounter with Christ that gives life to our souls and restores God’s characteristics of righteousness, genuine holiness and love. Such experiences also enable us to rediscover even in crisis where new signs of life are also present bearing witness to God’s incarnate love.

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