

TRAGEDY AND HOPE

A Study of Two Pioneer Colonial Pastors Charles Stewart and James Voller

I HORTON COLLEGE

In 1842 James Voller, a former apprentice pawnbroker from South Parade Baptist Church, Leeds, completed his studies at Horton College. He immediately took up the pastorate of the newly established church at Salford, near Manchester, where he was reported to be 'discharging his ministerial functions with very exhilarating prospects'.

The next year, Charles Stewart, a young Scot fresh from the University of Glasgow, began his training at the same institution. Just as he was about to finish his course, he received an urgent call to Zion Chapel, Newhall Street, Birmingham; it was regarded as a 'highly desirable' field of labour so he proceeded immediately to what he expected would be the beginning of a lifetime of fruitful ministry.

Although Voller and Stewart¹ were both students of the same college, there is no indication that they ever met. They were men of vastly different backgrounds, circumstances and personality, but in time, both made their way to Australia and served in Brisbane, making distinctive contributions to Baptist work in that centre in ministries that were tinged with tragedy and hope. In the case of these two at least, their college (later Rawdon and then Northern Baptist) was 'the dwelling place of wisdom, of manly piety, of zeal and learning' even if its buildings made it seem like a 'dingy Academy'.²

Stewart was the first to reach Brisbane, where he opened up a work which paved the way for others who followed, including Voller. But Stewart was also the first to conclude his ministry, retiring in ill health after only a few years, and dying a short time later while still young. Voller lived on into old age, seeing the dawn of the next century and was active to the end.

II CHARLES STEWART

Unfortunately, little is known about Stewart before he came to Horton. Born in about 1820 the son of a 'collector of money', he was a native of Edinburgh; he had an older brother, Robert and two sisters, one named Elizabeth. Robert, who became a Presbyterian minister, was disappointed that his brother had become a Baptist, probably the only family member to make the change. Charles pursued a course of classical studies at the University of Glasgow from 1840 to 1843, although he did not formally graduate. While in that city he may have associated with the Hope Street Baptist Church, sponsor of the Glasgow Baptist Educational Association which supported him at Horton.

He was a keen and serious student with a good mind, and benefited greatly from his general and theological education. When the opportunity came during his last

months of study to lead the church in Newhall Street, he gladly accepted it, commencing his ministry there by mid-1846. But it was to be short and traumatic. At about the same time, the famous Chartist, Arthur O'Neill, was baptized and became leader of a congregation in nearby Livery Street; this transformed itself into a Baptist church. By late 1847 or soon after, this group had merged with the Newhall Street church, ousting Stewart and leaving O'Neill installed as pastor, a position he occupied for fifty years. Stewart, badly hurt by the episode, withdrew (possibly with a number of the members) and began preaching at the Toll End Baptist Church, Tipton. This little known but substantial church had only been formed in 1840 as a branch of the Dudley church. It received autonomy in 1847 and was admitted into the local Baptist Association in 1849; but it decayed rapidly after that and was soon virtually forgotten.

It was here, while he was 'dispensing the ordinances of religion to a Non-conformist Congregation in Staffordshire in England', that Stewart read in the new evangelical newspaper, *The British Banner*, an article by the enterprising but controversial Presbyterian minister, Revd Dr John Dunmore Lang, from Sydney, New South Wales. He was in Britain at the time organizing an ambitious emigration scheme aimed at securing an 'extensive and continuous stream' of 'industrious and virtuous' Protestant settlers to develop the Moreton Bay district in the northern part of New South Wales; he wanted these migrants to take up cotton farming to provide British factories with an alternative source of this product, thus undercutting the evils of slavery on the American cotton fields.

But Lang was even more concerned with 'Popery and Puseyism' ('The Beast and the Image of the Beast') and his migrants were to offset extensive Irish Catholic immigration and the growing power of the Anglican establishment. He had, however, so far failed in his efforts to recruit a chaplain for the first of his ships, and Stewart's enquiries came at the right time for him to fill this need. Stewart had no pastoral prospects in Britain, and many of his acquaintances were already making plans themselves to emigrate; it was even suggested that his congregation at Toll End should make the move as a body. Although Lang was seeking a Presbyterian chaplain, he felt that Stewart's personal qualities together with his Scottish background made him acceptable, especially in the pioneer situation of Moreton Bay.³

