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# The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland  
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## Annual Festival of Baptist Heritage August 2000

The annual BHSQ event this year will be in cooperation with the Kalbar Baptist Church which will be celebrating its 125th anniversary. It will be held on August 26-27. The *Jahrestagsfest on this weekend* will feature displays, a musical program with a German choir and a dinner on the first day. Special services will take place on the Sunday.

The BHSQ is working on the histories of two German Baptist Churches which are planned to be launched on that day. Both these churches have now ceased to function. They are the Brisbane River Church, established in 1869 at Vernor near Fernvale before moving later to South Lowood and finally to Tarampa, where it operated until 1995. The other church was at Marburg, which was formed in 1871 and ceased to function in 1988.

Kalbar church was established in 1875 as settlers moved further on from the Mt Walker area where the first Baptist witness in the area south-west of Ipswich had begun. Some of the earlier leader-pastors were J. Stibbe, C. Krueger, W. Peters and H. Windolf

Another church, known as Bremer River, existed a little further to the west. These three churches, Mt Walker, Brisbane River and Bremer River together with the English church at Ipswich formed the first Baptist Union in Queensland, known as the General Baptist Association of Queensland. German, English and Welsh languages were used in its meetings. However this Association did not last long, and other German churches took over from Bremer and Mt Walker in providing a spiritual home for their people.

The German churches formed their own association, known as the German Baptist Conference. This provided an effective means of fellowship and common action until after the First World War. By this time the churches were becoming anglicised and they became part of the Baptist Union of Queensland, contributing significantly to its life and witness.

Further details of the August function will be publicised as they become available. The launching of the BHSQ books will take place in the Saturday afternoon session.

<p><b>The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland</b> (est. 1984)</p> <p><b>Membership (2000)</b> Individual \$8 p.a. Family \$12 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.</p> <p><i>Qld Baptist Forum</i> 3 issues p.a. Free to Members Others \$2 each posted</p> <p><b>President:</b> Mr Eric W. Kopitke 98 Yallambee Rd., Jindalee 4074 Phone 3376 4339 <b>Secretary:</b> Dr Ken G. Smith, 110 White St, Graceville 4075 Phone 3379 6117</p> <p><a href="http://www.thehub.com.au/~dparker/forum.html">www.thehub.com.au/~dparker/forum.html</a> <a href="http://www.thehub.com.au/~dparker/order.html">www.thehub.com.au/~dparker/order.html</a></p> <p><b>BWA Baptist Heritage:</b> <a href="http://www.congress.baptist-vic.org.au/">http://www.congress.baptist-vic.org.au/</a></p>	<p><b>CONTENTS</b></p> <p><i>Qld Baptist Forum April 2000</i></p> <p>Annual Festival of Baptist Heritage p1</p> <p>Early Qld Baptist Churches No 1 p 2</p> <p>Building Spiritual Vitality through Unity - James Voller p 3</p> <p>The Heritage Quilt p 7</p> <p>Baptist Heritage at the BWA Congress Melbourne AD 2000 p 8</p>
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## THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN QUEENSLAND.

Reproduced from *The Queensland Baptist* Nov 1899 p 155

We begin the reproduction of a series of articles on early Baptist churches in Queensland which appeared in *The Queensland Baptist*. These articles present some interesting details of the churches and their buildings. One of the features of the original series was a photograph of the church with each article. However these do not reproduce so well now, so it will be necessary to make substitutions. However the first illustration was an etching which is presented here.

