



**Rev. Dr. R. Hollis Gause**  
(July 1, 1925 – September 6, 2015)

SPS President, 1972

**Remembrance by Jackie Johns:**

Over the past dozen years, the most frequent question I have received as the pastor of the New Covenant Church of God was “what is it like to pastor Hollis Gause?” My response always has been, “He lets me preach to him every Sunday,

but my wife is his pastor.” In truth, one of the greatest honors of my life has been to pastor the church R. Hollis Gause chose as his church.

In my denomination, the name of Dr. Gause has been revered for almost seven decades. As reported to me by one who knew him when he arrived in Cleveland in 1947 to teach at Lee College, it did not take long before it became evident that he was probably the sharpest theological mind in our movement. Over the decades thousands of students came to admire and fear him. He was an enigma, both hard as nails in the defense of the truth and as meek as a lamb in caring for those who sought the truth.

I first knew him as my professor of Greek and the Dean of the College when I arrived at Lee in 1972. At that time, there was a common adage on campus, “Some are of Cephas, others are of Apollos, but I am of Gause.” Students would often replace the names of the Biblical characters with those of other faculty members. The thing I feared the most in his presence was his sharp wit. He could be both folksy and brainy in the same instance. I always felt I was out of his league, an amateur trying to keep up with a pro.

The things I admired the most about him began with his passion for Christ, which was most clearly seen in the tears he shed at every mention of the cross. I loved his keen intellect applied to the interpretation of the Scriptures as he allowed the Word of God to illuminate the Word of God, always pointing to Christ and Him crucified. As his student, I often admonished my peers to listen closely to his sermons and lectures, “He is the last of his kind in our generation.” His passion for the incarnated and inscripturated Word produced a Biblical-Systematic theology, that

is, his scholarship might best be described as the systematizing of God’s self-revelation in the Scriptures.

What was it like to preach to Hollis Gause every Sunday? The truth be told, he was the only person in the world who intimidated me when I preached. I have always wanted to be precise in my presentation of the Word of God, but when Hollis joined our congregation, my desires for theological depth and contemporary relevance kicked into overdrive. However, I soon accepted that my impulse to impress my mentor and friend was an obstacle, so I opted for an alternative goal each Sunday. I

aimed to simply get one chuckle out of him. If I could get him to laugh, I knew I had connected, and everything would be all right.

Once I was free from the need to preach for Hollis Gause as though I was still being graded, I was able to draw strength from his presence. I knew he loved me, I loved him, and together we loved our Savior. His presence brought the comfort of knowing I was a faithful, if not effective, preacher of the gospel. He was an anchor whose presence emboldened me to preach the truth in love. His frequent, soft, deep response of “Praise God” was fuel to the fire within me.

I conclude with words I wrote for his obituary. “Dr. R. Hollis Gause lived life to the fullest. He taught and understood that eternal life is more than life that does not end; it is to know God and to glory in the cross of Christ forever. He measured his life not by dates on a calendar, but by the joy of serving the eternal Creator from whom all life flows. To that end, he was a friend to the friendless, a counselor to the weary, and a tireless preacher of the Word of God. He served as a professor at the Pentecostal Theological

Seminary until his ninetieth birthday. And he remained an active preacher and teacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ until his death. In recent months he completed an extensive commentary on the New Testament Book of Hebrews and submitted it for publication. In recent weeks he submitted for publication a collection of short theological essays. He fought a good fight; He kept the faith; He labored until the end. In the words of the early Methodists, on Sunday evening, September 6, 2015 with family gathered around, he died a ‘happy death’ and marched into the presence of his Savior.”



The writing of theology or the teaching and preaching of theology must be one fabric with worship. The lecturer’s classroom, theologian’s study and the proclaiming-praying-singing congregation are identical. They are the body of Christ, the church of the living God. It is our intention to write under the authority of the word of God. All that is said is answerable to Scripture. It is also our intention to be responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit—in loving union with Him so that His leading and power are evident. Our writing is under the warning and promise of God that it is ‘not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts’ (Zechariah 4:6). We write with the understanding that we are immediately in the presence of God—the One who knows our thoughts afar off. We also write around the centrality of the Incarnation—Christ’s birth, life, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and return. These are all terms of worship, and such terms of worship are both promise and judgment.

