Serving in the Shadows: the ministry role of women in the French Assemblies of God, from 1932 to the present.

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Abstract

Through an investigation of source materials, this article examines the reasons behind the restrictive position on women in the pastoral ministry held by the French Assemblies of God from 1933 to this day, tracing its development from the early revival, despite an initial ambiguity which might have resulted in a more overtly Pentecostal approach.

Introduction

The Assemblées de Dieu de France (ADD) does not recognize female pastors. Yet:

- Pentecostals understand the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as ‘power for service,’ through the Spirit’s sovereign distribution of gifts. It is promised to all believers, regardless of age, sex, race or social status (Ac 2:17-18; Jo 3:1-3; Num 11:29) and is the basis for charismatic ministry (Ro 12:4-8; 1 Co 12:1-11; Eph 4:7-13).

- In contrast to Catholicism, Pentecostals do not hold a sacerdotal/sacramental view of ministry but affirm the priesthood of all believers (1 Pi 2:5-9; Ap 1:6; 5:10).

- Early Pentecostal women preached the gospel. The American Assemblies of God accredited female evangelists and missionaries from its inception in 1914, then female elders in 1935.

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2 This article is adapted from the third part of a Masters dissertation completed in 2009 entitled Permitted to Preach? Women’s Ministry among Evangelicals in France: A Consideration of Biblical Teaching and Practice, with Special Reference to the French Assemblies of God.
Furthermore, the subject has proved too sensitive for debate in Conventions. I have sought to understand why.

1. The Evangelical Context

The recent adoption (May 2005) of female pastoral candidature by the Baptist F.E.E.B.F. shows how restrictive French evangelical charismatic circles have been.\(^5\)

A certain isolationism and anti-academic stance caused by early rejection of Pentecostalism as ‘counterfeit’, has lead the ADD to be wary of theological reflection from the wider evangelical horizon.

2. Inheriting a Traditional Position: the 1933 and 1935 National Conventions

A general consensus that ‘women cannot preach, wives must submit’, hints that the movement simply inherited a traditional evangelical position.

Elim missionaries Douglas and Clarice Scott brought the Pentecostal revival to France in 1930. The first pastors of the newly-planted churches were Baptists or Reformed ministers\(^6\) ‘converted’ to teaching concerning Holy Spirit Baptism.\(^7\) Naturally, they brought theological input with them. The ADD’s first president was ‘well-balanced Baptist’ Pierre Nicolle (not Douglas Scott), to whom the movement ‘seemed much too fanatical’.\(^8\) These men helped set ADD doctrine.

Accordingly, a traditional position on women was adopted at the first decisive Convention in 1933:\(^9\)

A woman may never be in the ministry as pastor or evangelist. However, in exceptional cases, the pastor’s wife can teach. In circumstances defined by the pastor, his wife may lay hands on the sick with him, in public. A pastor must never call on a woman to hold a meeting and preach.

Argenteuil, March 1933

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3. As did other Pentecostal denominations; the American ‘Foursquare’ denomination was founded by a woman, Aimee Semple McPherson.


5. Evangelical Mennonite and Reformed women gained the right earlier.


8. [Trans. mine]; Stotts, *Le Pentecôtisme*, p.72

9. [Trans. mine] *Esdras* (Numéro spéciale, mai 1964)
Women must make a commitment to let their hair grow long, men to abstain from tobacco and alcohol.

Argenteuil, 1933

A precision followed two years later:
Deaconesses can be accepted. They must especially look after the Sunday School and visits.

Paris, 1935

These resolutions echo Scripture. The first, crucial resolution is ambiguous. Never admits exceptional cases or circumstances allowing the pastor’s wife some public ministry. But she has no ministerial identity apart from her husband, functioning under, and almost as an extension of, his authority. The teaching/preaching distinction is unclear – ‘teachers’ are Ephesians 4:11 ministry-gifts engaging in the activity we designate ‘preaching’ – contradicting the traditional interpretation of 1 Timothy 1:12 behind never.

This resolution, doubtless formulated in response to questions raised at the Convention, probably indicates diverging practices, even tensions, within the movement. Possibly the ‘exceptional’ measures reflect Clarice Scott’s ministry alongside her husband. She was a well-loved and respected figure. In November 1966, Scott being ill, ‘Mrs Scott, assisted by the local pastor, finished the mission.’ This implies that she preached. Relocated to the Congo during World War II, Clarice expressed her own missionary identity: ‘In spite of great difficulties, sustained by a supernatural strength, we have been able to evangelise the whole territory attributed to us.’