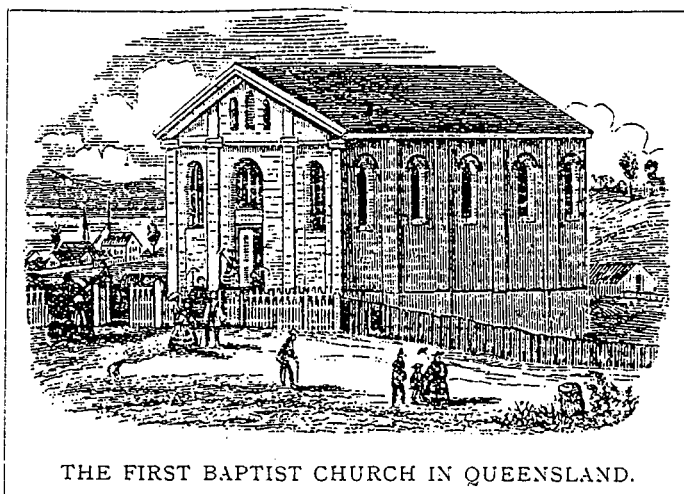
THROUGH the kindness of Mr. W. Southerden, of Maryborough, we are able to present our readers with an illustration of the Wharf Street Church when first erected forty years ago. This will be of interest not only to the old members who remember it in the condition depicted, but to others to whom it only affords matter for comparison. The tree-stump in the roadway in the foreground, and the paddocks and two-rail fences where Queen Street now stands furnish striking evidence of the progress of the last forty years.

The first Baptist church was formed on 5th August, 1855; and for some time met in the Exchange room of the old Court House in Queen Street. The first baptism was administered in 1857 by Rev. James Voller, then on a visit from Sydney, at a waterhole between what are now George Street and Roma Street.

About this time the property shown in our July issue (this was the United Evangelical Church in William Street which we have featured earlier as well - Ed.) was sold, and the allotment in Wharf St. purchased for £125. This was raised among the Baptists so that the proceeds of the William Street property (£450) were available towards the erection of a church. The contract was let to Mr. Petrie for £1200; and meantime, in response to an application, the Baptist Missionary Society had sent out Rev. B. G. Wilson to be the pastor of the church. Mr. Wilson arrived in September, 1858, when the Wharf Street Church was in course of erection.

The Exchange room soon became too small, and the use of the Supreme Court was obtained. This served till the new building was opened on the first Sunday in February, 1859, when nearly twenty persons were baptized. The cost and furnishing of the new building amounted to £2050, part of which had to be raised on mortgage.

During the ministry of Rev. H. Coombs it became necessary to enlarge the building by adding 41 feet to its length, and providing school accommodation in the basement. This was accomplished, and the building re-opened in October, 1881, at an expense of nearly £2000. The building then served till 1889, when it was sold for £16,000, and the building on Wickham Terrace was erected, known as the City Tabernacle, into which the church moved the following year.



Since being vacated by the Baptists, the Wharf Street Church was unoccupied for some time, and was then rented successively to the Disciples and the Brethren. It has now been sold to Messrs. R. W. Thurlow and Co. (we understand for £6000) for commercial purposes.

(Note: A new building has just been erected on this site, now known as 'Wharf Central', the south east corner of Adelaide and Wharf Streets for 'commercial purposes' after many different uses of the years - Ed.)

## *Building Spiritual Vitality in the Churches through Unity*

by James Voller

**W**e meet for the first time as an associated body of Christians, and take our first step in the accomplishment of designs of the highest order.

Existing and acting hitherto as units simply, or in connection with the more limited circle of our separate church fellowship, we now stand out as bound by the broader but no less sacred bonds of confederated churches, and with the object of subserving in a higher degree the interests of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What it shall be -- a blessing or otherwise - it is important for us to remember depends largely upon ourselves, and those who may from time to time succeed us. Our absolute dependence upon the blessing of God for the accomplishment of any good must never be forgotten; but it is equally important to remember that that blessing is sometimes peculiarly conditional upon the moral state of those who are to receive it.

*Unity is the essential force of our movement.* Unity, not combination merely, but unity - the oneness of interflowing spiritual life. Our gatherings are to be expressions of it; means they may be of strengthening and augmenting it, but especially they are to be expressive of it. The spirit of unity, therefore, is that which each must bring, as we meet from time to time. But let this condition be honoured, and the blending will be a spiritual sacrifice before God, acceptable through Jesus Christ, and will infallibly bring from Him the wisdom, the

zeal, the courage, the patience, and fidelity needful to make us blessings to the Churches and to the world.