R. Hollis Gause, ‘The Distinctives of a Pentecostal Theology,’ unpublished paper

**In Honor of My Mentor, R. Hollis Gause, by Kimberly Ervin Alexander**

For over sixty-five years students were challenged by the rapid-fire delivery of Dr. Hollis Gause's logically ordered but tightly packed lectures in theology and biblical studies. The challenge to 'keep up' and 'get it all down' was complicated by the awe and wonder we experienced as we heard what we'd never heard before though, as Pentecostals, we found resonance with it. What amazed those of us who studied under him and later had the privilege of teaching with him was that though he obviously drew upon an accumulation of scholarly work spanning the decades, he continued to write new lectures, to think in new ways and to re-vision Pentecostal theology. As my husband, Corky, who 'sat at his feet' at both the undergraduate and graduate level, totaling eighteen credit hours, equivalent to a concentration in Gause, put it, 'After so many dusty lectures from others, I was always thrilled to see those fresh legal sheets.' Unlike some scholars, Dr. Gause was able and willing to revise his own theology and to rethink it as is evidenced in the moves he made from his first book on women in ministry leadership to the second one, which we co-authored. He became more and more dissatisfied with previously acceptable categories and their limits. He was truly Wesleyan and truly Pentecostal.

In the bibliographic essay I wrote in a *Festschrift* in his honor, I described his work in this way:

Pentecostal scholars today, for the most part, have the luxury of being able to 'specialize', devoting their time, talents and energies to one discipline with an occasional foray into interdisciplinary experiments. But scholars of earlier eras within Pentecostal academia were called upon to be the primary resource person for the denomination or school that employed them. Thus, though their degrees may have been in biblical studies, they were often called upon to teach theology, history or even practical theology. While obviously taxing for that first generation of scholars, they produced an invaluable pool of resources for future generations. R. Hollis Gause became that kind of resource for the Church of God. One may conclude that Gause is/was what Anglicans would refer to as a 'divine', a member of the clergy skilled in the study of divinity or theology; though now much more common in Pentecostal circles, for years this was something of a rarity.

As a result, a survey of his writing reveals that his contributions are found in a variety of genre. One finds in his portfolio works categorized as exegetical commentary, Bible lessons, theology, church polity, historical theology, practical theology, reflective essays and even free verse.

Gause, like his contemporaries in classical Pentecostalism, became an occasional writer, being called upon by the denomination to produce works that answered questions, explained positions or instructed and trained ministers and laypersons in the faith. Gause's work was often pivotal, determining the direction the denomination or educational institution would take.<sup>1</sup>

For me, his work and influence were pivotal in determining the direction I would take.

I first met Dr. Gause when I timidly entered his office at Lee University in the summer before he was to make his rightful return to the Church of God School of Theology, the school of which he was founding director and dean. As a very green seminary student, I asked if I could serve as his graduate assistant. He kindly agreed and thus began one of the most significant relationships of my life and *the* most important one for my theological formation. He not only affirmed me as a student, one of the few female students at the seminary at the time, but also as a human: he wouldn't allow me to do any menial tasks, such as washing out his coffee cup.

Using his text, *Living in the Spirit: The Way of Salvation* in a Lee extension at the Woodward Ave. Church of God, I knew he would be delighted by the comment by one of the students who was challenged by his discourse. She said, in a classic Tennessee accent: "Well, he's no Frank Peretti!" She had no idea just how astute she was! And I was right, he was delighted! Later, I audited a seminar on Theology of Suffering in Paul in which a visible demonstration of his own suffering was a part of the co-curricular pedagogy as his wife, Beulah, in the early stages of dementia sat in the room, in a wheelchair, while he discussed Romans 8 with pathos: we groan, the whole creation groans and the Spirit groans—in resonance together.

Sitting down to write what would be the fourth chapter of my thesis, in which I constructed two models of Pentecostal healing theology, as I stared at a blank page with a sub-heading "A Wesleyan-Pentecostal Model of Healing," I stumbled for a few minutes, feeling apprehensive about how and where to begin. Literally, I thought, "What would Hollis do?" And the answer was simple: you begin with the Trinity. A few months later, at my *viva*, as questions were asked, I knew, whether the examiners did or not, that I was speaking in Gause.

I imagine that to be the experience of so many of my colleagues and friends who've sat at his feet, shared in conversation or, best yet, heard him preach. We join generations in proudly proclaiming, "Some are of Cephas, others are of Apollos, but we are of Gause."



<sup>1</sup> Kimberly Ervin Alexander, "Under the Authority of the Word and in Response to the Spirit: The Written Work and Worship of R. Hollis Gause," *Passover, Pentecost and Parousia: Studies*

*in Celebration of the Life and Ministry of R. Hollis Gause*, S. J. Land, R. D. Moore and J. C. Thomas, eds. (Blandford Forum, Dorset, UK: Deo, 2010), pp. 4-5.