The 1935 resolution allowing deaconesses suggests that questions remained about the role of gifted women after 1933, and should probably be seen as a concession.

Early British Pentecostalism provides an interesting comparison. From 1908-1914, women ‘pioneered in ministry, led churches, and were popular speakers at Conventions.’ Nevertheless a 1914 debate raised the issue of authority: ‘those present […] wrestled with the passages that seemed to limit

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10 The first part of my dissertation was devoted to an examination of relevant passages and the wider debate on women in ministry.
11 See Stotts, Le Pentecôtisme, p.88
12 [trans. mine] ; Stotts, Le Pentecôtisme, p.46
13 [trans. & italics mine] ; Stotts, Le Pentecôtisme, p.57
woman’s participation.’\textsuperscript{15} Chapman concludes, ‘those from existing denominations brought their existing biases into the movement,’\textsuperscript{16} (the later charismatic movement kept theirs)\textsuperscript{17} France did not experience a prolonged period of spontaneous ‘Spirit-led’ female ministry, unlike Britain.

The 1930’s social context is discernable in the reaction against fashionable hairstyles. France only granted women the vote in 1944.\textsuperscript{18} Women belonged at home. One exercising religious authority would have been incongruous in a Catholic context where the celibate male priest ‘represents’ Christ.

Nevertheless, World War II imposed special circumstances upon the young movement. As pastors were mobilised or imprisoned, their wives took on pastoral functions.\textsuperscript{19} But the abilities of these women failed to change deep-seated attitudes and beliefs.

The restrictive position of 1933 has never been revised. Indeed, the general status quo no longer allows pastors’ wives to publicly pray for the sick or teach.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{3. Fundamentalism}

According to Stotts, the ADD defined ‘fundamental truths which expressed the basic doctrines, but would not exclude any truth [...] discovered or revealed in the future.’\textsuperscript{21} Scripture is authoritative, not tradition. Thus the changing social status of women could have inspired fresh doctrinal examination of the issue of women in ministry. However, the Bible ‘interpreted in a strictly fundamentalist way, is considered to be true in its slightest detail. Every aspect of the Movement finds its justification in at least one quote from Scripture.’\textsuperscript{22} Such literal biblical interpretation resists contextualisation.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{15} Chapman, ‘Rise and Demise’, p.234
\textsuperscript{17} J. Everts Powers, ‘Recovering a Woman’s Head With Prophetic Authority: A Pentecostal Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:3-16’, \textit{JPT} 10.1 (2001), pp.11-37
\textsuperscript{18} Years after Germany (1918), America (1920), the UK (1918, married women/1928 all adult women)
\textsuperscript{19} Stotts, \textit{Le Pentecôtisme}, p.106, p.110
\textsuperscript{20} Despite some localised changes.
\textsuperscript{21} [trans. mine] ; Stotts, \textit{Le Pentecôtisme}, p.87
\textsuperscript{22} [trans. mine] ; Stotts, \textit{Le Pentecôtisme}, p.62
\textsuperscript{23} Several assemblies still impose female headcoverings, an irrelevant practice.
4. A Lasting Ambiguity

Viens et Vois\textsuperscript{24} magazine condemned ‘all fanaticism,’ distancing itself from perceived excesses in Pentecostalism abroad.\textsuperscript{25} Perhaps Aimee Semple McPherson’s\textsuperscript{26} flamboyant preaching style, or evangelist Maria Woodworth-Etter’s ‘trances’ offended ‘balanced’ French evangelicals like Pierre Nicolle.

An almost complete collection of Viens et Vois\textsuperscript{27} dating from November 1932 (7th edition) to 1949\textsuperscript{28} yielded 43 articles referring to women.\textsuperscript{29} Like the pieces of a puzzle, these offer insight into the early movement.

4.1 Glowing Reports

The February 1933 issue includes an astonishing report entitled ‘A few memories of the visit of Mme Fritz de Rougement of Neuchâtel (Switzerland) to Calais’. Her evangelistic campaign, held late in 1932, was so successful that she extended her visit to 12 days, preaching 19 sermons. Edmond Rieder wrote:

> It was with great joy, but also a certain curiosity, that our dear Calaisians awaited the arrival of Mme de Rougement for a series of evangelism and sanctification meetings [...] I shall never forget our sister’s visit to Calais. How often we returned home, my evangelist friends Lorenz, Leblond and I, thanking the Lord for sending her to us to be a blessing\textsuperscript{30}

Many were converted and healed in these meetings (200 coming for prayer on the final evening). Despite this glowing report, a month later at Argenteuil the restrictions on women in ministry were voted. It seems fair to suggest that the report sparked controversy, and the conservative position at the Convention carried the debate. This would explain the inclusion of ‘evangelist’ in the first line, and the injunction: ‘A pastor must never call on a woman to hold a meeting and preach’.

