

'The woman was deceived and became a sinner' – a literary-theological investigation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15

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Dates:

Received: 03 Sept. 2013

Accepted: 16 Mar. 2014

Published: 16 July 2014

How to cite this article:

Mbamalu, A.I., 2014, "The woman was deceived and became a sinner" – a literary-theological investigation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(3), Art. #2062, 7 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i3.2062>

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In 1 Timothy 2:11–15 women are forbidden to teach and have authority over men in the church. The ground for this instruction is the creation account in Genesis 2 that asserts the priority of Adam over Eve in the order of creation. The second reason for the instruction is the deception of Eve according to the account of the Fall in Genesis 3. This pericope has elicited arguments between advocates of egalitarianism and complementarianism revolving over the issues of grammar, the context of the Ephesian church with regard to false teachings and the comparison of this text with the other writings of Paul, for those that subscribe to the authorship of Paul. The contention of this article is that verse 15 provides a major clue as to how this text should be understood. In addition, the author's rhetoric in this text is interrogated with regard to the text's own internal literary and theological logic. In this regard, the author is found to be inconsistent in his outlook, for the grace that was poured out abundantly on him: a blasphemer, a persecutor and a violent man and on account of his *ignorance* and *unbelief* (1 Tm 1:12–16) is apparently, being denied women on account of Eve's deception.

Introduction

As part of the pastorals, 1 Timothy is a veritable tool in the hands of Pauline scholars who are interested in the development of Pauline thought and ideas over time (MacDonald 1988). For such scholars, the pastorals, in general, provide the occasion for noting the similarities and dissimilarities between Paul's authentic letters and those that bear his name without his usual charismatic flair. There is a general consensus amongst scholars that 1 Timothy is Pauline, whilst some actually consider it a writing of Paul the Apostle (Luke Timothy, Howard Marshall, Knight). In this article, 1 Timothy is taken as written with Apostle Paul's mindset. The view on women as expressed in 1 Timothy aligns with what is known of the Apostle in his authentic letters such as 1 Corinthians 14:33–38. However, Pauline authorship of this letter is not critical to the findings on this article, for the thesis of this article makes use of the argument within the text as the author portrays himself in the book of 1 Timothy. Therefore, whether the author is Paul or not, does not detract from the basic conclusions of this article. To this end, I have used the term 'author of 1 Timothy' to refer to the author of the book.

The pericope 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in particular, has attracted much attention because of its attitude against women leadership in the church. It has served as the manual by which some church communities organised their congregations, for in it they saw a pattern for church organisation and leadership. For this reason, feminists, egalitarians, and complementarians¹ have had a field day working on this text. Most of the discussions have revolved round exegetical issues and socio-historical cum cultural issues of the text. Commentators are split in their understanding of very crucial aspects of the text, such that conclusions reached have often differed on critical points. The matter is not much assisted by the fact that there are at least two words that are *hapax legomena* in the pericope. The meaning of almost every word in the pericope is disputed, sometimes because of the ambiguity of the word since it lends itself to many interpretations.² As the matter stands, exegesis has rather been a tool to advocate one viewpoint against another and therefore has not brought any consensus on the issues raised.

It is the contention of this article that a reading of the pericope in light of its literary-theological³ context can lead to a more fruitful understanding of the passage and the book as a whole. The article shall not attempt to do an exegesis of the text, but shall highlight the different exegetical issues at stake in its interpretation.

1. Thomas Schreiner who subscribes to the complementarian view, defines the view as one that holds that 'women should not serve as pastors' whilst of the view that 'sees no ministry limitations for women as the egalitarian view' (Schreiner 2005:85, 207–208). Alice Mathews avers that complementarians were previously referred to as traditionalists or hierarchicalists (Mathews 2005:499).

2. Preposition *dia*, conjunctions like *gar*, *ude*, and words like *aythentein*, *teknogonias*, (these two are *hapax legomena*), *epitrepō*, *Andros*, *gunē*, have all been subjected to intense debate.