Stewart sailed on the *Fortitude* in mid-September 1848 and arrived in Moreton Bay in January 1849. Lang organized two more ships which arrived later in the year, bringing a total of more than 600 people, whose social, economic and political impact on the district was enormous. Moreton Bay had been established as a penal colony in 1824; transportation ceased in 1839 and the area was thrown open for free settlement in 1842. By the time of Stewart's arrival the population of the whole area was around 2,000, Anglican and Catholic churches were operative, and the Wesleyans had begun activities only a year before. The most numerous Protestant group, the Presbyterians, had no minister or church; Lang had promised to find a

suitable man for them, and with the arrival of the *Fortitude* expectations were high that the promise would be honoured. But in his publicity through the *Banner* and in personal contact with Stewart and the migrants who came from several different Protestant churches, Lang had also advocated that in the initial stages at least a united church be set up on a 'broad and Scriptural' basis; he even suggested basing it on the principles of the Evangelical Alliance, which had been formed in England only a couple of years earlier.

It was a difficult situation that faced Stewart as he stepped ashore. There was, of course, no church organization and no chapel, but he was told in no uncertain terms that, because a Presbyterian had been expected, there was no ministry available to him as a Baptist. To make matters worse, his elder sister who had accompanied him as his house-keeper left after a few weeks 'in high dudgeon'. Stewart wrote in desperation to the Revd John Ham, one of the few Baptist ministers in the country, then pastor of the Bathurst Street Baptist Church in Sydney; he had once been minister of the Newhall Street Church, and proved to be an effective counsellor in the months that followed, although his health was fragile and the 600 miles that separated them remained a barrier.

Meanwhile, Stewart commenced united services for Presbyterians, Baptists and Congregationalists in Brisbane and also in nearby Ipswich using the Court House in each place; he soon won the approval of the community for his fine preaching ability and his pastoral dedication. A church was formally organized which, reflecting the majority interests, was styled in general terms as the 'United Presbyterian Church' indicating that it would serve all denominations. In view of his background, Stewart was recognized as an 'acting Presbyterian minister' although his status as a Baptist minister was respected. There was an understanding that there would be no proselytization; in any case a Presbyterian minister residing in the town for health reasons was able to perform infant baptisms when required.

Stewart made some unguarded public statements expressing sympathy for a Presbyterian rather than a Baptist church structure. This slip arose out of his bitter Birmingham experience and reflected his feeling that Baptist 'ultra-democracy' could be detrimental to the best interests of the ministry, but it was misunderstood by some of his congregation as indicating genuine Presbyterian beliefs. Ham was also concerned about Stewart's leanings, but unnecessarily so because his Baptist convictions were strong; even when his sponsor, the powerful Dr Lang, tried to persuade him to switch allegiance and join his Presbyterian Synod, he told him that he could be 'nothing else' but a Baptist. So in writing to Ham, Stewart expressed the hope that he would not be regarded as a 'heretic' in regard to Baptist churchmanship.

Initially Stewart entertained Ham's recommendation that, instead of remaining in Brisbane and working to establish a pioneer united church, he should seek the pastorate of the well established and liberal minded Melbourne church, recently vacated by Ham. But within a few weeks he found the people more responsive, and

after his Birmingham experience, he remained cautious of entrenched denominational loyalties. So he came to the firm belief that Moreton Bay was his 'path of duty' and committed himself fully to this work. He took up the idea of a united church on Evangelical Alliance principles with considerable determination, and began to work out a formal basis for it, especially in view of the prospect of obtaining land in key areas of the town for chapels and schools. He firmly maintained his Baptist convictions about congregational government, believer's baptism and the function of confessions of faith and worked them into his proposal for the church, although paedobaptism would also be retained for those who conscientiously followed this understanding of Scripture.

Then strict and powerful Presbyterian elements in the congregation, who wanted exclusive recognition of the Westminster Confession as the basis for the church and a 'thoroughly Presbyterian' minister, began to exert their influence. In case his ideas did not win approval or a 'thoroughly Presbyterian minister' arrived, Stewart approached Ham once more about moving to Sydney and working with him there in establishing a new Baptist cause.

However, after discovering the church was unable to qualify for government land grants and a tense period of negotiations, Stewart's proposal for an Evangelical Alliance church was accepted overwhelmingly by the congregation. The strict Presbyterian element felt aggrieved and withdrew, forming their own denominational church in December 1849. It struggled for some years, but eventually grew into a virile work, although relations between it and Stewart's group were often uncertain.