But then a revival campaign in Ganges is reported in the following March 1933 issue:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{24} Now Pentecôte.
\textsuperscript{25} [trans. mine] ; Stotts, \textit{Le Pentecôtisme}, p.88
\textsuperscript{26} McPherson visited England twice, in 1926 and 1928.
\textsuperscript{27} Kindly loaned by Gérard and Hélène Raynaud, a fellow ADD pastoral couple.
\textsuperscript{28} Publication was erratic during the war.
\textsuperscript{29} Not including healing testimonies.
\textsuperscript{30} [trans. mine] ; Edmond Rieder, ‘Quelques souvenirs du passage à Calais de Mme. Fritz de Rougement’, Neuchâtel (Suisse), \textit{Viens et Vois} (February 1933), p.224-225
\end{quote}
Our friends Mr. Perrot, Mr. Scott and Mrs. Scott came to us full of joy and faith and soon communicated […] the certainty of the revival with which God was filling them […] His messengers stood in the full light of the Spirit and, determined to teach us the whole counsel of God, they gave us to hear their exhortations, altar calls and moving prayers for 11 days.\footnote{trans. mine} 

Clarice Scott is included in the ministers here, and this possibly confirms my earlier suggestion that the exceptions included in the resolutions that very month were a tacit concession to the way she worked alongside her husband. Mme de Rougement’s Calais campaign may have sparked controversy because she ministered in her own right,\footnote{She was the wife of Pastor Fritz de Rougement, who presided a campaign in Neuchâtel, Switzerland where Scott ministered. Bd de Perrot, ‘Neuchâtel, 18-30 April’, \textit{Viens et Vois}, (June 1933)} preaching fully-constructed sermons, whereas Clarice Scott’s interventions were considered testimony, or exhortation. In Nîmes:

Mrs Scott and Pastor Saussine concluded with their testimonies, telling how God had called and conquered them, and after the laying of hands on the sick and time counselling souls seeking salvation, we separated […] full of the joy of this 20th century revival.\footnote{trans. mine}

Nevertheless, Clarice Scott is part of the ‘ministry team,’ expressing a strong sense of Pentecostal calling. She apparently greatly inspired the anonymous woman reporter.

Thus the February/March issues of \textit{Viens et Vois} form the immediate historical backdrop to the 1933 Convention in Argenteuil, and illuminate the necessary ambiguities of the restrictive resolution.

The ambiguity was lasting. In April 1933, one month after, \textit{Viens et Vois} not only reported the successful mission in Bâle, Switzerland held by God’s ‘tireless and devoted servants, Mr and Mrs Scott and Mr de Perrot’\footnote{trans. mine} (the magazine regularly presenting ‘Mr and Mrs Scott’ as a ministry couple),\footnote{E. Doulière, ‘Nouvelles des Eglises: Bruxelles’, \textit{Viens et Vois}, (February 1934), p.254; C.D. ‘Nouvelles des Églises : Paris’, \textit{Viens et Vois} (February 1934) p.255 ; H. de Worm, ‘L’histoire d’un grand Réveil’, p.198-192}
but praised celibate female evangelist Anna Larssen’s ‘remarkable’ ministry in Copenhagen.\(^{36}\)

The continued publication of such reports demonstrates the paradox of the ADD position. The undeniable work of the sovereign Spirit through female servants remained hard to reconcile with traditional, literal interpretations of the Bible, particularly of the Louis Segond (LS) translation.\(^{37}\)

4.2 A Crisis?

A 1935 recap of early days (contrasting with Stott’s triumphal picture)\(^{38}\) offers an intriguing glimpse into a crisis possibly caused by ‘the question of women’s ministry’. After Scott’s initial crusades, pastors often struggled with the new assemblies: at the end of 1932 ‘a sense of unease weighed on our movement’; ‘until then, progress had been victorious, […] advancing with giant strides. The great difficulties were about to start, beginning with the Convention in Argenteuil.’\(^{39}\) Three pastors and two churches left the movement, followed shortly by E. Rieder - the evangelist who had just praised Mme de Rougement’s Calais campaign. This brief paragraph tells frustratingly little about the departures. Gauteron concludes, ‘Out of the Argenteuil Convention, our movement emerged organised and strengthened.’\(^{40}\) It seems issues had been ‘dealt with’ painfully.\(^{41}\)

A period of ‘convalescence’ and renewed progress followed – until the Convention in Calais ‘where the sense of unease manifested itself again, the church having been very tried in the torment.’\(^{42}\) Again, ‘the torment’ is not made explicit. M. Lorenz (who had rejoiced with Rieder over Mme. de Rougement’s campaign) did not leave the movement but left Calais. Possibly the church there had narrowly escaped a split. All this tends to confirm that


\(^{37}\) The second part of my dissertation examined gender bias in this popular bible translation, in particular the translation of *kephale* by ‘chef’ (chief) rather than ‘head’.