3. I came later to Elna Mouton's article that employs a similar methodology in reading the text. She 'analyses 1 Timothy 2:8–15 within the broad literary thrust of the epistle and explores (inter-)textual coherence of the passage ... with particular reference to images from Genesis 2–3 referred to in 2:13–15.' The difference in our presentations lies in the fact that she also reads the text as an allegory (Mouton 2012:115–128).

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Problem statement

It is argued, that 1 Timothy 2:11–15 is the most vitriolic and disparaging comment on women in the whole of the New Testament, if not in the whole Bible. This is not just seen in the limitation it imposed on women with regard to the leadership options open to them in the church, but much more perhaps, in the implications of the justification it provides for such imposition, (we shall later on tease out these implications). This passage, 1 Timothy 2:11–15 has, therefore, polarised the Church into groups, those that accept the ordination of women into Church ministry and those that do not. This has brought the debate largely into the arena of those that view themselves as subscribing to the inerrancy and infallibility of the word and those that are said to not do so. Yet within the group that subscribes to the notion of the authority of scriptures are those that find 1 Timothy 2:11–15 quite incongruent with the total witness of the New Testament (Mathews 2005:496). Yet almost all within the group of those that desire to keep women away from leadership in the church, on account of 1 Timothy 2:11–15, are uneasy about verse 15 of the text. This is because the verse (v. 15) in its literal sense suggests the insufficiency of the death of Jesus, which they all affirm and uphold.⁴ Taking verse 15, whom all agree to be problematic, as the clue to the text, puts 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in its proper perspective as an occasional letter, one of the submissions of this article.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this article is that 1 Timothy is an occasional letter and reading it as such does not disparage its value as the word of God but rather puts it firmly in its historical context going by the clues given within the text, and this necessarily imposes restraint on its readers and interpreters in terms of its application.

Methodology

This is a literary reading of 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in its immediate context and in the larger context of the pastoral Epistles. This study investigates the rhetoric embodied in the text and looks out for the theological implications of its assertions. The hermeneutics displayed in the use of the creation story of Genesis shall equally be explored.

Setting the context

The purpose of this section is to outline the state of the discussion on the topic by highlighting issues that are germane for consideration.

The literary context of 1 Timothy 2:11–15

The pericope occurs within the context of instructions on public worship especially the conduct of different forms of prayer for those in authority. A general instruction to all in verses 1–7 is soon followed by specific instruction to men in verse 8, and subsequently women in verses 9–15.

⁴Verse 15 suggests that women will be saved through (means) child bearing.

Whilst the instruction to men falls within the context of prayer, the instruction to women moves well beyond that, indeed ‘prayer’ is not mentioned. Some commentators like Marshall have tried to link the section pertaining to men with the section pertaining to women because the adverb *ōsaytōs* [likewise] suggests a link between the two parts. He therefore views the author’s concern with ‘ostentatious and seductive’ adornment as a hindrance to prayer (Marshall 2004:447). This is quite a possibility, but we are going beyond the evidence of the text. Schreiner chooses to see the adverb as indicative of the author’s transition from one concern to another, without necessarily having the activity of prayer in mind. Mounce (2000:148), within the context of addressing the issue of church order, views the author’s use of the adverb as linking the disruptive activities of men and women. Having addressed what he considers as disruptive in the conduct of men (anger and disputing), the author now turns to activities of women that he also considers disruptive. The fact that the author soon move on to the issue of not allowing women to teach, shows that he has clearly moved beyond the original context of instructions on prayer. This section (1 Tm 2:11–15) is soon followed by 1 Timothy 3:1–15 which gives instructions on qualifications for the appointment of church officials. This evinces quite clearly that 2:11–15 should therefore be read in the context of instruction for conduct or order in the church. The key phrase here is found in 1 Timothy 3:15, ‘[i]f I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household’. In light of the above, it seems more pertinent to consider 1 Timothy 2:11–15 and the preceding verses on prayer under the bigger rubric of the author’s concern for order in the church. Linda Belleville however, places the pericope under the rubric of the author’s concern against false teaching and not church order. She observes that about 50% of the letter’s content is devoted to the topic of false teaching (Belleville 2005:207). Though it is not clear how she arrives at the figure, it is obvious that Timothy was initially sent to Ephesus to curb the excesses of false teaching and its effect in the church (1 Tm 1:3), but this does not give the guarantee that all correspondence with Timothy must still revolve around the same issue though. For if Timothy had done his job well, the author would not need to address head-on the issue of false teaching, though it may definitely form the background of his discourse. By inference, the need for church order could have been prompted, amongst other things, by the danger that false teaching posed to the church. So that if the tide of false teaching had been stemmed, it would make sense to set up structures that would keep it at bay, especially if Timothy’s stay in Ephesus was to be temporary.