This, however, points us to the secrecy of the closet, where this power is to be got. There must indeed be a connection maintained betwixt that sacred retreat and our public gatherings; bringing thence the spirit of love, we shall be prepared for council. To come together without it, or to get it, would be a grave mistake - a sure prelude to failure, if not to discord. No! Each must bring the spirit of unity with him. Then shall we be helpers of each other's joy and faith, and "God, even our own God, will bless us." This, I conceive, may appropriately have a primary place in our thoughts.

If, however, we would secure the utility and permanence for our Association, it is of the highest moment to realise in our minds the ends primarily to be subserved by it. The improved spirituality of individual Christian life will no doubt be gained by it; but it is the vitality and usefulness of the Churches, as such, which is to be first sought. It is an association of Churches, not of individuals; and the interests of the Churches, rather than those of individuals, are to be sought. In the one, the other, beyond doubt, will be included.

I personally entertain the opinion that *the establishment of Churches* was a much a part of our Lord's plan as the institution of the ministry of the gospel, and that the one is as essential to the ac-

**W**e present an edited version of the first presidential address of the Baptist Union (then Association) of Queensland delivered by Rev. James Voller on 20 Nov 1877. It was a message carefully geared to the occasion setting out the role and importance of the new Association.

The basis of the rather lengthy address was the idea that "Unity is the essential force of our movement. Not combination merely, but unity - the oneness of interflowing spiritual life." He said that Association meetings might enhance unity, but that was not the primary point - they were to be in the first place *expressions of unity*. He said, "The spirit of unity, therefore, is that which each must bring, as we meet." Then he showed how important it was that the churches were spiritually strong because the strength of the Association depended on them. More importantly, he said, "In the spiritual vitality of the churches we find the best solution to many of the problems so often discussed amongst us" - like how to strengthen new converts, the youth, families, missionary work - in fact much the same kind of issues as we face now. Finally he stressed that there is "strength in union" as they carry out the mission of the church.

It was a wide-ranging address showing a statesmanlike leadership and vision which was typical of this man who was known as "The Father of Queensland Baptists." Although the language used was rather elaborate, this remarkable speech is well worth reading today.

complishment of his will as the other. I speak not of their relative value, but simply of the necessity of each as part of Christ's will.

And it is as impossible to overrate the importance of the one as of the other. He never intended that souls converted by his truth should be left in their segregated condition, but be brought into fellowship one with another for mutual good; the growth of the new life, the culture of character, and augmented usefulness. Hence we find, upon the very first conquest of Christian truth as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, "The Lord added to the church daily such as were saved." The church then being the associated converts simply, pluralized subsequently by the multiplied conquests of the gospel and the necessities of an ever-widening field of action; but however pluralized, ever retaining the one essential distinction of being associated converts.

That indeed is, and ever should have been preserved intact, as the only proper designation of a Church of Christ. A church is only the selfsame thing it was when the words quoted above were affixed to it, an association of converts to the truth as it is in him.

So that when we speak of an Association of Churches, or of the promotion of the vitality and usefulness of churches, we mean the vitality and usefulness of converts to Jesus in their associated capacity.

And here permit me to counsel, with all the earnestness I can command, *the most sacred jealousy for the preservation of the church as thus defined.* There is a growing disposition in these times to facilitate connection to church fellowship. Unnecessary restrictions upon it are supposed to exist; the pathway from the world to the church is considered to be too narrow. It may be so; but there is no little danger in the desire for reform in this respect, of obliterating all lines of demarcation, and destroying distinction by an interfusion of the two. And whatever may be the temptation to slacken the bonds of fellowship in the Kingdom of Christ, or to open wider the doors of admission into it, it were better far to contract them still more, if needful to preserve that fellowship to those only who, seeking it, bring with them credible evidence of having passed from death into life.