\(^{38}\) Stotts, G.R., *Le Pentecôtisme*


\(^{41}\) The other resolutions concerned the adoption of the 10 fundamental truths of the English Assemblies of God, conditions for baptism, church membership and communion, laying hands on head or back only, not laying hands on children for Spirit baptism, youth meetings, not asking for money in Viens et Vois - nor publishing controversial articles!

there were indeed tensions at the Argenteuil Convention over ministry roles of women. Gauteron’s delicate treatment of the subject (an attempt at ‘closure’?) is hardly conducive to historical investigation, but I suspect longstanding sensitivities about women in ministry originate here.

In January 1935, the ADD had just 14 pastors and evangelists, explaining why the Argenteuil losses were so painful. Lorenz (in Switzerland) and Leblond (in Belgium) are not counted.\(^43\)

Another article\(^44\) mentioning Anna Larssen reflects feminine stereotypes, minimizing her 12-year preaching ministry pre-marriage: ‘her simple testimony [...] gentle and humble revival songs could not but touch her audience. Later, she married Pastor Bjoerner, with whom she had several years of blessed labour.’ The authors report: ‘Joenkoeping has already given new workers for the great harvest of souls in France: they are M. Sawe […], and his wife.’\(^45\) The ADD preferred women ‘ministers’ to be married.

### 4.3. The Laying on of Hands: Pastors’ Wives and Deaconesses

Clarice Scott reported a church inauguration in Nîmes: ‘We didn’t shut the door while we layed hands on the sick so that every one could see…’\(^46\) Other pastor’s wives also prayed for the sick: ‘Madame Nicolle came to pray for me and laid hands on me in the name of Jesus […] Twenty-four hours later the Lord healed me.’\(^47\)

In April 1946 we read the startling testimony of ‘Mme Vivron, [a] Deaconess of Rouen,’ ‘called’ to a young girl with osteomyelitis:

I prayed for her and laid hands on her in the Name of the Lord; several days later the child was fully healed. Her leg […] had become normal, being lengthened by about 10 cm. This child fell ill several months later with pneumonia. Her distressed father came to fetch me


\(^44\) O. and G. Falg, ‘Le mouvement de Réveil au Danemark et au Suède’, Viens et Vois (October 1937), p.162

\(^45\) O. and G. Falg, ‘Le mouvement de Réveil au Danemark et au Suède’, Viens et Vois (October 1937), p.165

\(^46\) Clarice A. Scott, ‘Nouvelles des Eglises : Nîmes’, Viens et Vois (October 1937), p.166

\(^47\) Mme. Lemonier, ‘Témoignage’, Viens et Vois (October 1937), p.167
[... ] After prayer in the Name of Jesus, the fever left and the illness was conquered by the power of God. 48

A male evangelist held the crusade these healings initiated! But we see here women actively ministering.

4.4 The War Years: The Paradox of Acting Female Pastors

The chaos of war propelled women into preaching and pastoral roles:

Toulon has organised itself with the help of a brother assisted by Mme Landrieu (the pastor’s wife), St Raphael is being looked after by Miss Turner and Antibes/Grasse by M. Lefillâtre assisted by Mme Ingrand (the pastor’s wife). As for Nice, our sister, the wife of pastor Thomas-Brès has been assigned to look after this congregation. The news concerning the South has been transmitted to us by Mr Scott before he leaves for the Congo 49

Even a single woman functions as pastor here.

In June 1941, Mme Samyn, acting pastor, wrote:

Having taken on this difficult task myself, God has manifested his strength in my weakness and the Lord’s work marches on under the Lord’s direction. We have had several noteworthy miracles... 50

4.5 The War Years: The Paradox of Female Missionaries

Pierre Nicolle’s church in Rouen, despite the 1933 ban on women evangelists supported a female missionary, the Chinese Chen-Li-Wood. 51

March 1940 brought a letter from ‘Mr and Mrs Scott, missionaries.’ Back from the Congo, they went on a ministry tour. At a conference, Mrs Scott ‘captivated us by her public recounting of ‘Mission in Pagan Lands’. 52 In a summary in the April edition, described simply as a ‘missionary talk’, 53 Clarice Scott speaks in the first person plural.