Exegetical issues in 1 Timothy 2:11–15

Having situated the pericope within its literary context, it is pertinent to now look at issues that have often divided scholars in their interpretation of the passage. It would appear that the exegetical choices a scholar makes are informed by his or her overarching predilection to view the passage as one that restrains women leadership in the church either as a universal principle or as an occasional issue.

Verses 11–12

Verse 11 expresses the author's command (*manthanetō* is in the imperative) that women should learn in silence and in all subjection or subordination. There is no need to split hairs about this injunction making women passive and not active learners, the injunction is that they are to learn (not teach as v. 12 makes clear). The mode for learning is that they be quiet in the process of learning, perhaps meaning that they exhibit a teachable stance, not disputing or being argumentative. There is no serious debate about this amongst scholars. However, verse 12, which builds on verse 11, is an arena for much contention amongst scholars. There are three clauses in verse 12, the first is 'I do not allow a woman to teach', 'and not have authority over a man', and the third clause is 'but to be silent':⁵

Verse 11 Let a woman learn
 In silence
 In all subjection }
 }

It is clear that the mode of learning is qualified by two phrases 'in silence' and 'in subjection'.

Verse 12 I do not allow a woman to teach:

and not to have authority over a man
 but to be silent

Although the verb *epitrepō* is not in the imperative, it does have the force of an imperative. The link between the verbs 'to teach' and 'to have authority' is a subject of much controversy amongst scholars. In fact my translation of the verb *authentein* is 'to have authority' would seem to have pre-empted the discussion. This is because the word in question appears only here in the entire New Testament (NT) and it seems to have the basic sense of 'to exercise authority' or 'to domineer over' (Baldwin 2005:49–50). Some scholars, like Marshall, reading 1 Timothy in the light of Titus 2:3 where older women are enjoined to teach younger women and in light of other evidence in the New Testament (Ac 18:26; 1 Cor 14:26), have qualified this prohibition on women to teach.⁶ In light of this they have opted for a reading that suggests that what the author of 1 Timothy prohibits is teaching in a dictatorial manner (Belleville 2005:219, 223; Marshall 2004:460; Scholer 2003:109).⁷ For Köstenberger (2005:62), however, the activities of *didaskein* and *aythentein* are coordinates. Going through a list of the usage of the conjunction *ude* in the New

5. Quinn and Wacker (2000:223) translate *gunē* as wife and *arnē* as husband so that verse 12 reads: '[M]oreover, I do not allow a wife to teach in the public worship and to boss her husband'. This was perhaps informed by the Adam and Eve analogy in verses 13 and 14, but most scholars understand *gunē* and *arnē* in a generic sense. Their interpretation has not gained much acceptance.

6. I would not presume that the readers (if it is assumed that it is read to the church) of 1 Timothy would have read Acts or 1 Corinthians, though Timothy, the intended recipient of the letter would definitely know if the practice was different from what used to obtain in the churches, but this in no way waters down the instruction. Another problem with this view is that within the context of church order, private teaching might perhaps not be prohibited as the example of older women in Titus may suggest.