The church of God is a synonym for the family of God. The family of God can only consist of his

own children, and in the New Testament sense we become such by faith in the Lord Jesus. To introduce among them those who are not is to desecrate the family, to destroy its harmony, to neutralise its power; and furthermore, to delude and imperil the subjects of such presumption.

*In that associated life there lie hidden the elements of purest power and the purest joy.* It is a treasure worth protecting. Under wise oversight, and pervaded by the spirit of Jesus, each church may become a centre of the most blessed influence.

Nay, more, each church might be a sort of concert hall, to which, from time to time, the spirit would feel itself most powerfully drawn by the melody of music and song, and the charms of social recreation after the toils and chafings of ordinary daily life.

A more painful or injurious anomaly is scarcely conceivable than an organization professing to be a church of Christ, which is not governed by his will, animated by his spirit, or subservient to his designs; while such as are, leave immeasurably behind all other combinations of human influence in the grandeur of their object, and in the worth of their achievements. They are the true lights of the world, the salt of the earth - centres of invincible power for good around which God and angels and the good on earth gather with interest and delight;

Such, indeed, many churches are, and mightily do they promote the benign purposes of their Founder. They bind those in membership with them together, and minister to their spiritual life and joy, so that they can say, "We have fellowship one with another, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

*In the spiritual vitality of the church we find the best solution of many of the problems* so often discussed amongst us; as, how to preserve to the them the advanced youth of our families and Sunday schools, instead of seeing them, as we too frequently do, wander away loosely into the world, or seek the gratifications of religious feeling and social interests in associations too questionable to afford any just hope of their ultimate happiness or usefulness. We lose our children and our scholars very largely, because we fail properly to sustain the power, the beauty, and the pleasure of church fellowship.

Then, kindred to this is the influence exerted

over those brought into fellowship, by mere worldly attractions - the attractions, mainly, of simple amusement. This is a distinct ground of anxiety and sorrow, and painfully felt by all churches. Instead of uniting in heart and action for the furtherance of the gospel, and cheering each other by presence and cooperation in details of their work, their warfare, or their worship, they are scattered hither and thither in very variety of association, merely seeking personal pleasure or social gratification; and this evil though not confined to the young, exerts a blighting power over them peculiarly.

And to this source of mischief we are, and, I fear, are likely to be, in this community, peculiarly liable. The craving for amusement, and especially of a sensational order, is becoming morbidly intense.

Where then is the remedy? In the repression of social instincts, and the denunciation of all merely sensational gratification? Surely not. Such a thing were utterly hopeless outside the church, and wrong even within it. Christianity honours, and can itself best meet, every human instinct.

It is the parent's duty to meet the children's needs; and, in this case, *the development of the spiritual life within the churches, the supply needed, will, I think, be found to abound.*

The church might be homes for the brotherhood, the centre of the mightiest, sweetest attraction, and even as halls of concert, where the melody of music and song might be enjoyed in the highest form. In his providence, God is now teaching his servants something of the power of song even to convey the gospel, and of the graver work of saving souls; and, possibly, there we may find an element, as yet undervalued, attractive and helpful to the new life.

Besides this, the churches of God furnish the purest companionships - the excellent of the earth in whom, worthily, may be all our delight; they open the way to the cultivation, in the private walks of life, of the happiest and most enduring friendships, with their endless facilities for the enjoyment of innocent and simply recreative pleasures.

These things flow naturally from a true, vital church life, which, if but fairly maintained and displayed, would do much to counteract the blighting evil to which we now specially advert. But in this

fellowship there is something even far higher than this - a moral power resulting from its teachings, which moulds the character and sways the life to aims too high and pure for attractions of the kind under consideration to affect.

There is indeed a sense in which the *true sphere of the Christian is in the world*. He is not to be a recluse, nor to look with ascetic scorn upon every loved or prized by it. He is to manifest towards it a loving, kindly, cheerful temper; move in and out of it freely under an abiding desire to do good, proving that he is the subject of a higher life, to which above all things he is anxious to raise those about him, but in no sense is he to be enslaved or ruled by it. Viewed under this aspect, the value of true spirituality in the churches is beyond exaggeration.