This left the Baptists, Congregationalists and the remaining Presbyterians who were voluntarist in belief to press on with the purchase of land and the erection of a chapel. This was a slow process, due to governmental bungling and fierce opposition by the Puseyist Episcopal Bishop, whose own scandalously underdeveloped church site was very near to the prime block chosen by Stewart's committee. Nevertheless, a 'neat and commodious' building seating 400 was successfully opened in April 1851.

Stewart's ministry was attracting a surprising proportion of the population including, now that Lang's immigrants were becoming a powerful force, some of the most influential members of the business and political community. Stewart himself generally shared their views on subjects such as separation of the district from New South Wales, cessation of convict transportation and the abolishment of state aid for churches. He took his place in the public life but he was careful not to appear as a political parson. His main concerns were spiritual, where he sought through biblical preaching and pastoral care to advance the highest levels of personal commitment and piety on the part of the members of his congregation.⁴

The high standards Stewart imposed upon himself and his church exacted a heavy toll. He took his responsibilities seriously and found it difficult to cope with opposition; he was hurt deeply when people did not reach his expectations for them. So towards the end of his third year, he suddenly found himself in bad health. He

could no longer preach and after a few weeks rest in Brisbane, departed for Sydney with his sponsor, Dr Lang, who was returning home after a visit to Moreton Bay on political business.

In Sydney, Stewart made contact with Ham after a long break, but any hope of a lasting friendship was cut short by Ham's death, which left the Sydney church pastorless. Stewart received good medical treatment but by August 1852 prospects of a severe winter and urgent pleas from his congregation, who wanted him with them even if he could only preach once a month, made him return to Brisbane. Grateful that he had been 'hired again' by the Head of the Church and sent 'to labour in his vineyard' after 'standing idle in the market place for a whole year', Stewart threw himself into his work as much as his throat, lung and stomach problems allowed.

Over the months that followed, his condition varied, and he was faced with some serious pastoral problems; he was even pursued over petty matters by the daughter of his doctor, who was also his church secretary, and a troublesome friend of hers. It was all a great test of Stewart's faith, but he maintained and even expanded the ministry of the church. He came to realize his 'utter dependence on our Almighty Arm' and found to his delight that he was enjoying as never before 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness'. Suddenly it was all over. Stewart had thought of ways of easing his load - by finding an assistant or turning to school teaching. 1854 had commenced normally, and he had been busy for most of the time. Yet at the end of the year, he sold up his books and possessions, apart from a block of land, and left the colony on 3 January 1855. There were no farewells, presentations or announcements about his plans!

After a few weeks in Sydney he sailed to England, and undertook a course of hydropathic treatment at Dr James Gully's celebrated clinic in Malvern, Worcestershire. When this proved too expensive, he moved to a similar institution in the Savoy region of France and then on to the Pyrenees. Here he lived quietly during 1856 and 1857. With his health still poor, his other sister, Elizabeth, brought him to the Bermuda home where she lived with her husband, Archibald Hall, Quartermaster of 26th Foot Regiment (Cameronians). There Stewart died on 2 March 1858 at the age of 38 years, and was buried the next day by the chaplain of the Regiment.

At his departure from Brisbane, the church Stewart had fostered for six years was in crisis. The foundational years when a united fellowship was possible were over and in a context of significant economic and political advancement in the district, denominationalism was rampant. Within two or three weeks, a decision was made by the congregation to split up and sell the property, but the trustees were opposed to this and there were legal problems. First one group and then another tried to gain the ascendancy and set up their own group in the chapel. In the end it was the Baptists under the enterprising leadership of the Revd Charles Smith from Parramatta, NSW, who organized their own church in August 1855, although using

other property for their meetings. There was some Congregational participation in this fellowship - their church was not set up until three years later.

Meanwhile, a Presbyterian minister in fellowship with Dr Lang, Revd Thomas Bell, had gathered the remaining members of the United Evangelical Church in the old chapel and eventually transformed them into a regularly organized Presbyterian Church. After further legal and personal complications, the chapel was sold in 1857 and the proceeds made available to the three denominations as originally agreed. The building became the town's first Telegraph Office and then part of the Government Printing Office, before being demolished in 1899 to make way for further government buildings.