7. More reasons than this are adduced for this conclusion, for instance, the fact that there are other words that have no negative colouration such as *exusia* or *exusiaōzō*. So the author's choice of such an uncommon word must have been intended to give the added nuance of domination or autocratic behaviour (see Scholer 2003:109). A rather unusual translation of the verse is proposed by Kroeger and Kroeger (1992:103): 'I do not allow a woman to teach nor to proclaim herself author of man.'

Testament, he avers that the conjunction is always used to conjoin activities that are viewed in the same manner whether positively or negatively (Köstenberger 2005:61). He therefore concludes:

Since, therefore, the term *didaskein* is used absolutely in the New Testament for an activity that is viewed positively in and of itself, and since *ude* coordinates terms that are both viewed either positively or negatively, *aythentein* should be seen as denoting an activity that is viewed positively in and of itself as well. (p. 62; transliteration mine)

The last clause 'but to be silent' unmistakably concludes the non-teaching role of the woman in the church. In summary of this section, I agree with Köstenberger that the author of 1 Timothy wanted women to be silent in the church and not teach and thereby exercise authority over men.

Verses 13–14: Justification for or illustration of the prohibition?

Verses 13 and 14 provide support for the prohibition in verse 12. However, what type of support the verses lend is also contended. Critical to the discussion is the conjunction *gar*, which some like Schreiner, Knight and Mounce take as the reason for the prohibition. Other scholars such as Belleville, Scholer, and Witherington take the conjunction as illustrative or explanatory (Belleville 2005:222; Scholer 2003:112; Witherington 1988:122). For these scholars, Eve is used as an example of a woman who was deceived and 'attempting to assume or assert an authority not given her' (Witherington 1988:122). She is therefore an example whom the Ephesian women must not emulate. The implication of the understanding of *gar* is to not see the author's recourse to Eve's story as a sweeping statement about the susceptibility of the womenfolk to deception. But this reading does not hold much water because the conjunction *gar* is used to introduce two statements; one about the priority of the creation of Adam over Eve and secondly, the deception of Eve. So if the conjunction is taken as an explanation, how does this apply to the statement of Adam's priority? Therefore, it is better to take *gar* as introducing the cause or reason for the prohibition. The implication of this statement shall be teased out later.

Conclusion of the pericope

The contention of this article is that verse 15 provides a major clue as to how this text should be understood.

Verse 15 – the conclusion of the pericope – commences with a mild adversative *de* which gives a different nuance or sense if directly linked to verse 12. Having mentioned the disqualification of women from teaching and having authority over men in verses 11 and 12, verse 15 provides a concession saying in effect:

though women are prohibited from teaching and having authority, they are not denied access to the kingdom in the world to come as long as they bear children and remain in faith.

Another option of reading could be 'women shall be rescued from the dangers associated with child bearing, if they continue to abide in faith and walk in love.' In the

first reading, women are to derive comfort from the fact that their prohibition from teaching and leading is not a prohibition from entering the kingdom at the end of the age on the condition that they bear children and continue in faith and love. A similar reading results if verse 15 is taken as following directly after verse 14, then it would read that women would not suffer the fate that befell Eve, the fate of becoming a sinner. The means by which they would not be regarded as sinners is by them giving birth to children and their continuing in faith and love. One of the implications of this statement is that it only targets women of childbearing age, and this could be read as a bias against barren Christian women. These two possible delimitations, therefore, imply that the verse is not generally applicable to all women in its original context. The second option of reading takes verse 15 as a promise to women that they will not die in the process of giving birth to children. An argument against this reading is that it lacks an antecedent, for it does not arise from any previous relevant discussion. Moreover, it is a reading that is not applicable to all women, for it goes against the grain for instance, of the experiences of Christian women in many contexts in the developing world. Therefore, whatever reading one subscribes to verse 15 is doubly limited; it does not apply fully to the context of Ephesian women (where we may surmise that there were women that were past childbearing age and those that might be barren). The statement in verse 15, therefore, cannot function as gnomic truth applicable to all Christian women of all time. This is the crux on which the exegesis of the prohibition in verses 11 and 12 must rest. This is because verse 15 is meant as the conclusion of the pericope. It is the clue left by the author that he has certain women in mind in the congregation at Ephesus. It is a clue that attests to the occasional nature of the prohibition. Non-acknowledgement of the import of this verse as crucial for the exegesis of the pericope is the failure of the major contenders of the prohibition of women from ministry. By their neglect of the importance of verse 15 for their exegesis, they unwittingly demolished the edifice of the general prohibition of women ministry that they had carefully built up. Their conclusion in verse 15, therefore, stands at odds with their assertion of the prohibition of women in ministry. This is obvious in the works of Schreiner and Mounce as stated below. Schreiner – noting that the implication of asserting that women are saved through childbearing would suggest that salvation comes through works – affirms the need to understand the historical situation of the Ephesian church in order to make sense of verse 15:

The false teachers, in trumpeting an over-realized eschatology, prohibited marriage and certain foods (1 Tim. 4:1–5). If marriage was banned, then bearing children was probably also criticized. Childbearing was selected by Paul, then, as a specific response to the shafts from the false teachers. Referring to childbearing is also appropriate because it represents the fulfillment of the woman's domestic role as a mother in distinction from the man. (Schreiner 2005:117–118)

Mounce (2000), in his conclusion also comes to understand the contextual nature of verse 15:

Women are not to take the reins of the church, exercising authority over the men and teaching them; rather they are to learn in quietness, in submissiveness. Paul sees the prior creation of Adam (Gen 2) as justification for male leadership in the church. He also sees Eve's deception in Gen 3 as a reason for women not to exercise authority. But lest he be misunderstood, Paul moves from Eve's sin in the Garden and her punishment to the *Ephesian women* and the fulfillment of the promise of Gen 3:15 that salvation extends to them. But they are to work out their salvation by accepting their role, one example being that of bearing children. (p. 148, italics mine)

The problem of these scholars in reconciling verse 15 with the rest of the pericope suggests an atomistic exegesis where emphasis is placed on verses or words and not the discourse. In another light, the incongruity of verse 15 with the entire witness of the New Testament regarding the procurement of salvation is the greatest clue to the interpretation of the pericope. Salvation could have the sense of being delivered from 'acute danger to physical life' (Foerster 1971:989); it could also have a theological sense of eschatological import as a synonym for eternal life. Scholars are quite unanimous in taking the verb 'to save' as used in this verse in this latter sense. So, for the author of 1 Timothy to depict salvation as being obtained by means of childbirth is inconsistent with his earlier statement in chapter 1 verse 13: '[H]ere is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.' Furthermore, having just depicted Eve as a sinner, it makes sense to understand salvation as synonymous with eternal life. Therefore, for the author who had earlier proclaimed God as saviour (1 Tm 1:1, 2:3, and later in 4:10), to turn around in chapter 2 verse 15 depicting women's salvation as contingent on childbearing, he is, one could surmise, seeking to shock his readers for effect. The understand of his statement, given the antecedents of the Ephesian church (1 Tm 1:3 'stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines'), there is a need for church order to contain the problem at hand. One of the structures to be put in place, amongst others, is to prohibit women from teaching and leading men, they must remain silent. However, women of childbearing age should continue to bear children and keep walking in faith and love to realise their salvation. There is no previous discourse about women of childbearing age before now, so the only relevance of such statement is to aver that women of childbearing age were the target of the prohibition in the first place. Verse 15 is quite significant in this regard: it brings out the reason for and the delimitation of the prohibition of verses 11 and 12. The targets of the prohibition are younger women, probably young widows, as depicted in 1 Timothy 5:11–15, who are gossipers and busybodies, who say things they ought not to. If such women had the platform of teaching and leading, they might do more damage. For this reason, the author of 1 Timothy decides to restrict them by not allowing them an official platform to speak from. Secondly, in order to keep them busy, he urges them to bear children. Therefore, the apparent blanket prohibition in verses 11 and 12 is shown to be directed at only one segment of women in the Ephesian church in verse 15 – hence the importance of verse 15 for

the interpretation of the pericope. The remaining part of the verse: '[I]f they remain in faith and love and holiness, with modesty', (1 Tm 2:15b) does not pose any debate amongst scholars.