On this line of thought we might proceed, and exhaust far more than the time that legitimately belongs to this address, but enough is said to impress us with the *importance of making the spiritual vitality of the churches within our Association a primary object of our efforts*. In various ways this may be done, without in the least infringing the principle of their independence; and in proportion as it is done we shall most effectually subserve the glory of God, and nurture the elements of an invincible power for the good of the world. And now let us pass to this as another part of the design we should keep steadily in view.

There cannot be a momentary doubt that the *reputation of Christianity is pledged to the conversion of the world*. Nevertheless, the conquest has not been achieved; far, very far, from it. We see not yet all things put under him.

**But in this fellowship there is something even far higher than this - a moral power resulting from its teachings, which moulds the character**

Our purpose is to throw what little force we can muster into the battle; not to take up the sword for the first

time; this many of us have done long years ago, but have been fighting singly and separated. We yield now to the conviction that there is strength in union. We close in therefore, concentrate, and intend, by words, deeds, and even song, to animate each other in the holy warfare, and together wield a power that shall do something more to the accomplishment of the great result than could otherwise be secured.

*We hesitate not to confess the need of this concentration*. Never before did the battle rage more fiercely, never was the enemy more confident of success. Neither do we hesitate to acknowledge our own shame in that what we do has not long since

been done. We sorrow over the evils to which our divided and enfeebled action has given rise; but in hope, asking forgiveness and help, we blend our sympathies, place ourselves at our great Leader's service, and desire above all things, permission in some way to aid his triumphs.

Besides the basis of our faith, our hope, and our teaching is as immutable, and more so, than the everlasting hills. It is not a myth, not a legend, not a belief, but a fact - the unalterable fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead

*If there be room for fear at all, it comes not from the avowed antagonists of Christianity, but from its professed friends.* A truly ominous foreshadowing fact was that, when Jesus was betrayed by one of his own professed disciples; and no less so was the method by which the dark deed was done. The concentrated essence of infernal malignity was conveyed through a kiss.

We know that fidelity - not numbers, wealth, social distinction, or ecclesiastical prestige - is the gauge of honour and efficiency, and at least we can be faithful; faithful to God, to truth, to ourselves, to one another, to the church, to the world. Let this, then, be our unmovable determination.

*We know, too, that the principles we have been taught and hold have supreme rank among the weapons of this spiritual warfare.* Without one unkindly feeling to others, we may indeed glory in the simplicity of our deference to the written Word of God. We honour the fundamental principles of religious action - personality, freedom, choice, conscientiousness. We impose nothing, even on babes. In grasping the sword of the Spirit, we endeavour to free our hands of all human prescription. We make void no law of God by the enforcement of human tradition, and are entitled to enter the lists with the advocates of human authority in matters of religious faith and practice, because of our consistency with the too often empty based, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of the Protestants." At least we can boldly challenge our adversaries on the fundamental principles above stated, without fear of having thrown back at us the question,

Where do you get your infant baptism from? Is it from heaven or of man?

Then we may surely derive *some incentive to take our part together in the great work* of extending the boundaries of Christ's kingdom in the world from the memories of the past, and the examples of the present our specific brotherhood supplies. We have a glorious ancestry, owning no human head or origin, but passing like a golden line right up through the eventful history of the Christian cause to him whose sole authority in his Kingdom has ever been honoured and defended by them.

To Baptists, beyond dispute, belong the grand distinction of proclaiming, so far as extant records prove, *the inalienable rights of every man to freedom of conscience*, in the face of an all but universal approval of the use of the sword to compel conformity with the dictates of priests, or the claims of secular states in matters of religion.

To them also belongs the imperishable honour of *pioneering the grand cause of Christian mission* to the heathen by the consecrated cobbler of a Northamptonshire village. He, burning with a desire to carry the light of Gospel truth into the deep darkness of Eastern idolatries, laid himself upon the altar of God as a living sacrifice to attempt, even single handed, the task which, in spite of the discouragement of friends and the hostility of foes, was done; it then led the way to the development of what the Church of God may regard as one of the most glorious achievements of its career.