Although Stewart's work seemed to collapse as soon as he left it, and his (and Lang's) vision of a 'United Evangelical Church' on broad scriptural principles was totally lost as far as Brisbane was concerned, his faithful yet tragic ministry opened in a spiritually and morally need commnity a vital beachhead which others found easy to expand.⁵ His fellow Horton student, James Voller, was one of those.

III JAMES VOLLER

While Stewart completed his studies and moved to Moreton Bay, James Voller's ministry at Salford was shorter than expected: his theological beliefs were not as strict as the people there expected, so in 1845 he moved on to a quiet church in country Yorkshire at Bishop Burton.

A year earlier he had married into a leading Leicestershire Baptist family. His bride, Ann Carryer, came from the Harvey Lane church, where William Carey served immediately before leaving for India. Robert Hall conducted their marriage. Ann Carryer therefore brought a strong Baptist tradition into her marriage with Voller, who had been born in 1813, the son of a London cooper, and had been christened at St Saviour's Southwark, along with his sister. In Leeds, he had attended Salem Congregational Church with his employer.

Voller's ministry in Yorkshire was steady if not dramatic, but late in 1848 he moved again to Princes End, Tipton, Staffs. He was now only a mile from where Stewart had been just a few weeks before at Toll End. This five-year pastorate was long remembered as Voller's most successful in England. It was marked by firm growth and the introduction of prayer meetings, building improvements and the establishment of a school.

Yet Voller had a desire for wider horizons. Some of the Carryer family were already in North America and various ministers and church families known to him were making moves in the same direction. Voller had enquired about Australia, but being advised there were no openings, made plans to join the exodus across the Atlantic, only to be disappointed in this venture at the last minute.

In the meantime, an opening was developing in Sydney where Baptist work was only about twenty years old, although British settlement had begun with the First Fleet in 1788. After John Ham's death in March 1852, the Bathurst Street church

decided to call the Revd W.H. Carey, grandson of the famous missionary, who had been brought to Australia by Dr Lang as a student for the ministry. He was the only other Baptist minister in New South Wales, then serving at the newly established and struggling church at Parramatta, and preaching also at Bathurst Street. But before the call could be processed, Carey who was still in his early 20s, took ill and died. The church was then in a quandary until it decided to appoint a selection panel in England to find a pastor.

If Charles Stewart had come to Sydney to work with Ham as he had contemplated three years earlier instead of staying in Moreton Bay, he would now have been a highly suitable candidate for the Bathurst Street post. But there was no suggestion of calling him - indeed the church in Sydney did not even appear to know of his existence despite the lengthy and helpful correspondence he had entered into with Ham. Ham found it difficult to understand Stewart's decision to remain in Brisbane and was uneasy over his apparent Presbyterian leanings. In any case, Stewart was fully involved with his own church and health was a problem for him as well.

The panel appointed by the Sydney church consisted of the founding Sydney minister, John Saunders then pursuing a legal career in London, together with the leading ministers, the Revds William Brock, Baptist W. Noel and J.H. Hinton. At first they found their task difficult, but then through a contact at Leicester they heard of James Voller's interest. Upon investigation they had no hesitation in commending him and his wife to the Sydney church as a 'well known and approved minister of the Gospel' of 'character unimpeachable'.

So in June 1853, Voller, at forty years of age, with a decade of successful pastoral ministry behind him, departed from England with his wife and three young children aboard the *Meridian*. He was well equipped and ready to embrace the greatest opportunity of his life.

When the church members in Sydney heard the news, they were relieved to find that after the uncertainties and difficulties of the past, they would at last have a pastor to lead them. But joy turned to concern when the vessel on which the Vollers were travelling failed to arrive on time, despite being reported to be making an exceptionally fast journey. The church was thrown into despair when news came through that the *Meridian* had been completely wrecked on the remote Indian Ocean island of Amsterdam.

However all was not lost! After surviving several days on the harsh, uninhabited island, the ship's company was heroically rescued by a friendly American whaler and, after some weeks in Mauritius, the passengers made their way to Australia. When Voller and his family finally reached Sydney on 31 December 1853, the church and community welcomed them with enormous relief and heartfelt thanksgiving. The story was told and re-told for years to come, and the church celebrated the safe arrival of their pastor annually for the next decade.