50 ‘Belgique, Mme Samyn’, Viens et Vois (June 1941), p.90
51 ‘Nouvelles des Eglises’, Viens et Vois (October 1939), p.165
From 1939, regular news came from M. and Mme Vernaud and two Swiss female missionaries in Gabon. Letters from ‘Mlle Jacoud, Missionary in Gabon’ give insight into her responsibilities. ‘I went through a great physical trial, the Devil didn’t want this series of meetings at Oboui.’ Miraculously healed:

I was thus able to hold the meeting, and the following day I left to evangelise Wo and Abanga-Ayo. The day after that I was in Bikum. […] A revival has broken out at Oboui […] our brother Alexander is evangelising with a great love of souls and with authority. He is very obedient and submitted. On Sunday we baptised our brother in the Abanga.

September 1947 offered a moving testimony:

I bless the Lord for his call and the task he has given me, which still burns in me as strongly as ever, for these years spent serving Him […] I bless him for the life of faith, for the struggles and warfare of the ministry…

Germaine Jacoud was on furlough after eight years of missionary service, recovering from malaria.

Her fellow-worker was also hospitalized: ‘our sister Mlle Lassade is having to cope, not only with the sole charge of a large mission, but also with a difficult climate […] We must pray fervently for our sister…’ July 1947 brought news from this young missionary.

Incredibly women, forbidden to minister in the comparative safety of France, worked alone in Africa, apparently even supervising Gabonese male trainees.

4.6 ‘A Ministry for Everyone’ – Especially Women

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54 ‘Nouvelles des Eglises’, Viens et Vois (October 1939), p.165
57 Germaine Jacoud, ‘From darkness to light : saved to serve’, Viens et Vois (September 1947), p.138
60 These Swiss missionaries were probably not sent by the ADD; but their news is reported.
An October 1941 article inspired by the deprivations of the war describes ‘a ministry for everyone’. Dorcas (Acts 9:36) is a shining example. Stephanas’ family is portrayed giving practical help to needy church-members; but the text also indicates that they were church leaders: ‘I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these, and to everyone who joins in the work, and labours at it’ (1 Co 16:16). One couple offered hospitality to Paul:

Aquila took on everything that would have complicated the spiritual work of the apostle, whilst Priscilla took care of his laundry and clothes. Later Apollos was also taken in to their home. Their house was God’s house, and that of God’s servants.61

Today, this is a frankly amusing interpretation of Acts 18:1-3 which state that Paul initially ‘stayed and worked’ with these tentmakers, probably contributing to the household (see Acts 18:5). Priscilla’s teaching and missionary role goes unnoticed: ‘Priscilla and Aquila’ accompanied Paul to Ephesus; ‘Priscilla and Aquila’ taught Apollos (Acts 18:19;26-28); Paul greets ‘Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow-workers’ – *sunergos*, the Greek term applied to Timothy in Romans 16:21. Named first, against conventions of her day, she was probably the most gifted. But Fauvel writes according to the stereotypes of his day. Finally, ‘Phoebe understood that the blessed mission of the woman was to serve (of the man, too.)’ This minimizes her official role as *diakonos* (no Greek feminine) of the church in Cenchrea, delegated by Paul to carry the epistle to Rome (probably reading it publicly), a term translated *minister* (trans. LS) when used to describe Paul, Tychicus, Epaphras and Timothy (Eph 3:7; 6:21; Col 1:7; 1 Thess 3:2).

The presence of women on Paul’s ‘ministry team’ is overlooked.

4.7 After the War: The Problem of Deacons – and Deaconesses

In July 1948, theological justification is finally offered for forbidding women’s ministry, embedded almost incidentally in an article on elders (ie. pastors) and deacons:

It seems that these terms risk being confused or assimilated to each other in certain assemblies […] We will try to illuminate the question with the help of those passages in the Word of God which are relevant62

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Apparently, the role of deacons was unclear, perhaps causing tensions. What then of deaconesses?

Authored by editor Pierre Nicolle, this article confirms my original suspicions regarding the way the movement inherited a traditional evangelical view of women. Poloma cites three factors in an American context that worked against women’s early Pentecostal freedom: the secular feminist movement,63 ‘fear of apostasy (especially fearing the displeasure of evangelicals) and the decline of the revival,’64 which seem transposable to France. Despite years of portraying anointed female ministers, and recent war-time experiences of female leadership, the role of women was unclear. But now Nicolle’s ambivalence (in one account his own wife healed the sick) is resolved. He argues: ‘as for the deacons, the institution of which is detailed in [Acts 6], their mission was to take care of the material needs of each congregation;’65 deacons are not pastors or elders. Nicolle equates the role with ‘those able to help others’ (Greek antilemps; 1 Co 12:28.)