The use of the Old Testament in 1 Timothy 2:11–15

The universal nature ascribed by some scholars to the prohibition of women to teach or lead in the church is informed by the author of 1 Timothy's reference to the account of creation and the fall in Genesis, as Schreiner says (2005:109): '[T]he prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:12 is grounded by an appeal to creation, indicating that the command has universal validity' (see also Merkle 2006:547–548). This is one reason, therefore, to consider the author of 1 Timothy's use of scripture in this regard. Special note shall be taken of any hermeneutical principle that his interpretation of the Genesis account might display or assume.

An appeal to the creation order with respect to the creation of Adam and Eve was invoked by the author of 1 Timothy, to accentuate his prohibition of women teaching or leading in the church. The question to ask is how he moved from his reading of the creation account to his conclusion that women generally, or even if it is limited to the Ephesian church, must not exert authority over men, nor teach.

The structure and rhetoric of the argument

The line of argument used by the author of 1 Timothy in 2:11–14 could be depicted thus:

- Premise 1: Adam was first created, then Eve (v. 13).
- Premise 2: Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and who became a sinner.
- Conclusion: A woman should not teach or have authority over a man, she should learn in quietness and full submission.

The priority of Adam

Concerning the use of the adjective *prōtos* though, Michaelis (1968:866) lists its interpretation in the New Testament as 'first in time, number and sequence'. It seems that the author of 1 Timothy infers from this neutral sense of 'first' a sense of rank or hierarchy. Michaelis (1968:865) notes, though, that this is well known in Homer. Rank or hierarchy intrinsically suggests a sense of value. That is, the fact that Adam was made first suggests that he is more valuable or more eminent.⁸ The eminence of Adam, according to this interpretation, is then passed on to all males. So every male

8.This definitely is not the account that we read, for God having made Adam found that something was lacking not necessarily in him, but more perhaps in his circumstances. It is also worthy of note that the Lord God, who had made other creatures male and female, chose to make Adam alone in the first instance. Was this to demonstrate how precious Eve was to be to him? According to Trible (1979:74), *h'adam* in Genesis 2:7 'is basically androgynous: one creature incorporating two sexes'. For out of this human person or 'earth creature' *'ishah* the woman was formed, that means that *h'adam* embodied the two sexes before God separated them. According to West: 'God begins the creation of human beings with a unity, the earth creature. Two sexually differentiated human beings, a man and a woman, are then produced through a process of separation. And we are told that it is the purpose of the man and the woman to become unity again. The story is clear: from unity (the earth creature) through diversity (man and woman) to unity (one flesh)' (West 2004:168).

is more important than every female. It is for this reason that no woman must teach men. The absurdity of this claim is quite clear, for it suggests that a mother may not even teach her son. But given the context of church order that we have chosen as the rubric under which to interpret 1 Timothy 2:11–15, where order itself is a relative term, it is safe to assume then that a contextual element has informed the author's interpretation. His concern for order is amongst other things informed by the desire for the church to gain or maintain respectability in the society (Scholer 2003:103). Instances in the letter that suggest this are numerous: '[H]e must also have a good reputation with outsiders' (1 Tm 3:7); 'to give the enemy no room to slander' (1 Tm 5:14); 'so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered' (1 Tm 6:1). Balch has demonstrated the pervasive influence of Aristotle's understanding of the sexes on the culture of the day. Groups that gave freedom or authority to women and slaves such as the Dionysus cult, the Isis cult, Judaism and later on Christianity received negative publicity in the eyes of the Greco-Roman society of their day. Often Jewish and Christian slaves had refused to worship their Masters' gods (Balch 2003:74–75). The authorities of the day usually clamped down on such groups and attributed atrocities to them, including treason. Since the household was viewed as a microcosm of the state, any perceived subversion of Roman customs and laws in the home was seen as an affront on the state, and seriously put down. For this reason, Josephus had to write an apology in defence of the Jews. Dionysius of Halicarnassus also did the same for Rome in which he had to present the constituencies as law abiding that enforced the submission or subordination of women and slaves (Balch 2003:75–76). If Balch's thesis is taken seriously, the author of 1 Timothy's need to reinterpret the only source of authority for Christians – the Hebrew Bible – to ensure compliance, is perhaps understandable and excusable.

