

APPRECIATION FOR IAN ARTHUR FAIR

In 1986, a senior at a Christian college in Tennessee visited Ian Fair for advice about future theological studies and a career in ministry in Churches of Christ. Discouraged by his previous educational and ministerial experiences and certain that the Christianity he had known lacked both intellectual vigor and compassion, he was looking for a reason to stay. The interview convinced the student that the tradition of his youth could still support the harmonious life of the mind and the heart. I was that senior, and the interview marked a turning point in my life. Over the years, countless students, to say nothing of ministers and other church leaders, have encountered Ian Fair and received from him wisdom, encouragement, and a renewed commitment to service. Some of those who have benefitted from his work, both students and colleagues, have contributed to this Festschrift in his honor.

A native of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, Ian Fair began his career as a civil engineer for South African Railways. After becoming a Christian in 1959, he started to preach. In 1965 he began his second career as a theologian by enrolling as an undergraduate at Abilene Christian University, from which he received a B.A. He later received a B.A. (Honors), M.A. in New Testament Theology, and Ph.D. in systematic theology from the University of Natal in South Africa, where he had returned to preach and teach. With his father in the faith, Tex Williams, he helped establish the Natal School of Preaching near Pietermaritzburg and served there as director and instructor (1969–74). He later taught at the Sunset School of Preaching (1974–78), and then at Abilene Christian University (1978–2001). There he was chairman of the Bible Department in 1983–85 and then the first dean of the College of Biblical Studies (1985–97).

Ian Fair has been blessed with a loving partner, June, who has been at his side constantly. They are proud of their three sons, Deon, Nigel, and Douglas, and their grandchildren. Many others count themselves honorary relatives.

Fair's academic interests range widely, from NT theology (especially the Apocalypse), to preaching, to missions, to contemporary theology. While he might have spent his career publishing recondite studies for a few scholars, he has chosen to live in service of the church, writing countless books and articles and delivering thousands of sermons and lectures for ministers and laypersons, always with panache and insight. His doctoral dissertation examined "The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg as a Reaction to Dialectical Theology." He cowrote with Bill Humble a booklet on *The Seven Churches of Asia* (Gospel

Advocate, 1995). His most recent book, *Leadership in the Kingdom* (ACU Press, 1996) distilled years of theological reflection and practical wisdom. His friends await eagerly his commentary on Revelation, of which we have a foretaste in the booklet *Revelation: Visions of Victory* (Hillcrest, 2000). Perhaps despite appearances, this eclectic body of work derives from a solid center of Scripture and theology in service of the community of faith. While teaching a range of courses in Abilene Christian University's graduate and undergraduate programs, he also served as an entrepreneurial and inspiring administrator who not only assembled a creative and highly collaborative faculty but used his skills as an engineer to supervise the building of one of the finest academic buildings anywhere. He has done many things well.

The contributors to this volume mirror the breadth of Fair's theological concerns and professional achievements. The articles fall into three large groups: the first three explore the dynamics within and beyond Abilene Christian University that have shaped Ian Fair's role, and not incidentally, Churches of Christ. The second group of articles explores biblical images of leadership and responses of the community of faith to leaders. The third group examines dimensions of community.

In the first cluster of essays, Tim Sensing describes the roles of deans in American universities as cultural models, and Jack Reese, Fair's successor at Abilene Christian University, explores how the dynamics of academic administration listed by Sensing played out in Fair's career. James Thompson surveys the history of the Bible department at ACU since the 1920s, opening an important window into the twentieth-century history of the Restoration Movement and its intellectual life.

The second group of essays examines biblical explorations of leadership. Mark Hamilton studies the role of kingship in Job, noting how the motif reflects the book's characteristic theological sleight of hand. David Wallace reexamines the intertextual links between royal psalms and the book of Hebrews, showing how the latter work uses older Scripture for new ends. Ken Cukrowski surveys the current discussion of emperor worship and the book of Revelation, shaking up conventional wisdom in important ways.

The third group of essays reflects on both historical and theological dimensions of the communal life of a Christian group. Jeff Childers calls for a renewed attention to the ancient fathers (and, we may hope, mothers) of the church as both witnesses to the Spirit's work and as touchstones for a faith able to flourish in a post-Christian world. Tony Ash discusses the case of John's disciples in the Acts of the Apostles, raising the question of the nature and limits of the Holy Spirit's work in the ancient Christian community. Douglas Foster sketches the complex history of the Restoration Movement's understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. Jeanene Reese, in a serious reexamination of the biblical witness, argues for a reconsideration of the unequal ministry roles of men and women that have hitherto marked Churches

of Christ (and many other Christian groups). Finally, Frederick Aquino contributes an important essay on the nature of informed judgment, that combination of wisdom and knowledge that underlies theological decision-making in the church.

As a group, the articles in this volume probe the nature of authority and community in the Bible and in the contemporary Church. This twin focus on past and present—both leading to God’s future—allows for renewed attention to those theological issues that have most concerned Ian Fair—and indeed all of us. We can think of no more fitting tribute to our teacher and colleague.

Finally, this volume could not have been completed without the encouragement of several persons. Thanks go to James Thompson for opening the pages of *Restoration Quarterly* to this endeavor and for contributing an important essay to it and to Carolyn Thompson for her assiduous work as the journal’s copyeditor. Jack Reese, Fair’s successor as dean, encouraged this venture and insured that it be done in style. The contributors of the volume agreeably fulfilled their commitments on time and with skill. My graduate assistants, Jason Martin and Phillip Stambaugh, assembled material relating to Fair’s work. My wife Samjung Kang-Hamilton permitted her distracted husband to spend one more hour at the office when he should have been attending to more domestic concerns. To all of them, I offer sincere thanks.

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