The final stage of his argument concerns the place of women:

It does not seem that the pastoral ministry can be a feminine ministry since, on the one hand, Preaching and Teaching are central to it […] and, on the other hand, we can read in 1 Timothy 11-12, ‘I do not permit a woman to teach…’ Whereas a woman can definitely be ‘Deaconess’ (Romans 16:1). All these ministries are from the Holy Spirit; therefore, let there be no misunderstanding: a pastor’s wife will not be, because of [her marriage], ‘evangelist’ any more than the wife of a deacon will be ‘deaconess’. The pastor has a public ministry, as does the evangelist, whilst deacons and deaconesses have a private ministry, among the Congregation, by visiting people in their homes.66

1 Timothy 2:11-12 is interpreted literally with no exegetical justification. He concludes:

Thus deacons are helpers […] they are not clothed with any authority at all in the church. A servant does not HAVE authority but is

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63 French women had been voting for 4 years
UNDER authority. This must be clearly understood, accepted and practised if we are to avoid misunderstandings and difficulties. Here lies the heart of the matter: authority. Nicolle puts both deacons and deaconesses ‘in their place’, but more specifically women.

Nicolle narrows down the 1933 Argenteuil resolution permitting association of the pastor’s wife with her husband. Ironically it is perfectly Pentecostal to say gifts are spiritual, not ‘marital’. But in practical terms, wives whose status offered slim opportunity were now discouraged from exercising their gifts.

The following month, Prod’homme, pastor of Argenteuil (a coincidence?) tackled the issue, differing slightly in ecclesiology: ‘There are three groups of ministries in the church, charged with its direction and edification: the Apostolate, the Episcopate and the Diaconate’. The first group are Ephesians 4:11 ministry-gifts: ‘They depend only upon God.’ The second group are local ministries (Elders) designated by the first (some of whom may also preach.)

This obviously differs from Nicolle. Reminiscent of the three-fold ministry of Catholicism/Episcopalianism, it tends to ‘hierarchalize’ and institutionalize the church. However Prod’homme was above all reacting to the same problem as Nicolle:

The third group, the Diaconate, includes the deacon and the deaconess (Greek diakonos = servant). This is the only ministry with a feminine because it does not imply the task of direction [...] His ministry is to look after material tasks. [...] Note that there is no mention here of preaching or teaching.

The fundamental point about the role of deacon is agreed. For deaconesses, Prod’homme refers to Romans 16:1-2 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. He concludes: ‘very few churches need deacons [...] Our churches in France need Elders, but these cannot be elected by an assembly.’ The problem of

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69 Nicolle resembles British leader Donald Gee who preached in France; he paired spiritual gifts with particular ministries ie. healing with evangelist.
70 Prodhomme, ‘Court essai’, Viens et Vois (August 1948), p.125
71 Prodhomme, ‘Court essai’, Viens et Vois (August 1948), p.125
deaconesses prompts a move away from spontaneous church life towards a more ‘clerical’ one, strengthening pastoral authority.\textsuperscript{72}

The progression to negative positions on women’s ministry strongly suggests that this was the real purpose of these articles. Scripture must resolve important contemporary issues: church structure and women’s roles, probably sharpened by the war years. The 1933 Argenteuil resolution is hardened and the 1935 institution of deaconesses undermined. Thus the practice of ministry by women as recounted by reports and testimonies published in Viens et Vois, and the Pentecostal position on the universal baptism of the Holy Spirit, were curtailed by the traditional understanding of the biblical texts reaffirmed after the war.

Nicolle’s article: ‘SOS: We need labourers for France!’\textsuperscript{73} made it ever clearer that deaconesses were largely superfluous: male workers were needed.

Nevertheless, the following month Gabonese evangelist Bengame reminisced about ‘Spirit-filled’ Madeleine Nyingone’s gifts of healing and prophecy, whom persecution prevented from becoming ‘a powerful servant of the Lord.’\textsuperscript{74} More ambiguity! A ‘Pentecostal’ point of view concedes that the Holy Spirit can after all sovereignly distribute His gifts: the Exception is always possible, a biblical example being Deborah. This is really a \textit{derivative} of Acts 2 Pentecostal theology! I would suggest that this ‘exception theory’ actually points to a Pentecostal hermeneutic that integrates the activity of the Spirit, after the model of Acts 15.\textsuperscript{75} Nowadays ADD status quo does not allow the Exception to manifest herself.