Voller's arrival in Sydney thus overlapped the final year of Stewart's ministry

in Brisbane, but there is no record of any contact between the two. By this time Stewart was preoccupied with local and personal matters; any Sydney contacts he had were with Dr Lang and his Presbyterian Synod. There is no evidence of any contact either with Voller or the Baptists as Stewart passed through Sydney for the last time a year later.

James Voller soon established himself as exactly the kind of pastor Bathurst Street needed at the time. Different in personality and style from his predecessor, he gave top priority to building up the church as a Baptist fellowship. His preaching was inspiring, his pastoral care sensitive and his guidance marked by wisdom and insight. He was especially concerned to establish churches in suburban and country locations and to secure pastors for this task of church extension. Accordingly he set up the Colonial Missionary Society, travelled frequently and called (largely in vain) for financial and pastoral assistance from England.⁶

The church grew steadily by conversions and also by transfers from the continual stream of migrants entering the colony. Other Baptist churches which began to appear did not always agree with Voller's views which were denominationalist without being sectarian; he was not considered a strict enough Calvinist by some and found himself excluded from certain areas of fellowship as a result. He faced other minor pressures relating to finances, church order and worship, but over a period of fourteen years he devoted himself without restraint to this ministry, ably supported by his wife who had the added responsibility of a growing family, finally reaching seven in all. He was held in high honour by his congregation and members of other denominations, yet was a humble person who was confident of God's immutable wisdom and love and always mindful of the hand of providence that guided and protected him.

Then it all seemed to tumble in on him. Late in 1867 he sadly announced to his church that his voice had failed and that unless he wanted the condition to become fatal, he must take a year off for rest and treatment. Leaving his family behind, he was farewelled by the church in a moving service and left almost immediately for England. Here he came under the treatment of the pioneer throat specialist, Sir Morell MacKenzie.

It was a time of mixed feelings for Voller. He found England in a 'blaze of beauty' and was honoured with a hero's welcome at his old church at Princes End. Here he was still held in 'esteem and affection' and was presented with gifts for himself and his wife. But as he looked around the country, he was saddened by the great urban masses outside the reach of the gospel and the lack of concern by the churches.

After about a year away, he was once again greeted by his Sydney congregation full of hope for the future; but it was not to be. A few months later he announced his retirement from the church and the ministry, only waiting until a successor could be appointed before making his departure. He did not even take up the position of inaugural president of the Baptist Union of New South Wales to which he had been

elected.

Voller ended his sixteen-year ministry in Sydney in mid-1870, and departed immediately for Brisbane where he was already extremely well known to the Baptist community. In fact, he had virtually been their saviour and was known as the 'Father of Baptists in Brisbane'.

This relationship had begun soon after Voller had first arrived in Sydney when a number of capable members of his church moved to Brisbane to further their business and family interests. Voller, ever conscious of opportunities for planting new churches, had encouraged them in their desire to see a Baptist church established. The timing was crucial - these families arrived in Brisbane early in 1855, within a few weeks of Charles Stewart's departure and the disintegration of the United Evangelical Church. Hence they were able to take a leading part, along with Baptist members of Stewart's old congregation and other recent arrivals, in establishing the Baptist church there in August 1855.

It was led by the Revd Charles Smith who had been attracted from Parramatta with the prospects of the new work. But Smith's flamboyant ministry which began with such promise was short-lived; he was forced out in disgrace by the end of 1856 and the small fellowship he left behind was dispirited and considered disbanding. But the united church had already disappeared and there was no other obvious spiritual home for these Baptists. Thus the future for Baptists looked bad.

So the leaders of the group turned to their erstwhile pastor for help. Accordingly in May 1857 Voller travelled to Brisbane to strengthen and advise them. As Dr Lang and others before and after him, he was immediately attracted to the place; this was only the first of many trips that he would make over the following years. He carried out the first recorded baptisms for the church in the town's open reservoir, and after confirming the local people in their aspirations to continue as a church under lay leadership for the time being, promised to write to England about the urgent need and encouraging prospects for a pastor. He also arranged for the church to write to the Baptist Missionary Society for assistance.