The deception of Eve

The second reason provided for the prohibition of the Ephesian women to teach and exercise leadership over men is the deception of Eve. Verse 14 of 1 Timothy 2 reads: 'Adam was not deceived, (*ēpatēthē*), but the woman was deceived (*exapatētheisa*),⁹ and became a transgressor.' This second statement intends to make much of the difference between Adam and Eve not in terms of their culpability, but in terms of their deception at the time of temptation, for Eve had said in her defence, 'the serpent deceived me and I ate' (Gn 3:13). The proper question would be: What constitutes deception? We shall take note of instances where the word 'to deceive' (*exapataō*) or its cognates are used in the New Testament – this could give us an idea of what is, perhaps, meant:

- 2 Corinthians 11:3 – 'but I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived (*exēpatēsen*) by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.'

9.Though two different words are used to depict the word 'deception' for Adam and Eve, scholars are almost unanimous that there is no basic difference in meaning. The author of 1 Timothy, apparently used it for stylistic effect. See *apataō*, *exapataō*, *apatē* (Oepke 1964:384–385). However, a few scholars view the deception, more as seduction with sexual overtones. This is attributed to an apocryphal reading, see (Verner 1983:170).

- Romans 7:11 – ‘For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived (*exēpatēsen*) me, and through the commandment put me to death.’
- Ephesians 5:6 – ‘let no one deceive (*apatatō*) you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.’
- Romans 16:18 – ‘For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive (*exapatōsin*) the minds of naïve people.’
- 2 Thessalonians 2: 3 – ‘Don’t let anyone deceive (*exapatēsē*) you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.’
- 1 Corinthians 3:18 – ‘Do not deceive (*exapatatō*) yourselves. If anyone of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a “fool” so that he may become wise.’
- James 1:26 – ‘if anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives (*apatōn*) himself and his religion is worthless.’

From the different instances cited above, I suggest that underlying every successful deception is an element of ignorance on the part of the deceived. Ignorance could be in terms of the repercussion of one’s actions or it could be in terms of discerning the motive of the deceiver. I wish to suggest that the latter was perhaps the case with Eve. Eve was not ignorant of the commandment not to eat the fruit, but she was perhaps, ignorant of the motive of the serpent. The account of the fall in Genesis chapter 3 starts by telling the reader about the character of the serpent in verse 1: ‘[N]ow the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.’ The reader is given the context in which to interpret or understand the story about to be narrated, I do seriously wonder whether Eve had such knowledge. The fact that Adam had a longer acquaintance with the animals – since he named them – makes it plausible to infer that he knew the character of the serpent and was, therefore, not deceived.

Now, back to the author’s argument, does he intend to imply that the deception of Eve is a perpetual feature or characteristic of women and therefore serves as a ground to disqualify them from teaching? As MacDonald (1988) observes that:

the conviction with which the author argues the case about women not teaching and not having authority over men, as well as the general reference to ‘silly women’, suggests that all women are viewed as being incapable of ‘knowledge of the truth’ on the same level as men. (p. 180)

Or is it that women by virtue of what Eve – their forerunner did – must pay for her sin? This appears to be the insinuation about the woman who was deceived and became a sinner (v.14). The one-sidedness of the argument is demonstrated by the fact that the corollary is not the case, for the fact that Adam was not deceived did not make him to be without sin.