\textbf{5. Recent Teaching}

Books published by the ADD’s publishing arm do not represent an official position but are selected by a committee of pastors and must conform to ‘sound doctrine’.

\textbf{5.1 Roger Copin: ‘Co-heirs of the gracious gift of life’}

\textsuperscript{72} There are no deacons in the ADD today.
\textsuperscript{73} Pierre Nicolle, ‘SOS: On demande des ouvriers pour la France’, \textit{Viens et Vois} (Septembre 1948), p.147
Serving in the Shadows: Women in French AoG

This late influential pastor wrote ‘about the pastor’s wife’ in 1997 to ‘honour’ (1 Peter 3:7; trans. LS) the sacrifices of women, documenting the hard conditions his wife endured during their ministry.

‘Pastor’s wife’ emerges as a ‘vocation’ based on Ephesians 4:1:

A Christian woman cannot say “Pastoral service doesn’t interest me. It’s my husband’s job, not mine.” What example will she give to the local Church her husband is called to serve. While there are good “doubles”, we have known cases where the woman destroyed her husband’s vocation […] Here, more than anywhere else, the Christian woman must be for her husband “a help the same as him”

The good pastor’s wife devotes herself completely to her husband’s calling; Genesis 2 as quoted here implies an effacing of self and opinions, a fusion to her husband’s self. “A true chief does not say: go on, but follow me”. She must be modest, loving prayer, not frivolous but holy in body and spirit.

Whilst humility, prayerfulness and holiness are excellent qualities, a special stereotype is being created. ‘If in the couple, the man is the head, the woman must not be the neck that makes the head turn to look the wrong way. Alas, this has happened.’

‘Mrs C. Scott’ is ‘what the pastor or missionary’s wife must be’:

A woman filled with the Spirit, self-effacing, consecrated, gentle, kind, loving the Lord and souls. She had to adapt herself to her husband’s rhythm of life[…] She ended her existence as she had lived, anonymously in an old peoples home in England

Something sad and dangerous is going on here! Wives are consigned to the shadows to lay personalities, needs and desires aside. This is not a true portrait of Clarice’s life and marriage. She doubtless was a modest woman who lived sacrificially, but she felt herself a true partner-in-ministry and, as reports in Viens et Vois testify, ministered in public and was sometimes the centre of attention. Indeed, she had experienced a call to missionary service

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76 R. Copin, Cohéritières de la Grace de la Vie (Grézieux La Varenne: Association Viens et Vois, 1997), p.29
77 [trans. & italics mine]; Copin, Cohéritières, p.31: Gen 2, trans. LS.
78 [trans. mine]; Copin, Cohéritières, p.33
79 [trans. mine]; Copin, Cohéritières, p.33
80 [trans. & italics mine]; Copin, Cohéritières, p.35
as Miss Clarice Weston. There should not be a different standard of humility for women as for men.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 is not quoted or exegeted; it is simply assumed to be the well-known meaning of Scripture that women cannot be pastors: ‘What service can they accomplish? They can be servants of the Lord like Phoebe, Euodia, Syntyche and many others (Romans 16. Philippians 4:3).’81 No study is made of the Romans 16 women: Priscilla, Paul’s ‘fellow worker’ (v.3) and Junia ‘outstanding among the apostles’ (v.7) go unmentioned!

If God, in his word, says what women must not do: teach or take authority over the man, let them accept it. God is wise! There are so many things to do! The man and the woman are complementary[...] The woman who wishes to free herself from the constraints of the Bible, will obtain or cause the same results as the first woman giving into temptation. The same serpent is still alive: “Did God really say?” Yes, God speaks. “Let the earth be silent before him (Habakkuk 2:20)”82

This is both patronising and threatening. It is based on a simplistic interpretation of 1 Timothy 2 and Eve’s role in the Fall: ‘Sin entered the world through a woman, Eve.’83 This contradicts Romans 5:12-14.

[Nounou] never aimed at the pulpit, nor a pastoral ministry. She was a humble woman who loved and served the Lord with all her heart. Like Elizabeth, Anne, […] or Mary in their day. […] We are not called to give into fashions […] Many of those who are ambitious do nothing other than trouble the Lord’s Work84

Again, biblical examples are glossed over. Mme de Rougement, Anna Larssen, Chen-Li-Wood, Germaine Jacoud have vanished into the Pentecostal past. (Strangely, Viens et Vois publish Maria Woodworth-Etter’s biography!) There is no recognition that some women feel called to ministry out of a genuine desire to serve God or that women serve in active ministry around the globe: again there is a double standard.