These facts are mainly valuable because of the indications they afford of principles by which our brotherhood has been, and is still distinguished; and coming down to the present time, it is impossible to repress the feelings of hope and thankfulness that spring within the indication seen they are likely to be perpetuated. The sublime success is

being more than sustained by the Head of the Church. The defence and propagation of these principles are yet needed as much, perhaps more, than ever.

But men equal to the work needed are being nurtured also; already they are in the field, nobly and success-

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**An Address**

DELIVERED AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION,  
20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 1877,

BY JAMES VOLLER, PRESIDENT.

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WITH THE CONSTITUTION AND OFFICERS OF THE  
ASSOCIATION FOR THE CURRENT YEAR.

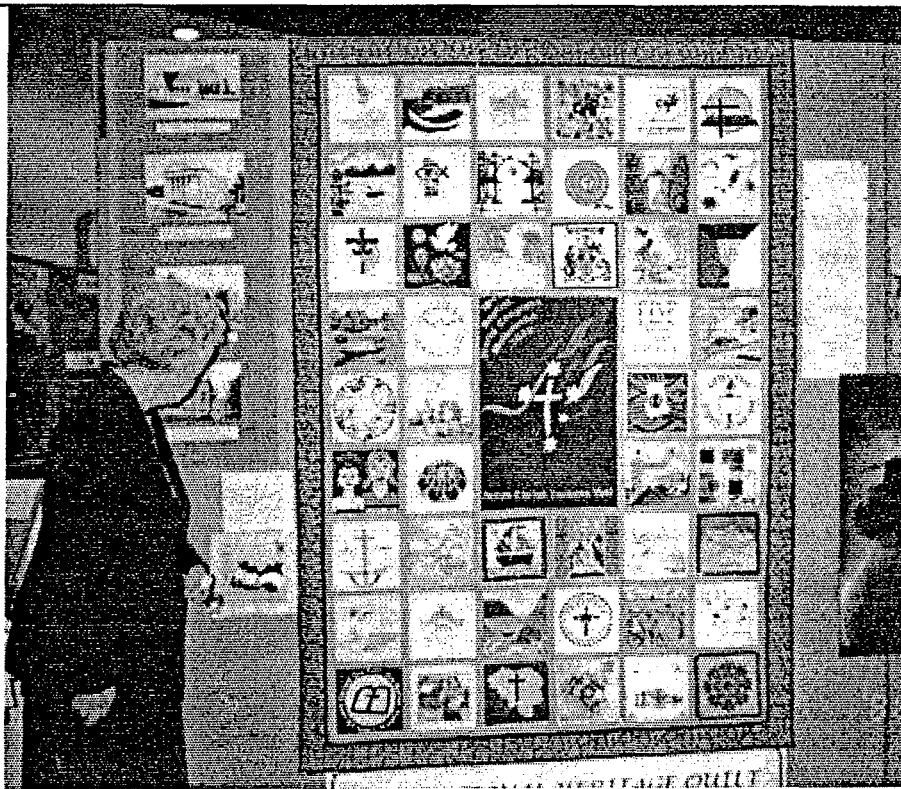
fully preaching the everlasting Gospel, and speaking with the enemies in the gate. And not in the fatherland only, but in the mission fields, and the ever-widening boundaries of human habitation, the same indications present themselves, in the activity, earnestness, intelligence, learning, piety, and increasing oneness of the Ministry and the Churches.

Let us not shame ourselves and them by standing loosely, idly by, while the swelling torrents of social and spiritual evil threaten the dearest interests of mankind, but, like them, join the struggle, and do what God may enable us to enlarge his kingdom, and bless the world.