Voller's letter was published in the English Baptist journal, the *Freeman*, of 23 December 1857, where it was noticed by the Revd B.G. Wilson of Bradford, an Irishman who had served as a city missionary in that city and later as a pastor in Barnsley and was anxious to engage in some kind of missionary activity. He was selected by the Baptist Missionary Society and arrived in Sydney in August 1858 en route to Brisbane. Here he met Voller for the first time and preached for him. A deep friendship was instantly established between the two men. Over the next twenty years they shared high points in their ministries, such as church openings and anniversaries, and they supported each other in times of church and family difficulty. In particular, Wilson had the backing of Voller when a bitter public dispute broke out over baptism. Voller could speak with deep personal conviction on this matter because a similar debate in Leeds more than twenty years earlier had caused him to leave the Congregational Church he had first attended and become a

Baptist. James Acworth, who was to become Voller's principal at Horton Academy, was then the chief protagonist. Wilson too had a similar dramatic conversion to believer's baptism.

When Voller's ministry in Sydney came to an end in 1870, it was natural for him to go to Brisbane and associate himself with Wilson. The Wharf Street church, which owed its survival in large part to Voller, had grown remarkably under Wilson, the fourth but most successful Baptist minister in Queensland up to that time. It now had several outstations and had planted a number of churches in country areas. Wilson had become a prominent figure in the life of the city. Voller was welcomed to the church, and his unofficial pastoral contributions to it in the years ahead were highly valued.

The Vollers settled on a farm a few miles out of town, where Wilson also had one of his properties. Soon they began holding services in their home and in nearby districts, which led to the formation of the Enoggera Baptist Church as another outstation of Wharf Street. Within a few years, the outstation at Sandgate, a developing seaside resort, needed pastoral supervision. So James Voller took on the responsibility and for the next ten years made the difficult journey cross-country every weekend to lead the congregation. It prospered strongly under his ministry and thereafter flourished as an independent church.

Voller continued to contribute to the life of Wharf Street, especially stepping in as an honoured senior minister to guide the church in times of crisis, such as during the long illness and premature death of Wilson. His counsel was always highly valued by the denomination which meanwhile had organized itself into a Baptist Union. Voller's unique role was recognized in his appointment as the inaugural President. His address was a powerful statement of strengths to be gained from the 'oneness of interflowing spiritual life' and a valuable reminder that it is 'in the spiritual vitality of the Churches [that] we find the solution of many of the problems often discussed amongst us'.

But in 1886, at the age of 73, Voller felt the time had come to retire once again from the ministry; he decided to go back to Sydney where some of his family remained. So amidst the fond wishes of his Queensland friends he departed and for three years entered strongly into the life of his old church. Characteristically, he even stepped in to fill a gap in the Baptist Union by becoming its secretary, despite a severe accident a few weeks after taking this appointment. But Queensland beckoned again, and so the Vollers returned, taking up their residence in the new suburb of Taringa. This area became the family home for succeeding generations.

Even at his advanced age, Voller's pastoral and church planting interests were far from dormant. Sensing the opportunities and needs of the area, he led a group of local residents who soon established a mission, once again as a nominal outstation of the Wharf Street, now City Tabernacle, church. With the help of lay men and other ministers, regular services were held and a site for a building was obtained. His architect son, who was also the organist, assisted in the erection of a chapel, and

after some time, a minister was called to take pastoral responsibility of the church in conjunction with Voller's old work at Enoggera.

At last, in 1897 on the eve of his 84th birthday and a few weeks before the official formation of the Taringa Union Baptist Church, James Voller handed over his responsibilities to others, and four years later died peacefully at his home. Ann, his wife of fifty-seven years, survived him by a year. Although his name was almost forgotten in some circles, the grateful church at Taringa recognized the importance of his work when it erected a memorial tablet honouring him as 'a pioneer Baptist minister of Australia'.

IV TRAGEDY AND HOPE

James Voller's long Australian ministry which began in apostolic style was based on his own personal qualities, a 'gentle and kindly disposition' and deep convictions enhanced by sound training and wide experience. Pastoral service of this kind was eagerly awaited by the Sydney church and produced good results in the fertile soil which had been well prepared by his predecessor.

In contrast, Charles Stewart was called upon to work in a much more difficult environment, pioneering a non-denominational church in sometimes adverse, hostile and lonely circumstances. He had superior intellectual gifts and a higher education which were reflected in his 'eloquent' and 'pure evangelical preaching'. But he was younger, lacked pastoral experience and had a sterner personality. He also lacked the support of a wife and family, and suffered from limited physical strength. Yet he was driven by the same deep convictions and personal commitment, and had the same high conception of the ministerial calling and the Christian life.