81 [trans. mine]; Copin, Cohéritières, p.25
82 [trans.mine]; Copin, Cohéritières, p.28
83 [trans. mine]; Copin, Cohéritières, p.17
84 [trans & italics mine]; Copin, Cohéritières, p.70
While Copin’s sincerity is not in doubt, I believe this style of teaching is potentially psychologically damaging to women struggling with a sense of call.

5.2 Jim Henry on Marriage

Henry teaches a traditional view: the husband as ‘chief’ (trans. LS) based on Ephesians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3, although insisting that the husband love his wife as Christ loves the church.

In the 1980 book he slips into polarized Complementarian stereotypes: males are rational, intellectual, authoritative, strong, active; females are emotional, intuitive, passive, graceful, reserved.\(^85\) Does the Bible expressly teach this? Deborah and Priscilla do not fit this ‘straitjacket’.

But the 2005 book applies the husband’s authority in an increasingly ‘egalitarian’ way:

The word chief smells too much of the barracks! The term and status of ‘responsible leader’ fits better the mentality of Christ, the greatest servant. Thus, the husband will be the first one ‘responsible’ for the home, mainly if he is the only one earning a salary as in the time of the Apostle Paul, when the woman was generally deprived of education and, consequently, relegated to the kitchen and with the pots and pans. In a truly Christian home, the man and the woman before God are “co-responsible” for their home.\(^86\)

There is even a nod in the direction of contextualisation. ‘Let us not be intransigent machos[…] Let’s get rid of our masculine pride. There is no shame in asking our wife’s opinion and following her advice.’\(^87\) Henry is aware of an imbalance that needs redressing.

5.3 André Pinguet on Marriage

Pinguet’s 2005 booklet is slightly more theological. ‘Men and women are made to complete each other.’\(^88\) The woman is ‘like him’ (trans. LS) defined as a ‘vis-à-vis,’ the NBS\(^89\) translation signifying ‘face to face’. From this, with

\(^{85}\) Jim Henry, *Que le Mariage soit Honoré de tous*, (Grézieux La Varenne, Craponne: Association Viens et Vois, 1997), p.93


\(^{87}\) Henry, *Le Mariage selon l’Evangile*, p.77

\(^{88}\) André Pinguet, *Jalons Bibliques: Le cercle de famille chrétienne* (Grézieux La Varenne: Association Viens et Vois, 2005), p.18

\(^{89}\) *The Nouvelle Bible Segond*, an important recent revision (2000)
1 Corinthians 11:11,12 and Genesis 1:27, Pinguet infers the complementarity of the couple, an ‘indivisible entity’. He emphasises reciprocity within the couple and quotes no text about male headship or female submission:

A joker [said…] “Yes, but the wife is the neck that turns the head!”

Well I think that there is a good dose of realism and common sense in this ‘dig’. A solid and supple neck allows the head to adopt a good position, a valid orientation […] Good relations between the two are favourable to the whole body! So let’s give up this stupid question of pre-eminence within the couple: husband and wife are equal and constitute, as we have said, an indivisible entity.  

Henry and Pinguet wrote to edify married couples. I cannot infer that Henry might approve of women exercising ministry under male authority or that Pinguet might approve of complementary female pastoral contributions to a leadership team. Yet both go further in reflecting the egalitarian ethic in Scripture (Gal 3:28).

Conclusion

Classical Pentecostalism, practising the biblical concepts of call, gifting and anointing welcomed women ministers but lacked resources to adequately address the doctrinal difficulties raised by traditional denominations; consequently, practice suffered in some places, including France. Early proponents believed Acts 2:17-18 demonstrated that ‘women in public ministry was actually a positive sign of the work of the Holy Spirit as God’s plan is reaching its glorious culmination in these last days’. Therefore, French Pentecostals should reconsider where spiritual authority is located: the masculine gender, or the Holy Spirit’s gifting of a member of Christ’s body?

But a wind of change is blowing, at a time when the movement is sensitive to preserving a Pentecostal identity within French evangelicalism. I suspect there is in reality a great diversity of opinion, and that an

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90 Pinguet, Le cercle, p.25
91 Chapman, ‘Rise and Demise’, p.217
93 Larsen, ‘Evangelical Distinctive’, p.233-234
indeterminate number of French ADD pastors would like to offer greater ministry opportunities to women.

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