Literary-theological critique of the argument

In order to justify the prohibition expressed in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 2, the author of 1 Timothy makes reference to the deception of Eve as the ground on which the question about the woman rests. However, reading within the context of 1 Timothy shows that being deceived is not the prerogative of Eve or women. The author in an account of his own life, in chapter 1 verses 12 through 16, refers to a time when he acted in ignorance and unbelief – the very ingredients of which deception is made. This account, therefore, provides a literary critique of the author’s rather harsh treatment of the women in the Ephesian church:

- Verse 12: I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.
- Verse 13: Even though I was once a blasphemer (*blasphēmōn*) and a persecutor (*diōktēn*) and a violent man (*ybristēn*), I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance (*agnoōn*) and unbelief (*apistia*).
- Verse 14: The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly (*yperepleonasen*), along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
- Verse 15: Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.
- Verse 16: But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience (*apasan makrothymian*) as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

With regard to the theological critique of the argument, verse 14 of the text refers to the account of the Fall as found in Genesis 3. The man is referred to by his proper name, Adam, whilst Eve is referred to by the generic term ‘the woman’ – ‘the woman being deceived became a transgressor’ (1 Tm 2:14). This move is tactical for it makes the argument from ‘the woman’ in verse 14 to ‘she shall be saved’ in verse 15 quite smooth. In addition, the anthropology of the argument is that males are superior to females as Verner (1983:170) puts it so succinctly: ‘[I]n vv. 13–15 the author adduces two reasons for the prohibition of v. 12, both of which have to do with the fundamental superiority of men over women’. This ‘fundamental superiority’ as we have seen above is an exegetical decision made by the author of 1 Timothy in consonance with the culture of his day and to ensure the good standing of the church in the society in which it found itself. That this understanding is new or different from what was obtained earlier in the church as the ‘Magna Carta of the new humanity’¹⁰ (Longenecker 1984:30) is worth noting. The implication of consigning half of God’s created humanity to a marginal role on account of gender – a situation that is not of their making, makes mockery of the grace of God and of the gospel. The insinuation that the non-deception of Adam

10. Galatians 3:28: ‘[I] here is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus,’ is regarded as Magna Carta spelling out freedom for all, for it is in rupture with the hierarchical divisions of the society of the day.

made him a 'better' sinner than Eve calls to question the efficacy of the death of Christ to cleanse females or women from sin in the same manner as men or males. Finally, the author, who identified himself formerly as a blasphemer, a persecutor and a violent man, but who was shown mercy because he acted in ignorance and unbelief, but had the grace of the Lord poured out on him *yperepleonasen*, (abundantly, to overflowing, beyond measure) seems impatient for the Lord to pour out the same abundant grace on the Ephesian women. The impatience of the author about those who do not measure up to his expectations of them is also quite evident in his decision to hand over Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan because they blasphemed (1 Tm 1:20, just as the author himself had earlier done 1 Tm 1:13). Therefore, the letter provides an internal critique of the author's bias against women in the Ephesian church.

Conclusion

This article has tried to demonstrate within the ambit of the first letter of Timothy, without much recourse to other books of the New Testament, that the injunction we have in 1 Timothy 2:11–15 is occasional and as Scholer (2003:104–105) says *ad hoc*. Verse 15 has been found to be germane to this conclusion, because it is in this verse that all opposing opinions about the prohibition converge in agreement with the socio-cultural context of the church that was necessary to make sense of the verse. I have averred that verse 15 serves then as a clue to taking the prohibition in verses 11–12 as evidence for its occasional and *ad hoc* nature. An analysis of the argument of verses 13–14 has shown the bias and impatience of the author at handling with an iron fist an ugly problem in the Ephesian church. In addition, this study has demonstrated that reading 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in light of the author's own personal experience sheds light on the human instrumentality available to God to communicate his words. This gives a proper perspective of the written word, and I agree with Webb in advocating redemptive-movement hermeneutics in the interpretation of scriptures, for the Old and New Testaments sometimes only espouse 'incremental and not ultimate ethics' as the case of the slavery question shows (Webb 2005:394).

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that she has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced her in writing this article.

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