His ministry ended prematurely, and on the surface at least his ideal of a united evangelical church was lost in bitter sectarian and personal wrangling. Yet who could say that he, any less than the older colleague he never met, failed to follow his path of duty, or that his ministry was any less significant for the Baptists in Queensland or the Kingdom of God?

NOTES

- 1 This paper is based on the author's *James Voller: Pioneer Baptist Minister of Australia* (Baptist Historical Society of Queensland, 1997) and "'Strange Bedfellows" - Revd Charles Stewart, Queensland's First Baptist Minister, and the United Evangelical Church, Brisbane' (forthcoming, 1998) Full documentation will be found in these works.
- 2 *The Baptists of Yorkshire - Centennial Memorial Volume*, Bradford and London 1912, p.283.
- 3 On Dr John Dunmore Lang and his work, see D.W.A. Baker, *Days of Wrath: a life of John Dunmore Lang*, Melbourne, 1985; John Dunmore Lang, *Cookland in north-eastern Australia: the future cotton-field of Great Britain, 1847*; Lang, *Narrative of Proceedings in England, Scotland and Ireland during the years 1847, 1848 and 1849 with a view to originate an extensive and continuous immigration of superior character from the United Kingdom into this territory*, Sydney, 1850.
- 4 For the lives of some of these influential people, see Melvin Williams, *Cameos of Baptist Men in 19th Century Queensland*, Brisbane, 1995.
- 5 The story of the second Baptist minister in Queensland is equally tinged with tragedy and

hope. Thomas Deacon became assistant minister of the General Baptist Church at Bourne, Lincs. in 1844; he was already in his mid-50s. His son, William Thomas Deacon, began studies at the General Baptist College, Leicester a year later, but took seriously ill while serving an interim pastorate at Spalding during a college break. When news of Dr J.D. Lang's Moreton Bay migration scheme appeared in the *British Banner*, Deacon Jnr decided to take advantage of it in the hope of regaining his health in a warmer climate. His father became an enthusiastic admirer of Lang's 'heroic' efforts for the Kingdom of God in Australia. Together with his wife and young family, William Deacon sailed on the *Fortitude* with Stewart. He established a saddlery business in Brisbane, and his wife set up as a milliner. Lang was pleased to cite Deacon Jnr. as a satisfied and exemplary participant in his migration scheme. With his health remarkably improved, Deacon moved to Ipswich, and his widower father, although fearful of the long journey, joined him there early in 1851. But after a short time, the son's health deteriorated again and before the end of the year he was dead.

Deacon Snr soon established himself in Ipswich as a 'devout and saintly' man; he re-married (with Stewart performing the ceremony) and in 1853 was appointed pastor of a United

Congregational Church established in the wake of Stewart's effort. He was willingly replaced only a year later by an Independent minister when the church was restructured on denominational lines, and continued his dedicated involvement in that church and in the community. He conducted the first service in the UEC chapel after the departure of Stewart in January 1855.

In 1859, a Baptist services were commenced in Ipswich as a result of separate efforts by Wilson and by Voller (who said that Thomas Deacon was the only genuine General Baptist minister he had ever met in Australia). The first meetings were held in Deacon's home and, when the church was officially constituted early the next year, he was appointed pastor. Deacon gave land for the erection of a chapel, which was opened 20 August 1860 with Voller, Wilson and others participating. But having seen his long held hope come to fruition, Deacon died a few days later aged 72 years, universally respected as 'a Christian, a friend, and a citizen, who has left the world the better for his having lived in it'. (For fuller details and documentation of this story, see David Parker, 'Thomas and William Deacon: Solitary General Baptists in Queensland' (forthcoming)

⁶ For the church in Sydney, see Ken R. Manley, *In the Heart of Sydney: Central Baptist Church, 1836-1986*, Sydney, 1987, and Alan C. Prior, *Some Fell on Good Ground*, Sydney, 1966.

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BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING 1999

This will take place on 6.30pm on 13 May at the Welsh Chapel, Eastcastle Street, London W1, with refreshments from 6pm and lecture at 7pm. Dr D. Densil Morgan, Warden of Bangor Baptist College, will give a Benjamin Henton Lecture:

JOHN MILES AND THE FUTURE OF ILSTON'S PAST Welsh Baptists after three and a half centuries

The lecture, which is sponsored by the Baptist Union of Wales, will also be given on Tuesday, 15 June, at 7pm at Capel Gomer, Swansea, when the President for the evening will be Sir Glanmor Williams.