And surely another incitement of no mean order is presented to us in the character of the sphere that opens before us. *We exult in the growing greatness of our country.* We profess to see before us visions of expanding human interests that can scarcely have limit assigned to them. We know that the earliest are peculiarly the formative stages

of progress, and we have not conviction deeper or profounder that nothing can mould these interests to virtue and honour, or associate them with true and lasting happiness, but the glorious power of the Gospel. And we know that is utterly vain to expect that power to be felt, except through the faithful, loving labours of the professed servants of Jesus. In the presence of all this, then, the very thought of indifference, inactivity, disunion, is insufferable; no reproach would be too deep, no condemnation of it too severe. It cannot, must not, be. God has honoured us with a sublime opportunity, and awaits our improvement of it. He is ready to help and succour us. We must throw ourselves in the great work of winning Queensland for Christ.

*Let us, then, in spirit and in truth, lay as deeply and surely as we can the foundations of this solemn union, by pledging ourselves to each other, and our Lord, to do what we can, by word, deed, and sympathy, to promote the spiritual vitality of the Churches, and win the colony to Christ.*



**Ellen Chataway examines the Heritage Quilt at the BWA Congress Heritage Display**

The idea for this quilt came from Rev Dr Geoff Pound, Convener of the Heritage Working group at Whitley College. Sandra Thwaites then took up the idea and saw it through to completion. Each Baptist Union was sent a square of home-spun fabric and invited to sew the name of their Union on it and to decorate it with symbols and colours representing their country, culture or God's creation. A team of enthusiastic quilters spent several days sewing the patches together. The central square is the Congress logo; there is also a BWA square. The completed quilt, which symbolizes the coming together of Baptists from around the world and the unity of Baptists, will eventually hang in the new Australian Baptist Heritage and Learning Centre planned for Whitley College.

## **Heritage Program at the 18th Baptist World Congress**

Melbourne Jan 5-9 AD 2000

*Reported by Melvin Williams*

Baptist Heritage in the New Millennium was the overall theme of the Heritage Focus Group, one of several options available on Thursday and Friday afternoons at the Baptist World Congress held in Melbourne, 5-9 January 2000.

With about 80-100 others I attended this Focus Group. Personally speaking I found the speakers themselves and who they were, of more interest than what they said. For instance the chairperson on Thursday was Eljee Bentley, a remarkable woman, a widow from Virginia USA, with an excellent knowledge of Baptists world-wide.

Other speakers were Faith Bowers from Bloomsbury Church, London, who spoke on Baptists in the Ecumenical context - clearly more advanced in this area in the UK than in Australia or the USA. Also from the UK was Nigel Wright of Manchester who attempted a reinterpretation of Baptist Heritage in a post denominational setting.

Following these there was a session demonstrating the potential of developing a greater Heritage fellowship and global research through the use of computers and the internet. Material for this was prepared on video by our own Dr David Parker (in absentia because of the illness of his wife Joyce). Two computers in the Display booth enabled people unskilled in computer use to have hands on experience. In David's absence Dr Geoff Pound, of Whitley College in Melbourne, who was Convener of the whole programme, found himself fully involved over the period.

The second day had an Australian focus. Most of the audience appeared to be Australians though the programme was designed for other than Australian delegates. This session was ably chaired by Geoff Pound and comprised three talks. Dr Ken Manley spoke on where Baptists came from and where they settled in Australia and the gradual shaping up of the denomination from its different roots. Ros Gooden told the story of Australian Baptists in World Mission compressing a lot into her 15 minutes, and a son of Graham Paulson stood in for his father who was recovering from an operation to speak about the Indigenous people with an outline of Christian work among them and by then mentioning recent initiatives.

The afternoon concluded with the Launch of a new book *A Cloud of Witnesses* - by Dr Basil Brown, a book on Baptist personalities in Victoria. The Display Booth featured the work of the various State Historical Societies and their recent publications. Some members of our society helped man the booth but the bulk of doing so involved Eljee Bentley and Geoff Pound.

You may like to check out the Baptist Heritage Web Site on <http://www.congress.baptist-vic.org.au/>

**A view of the author at the Heritage Commission display area.**

**See also photo on p. 7**

