

Theology on *the Web.org.uk*

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes.
Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit
or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the
copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the
ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the
links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbadshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

The Rise and Decline of the Downs Chapel, Clapton*

IT IS more than half a century since on a Sunday in February, 1917 I was given the "right hand of fellowship" at an evening communion service at the Downs Chapel, Clapton, and became No. 2532 on its Church Roll. I was on the eve of my fifteenth birthday. It was war-time. Five months later I was baptized, but I have to confess—perhaps to my shame and certainly to continued psychological perplexity on my part—that I remember far less about that occasion. I fear it meant less to me than joining the Church, the Church which I then thought of, and still think of, as the Church of my fathers.

The chapel of which I speak—and until quite recent days I do not recall ever hearing it referred to as the Downs Baptist "Church"—was erected in 1869 on the edge of the large open space in north-east London known as Hackney Downs. It was the second extension cause sponsored and partly paid for by the London Baptist Association, which had been formed in 1865. The first was Upper Holloway. In the earlier decades of the nineteenth century Hackney was little more than a suburban village, but the whole neighbourhood was being rapidly developed northwards through Clapton to Stamford Hill, so that before long the built-up area joined Stoke Newington and Tottenham. In the 1860s Clapton was becoming an attractive residential area for the growingly prosperous Victorian middle-class.

Those who have read the late Dr. Kevan's book *London's Oldest Baptist Church* will remember that in 1855 Charles Stovel, minister from 1832 to 1883, led the congregation from Little Prescot Street to Commercial Street. Changes in London's east end were destined to drive the community in the twentieth century, after a lingering period of decline, out to Walthamstow. When my grandfather came from Norwich to London with a young bride in 1861—he was then twenty-five—and made a home first in Bethnal Green and then by the side of Victoria Park, which lies in what we now call South Hackney, he joined Stovel's church. It was already clear that the move to Commercial Street was not a wise one. But Stovel—a formidable figure in denominational life—was a far-seeing man. He encouraged my grandfather, then a young man with good prospects in the textile trade and a growing family, to move in 1868 or 1869—with a number of others—into Clapton so as to become a foundation member of the new church. Several of the founders had been connected with Stovel's church. Others were transferred from Mare Street, where Dr. Francis Augustus Cox—a very influential figure

* A paper read to a Summer School of the Baptist Historical Society.

in his day—had ministered from 1811 to 1853, and which since 1847 had had Daniel Katterns first as Cox's colleague and then his successor. In 1871 the old church whose home since 1727 had been Devonshire Square, Bishopsgate, was moved, as a result of the building of the Metropolitan Railway, to new premises in Stoke Newington. The Congregationalists, who had been far and away the strongest of the nonconformist denominations in London, but whose supremacy had begun to be challenged, had three churches in the neighbourhood—the Round Chapel in what was called Clapton Park, an 1804 foundation which in 1871 erected for £21,000 a building seating 1,150 (to which they unsuccessfully invited R. W. Dale), one in Upper Clapton, dating from 1812, and one in Lower Clapton, none of them far from the Downs. In 1872, three years after the opening of the Downs, the Congregationalists established yet another church, on Stamford Hill, where Morgan Gibon was to win fame as a preacher, and near which Thomas Binney, the famous Weigh House minister, spent his last years. About the same time they formed two causes in Stoke Newington. At one of them, Rectory Road, C. Fleming Williams gained notoriety as a "Christian Socialist" and had Ebenezer Howard, the Garden City pioneer, in his congregation. There were also Presbyterians and Methodists in the district, while on Stamford Hill a charlatan erected the imposing Agapemonite Church. After prophesying the imminence of the Second Coming, he named the day, but escaped to the west country and there established his notorious "Abode of Love".

The fifty-two persons who covenanted together to form the new Downs Road fellowship were a daring company. The chapel that was built cost £8,300 and had 1,050 seats, and a large schoolroom and several classrooms behind it. A promising young man of twenty-seven was secured as minister, the Rev. T. Vincent Tymms, who after three years in Berwick had been only a few months in Accrington. Under his leadership a church covenant of a broad and comprehensive kind was drawn up. The building was placed in trust for the Baptist denomination, but the communion and membership were declared open to all evangelical Christians.

"All who are members of Christ's body are welcome to our fellowship, irrespective of opinion on matters wherein we are all learners, and none masters or lords. We seek not uniformity but unity—the unity of faith in Christ—and trust the love of God to keep us in unity of spirit and bonds of peace. . . . The question of Baptism is left entirely to individual judgement and conscience. The immersion of believers is the only ordinance taught or practised as baptism, but we make no difference in the manner or cordiality of our reception of Christ's disciples."

The opening services were held on the 14th September 1869, with C. H. Spurgeon as the special preacher. The painful down grade controversy was two decades away. Tymms quickly drew a large and influential congregation and after only three years the membership had grown to 185. This was the era of large families. My

grandfather, who became one of the first diaconate of nine, had arrived in Clapton with four young children. By 1882 twelve had been born to him, of whom ten survived infancy. There were other families of similar size. George Cox, one of the first deacons and at one time a prominent figure in the London Docks, had nine children. Before long the Downs had undertaken work in two mission halls not very far away—Rendlesham Rooms, where Sunday afternoon services were held from 1872, and Waterloo Rooms opened on 28th October, 1876. The latter had originally been used by the Brethren, then a considerable community in Hackney, with John Morley, senior partner of J. and R. Morley, the well-known hosiery firm, as one of its leaders. It was with this group and this neighbourhood that Philip Gosse had been associated between 1847 and 1857 and which figures in that sad classic *Father and Son*. At both Rendlesham and Waterloo Rooms, in addition to Sunday services and children's work, there were Mothers' Meetings and in winter Clothing Clubs and Soup Kitchens. These continued to be needed up to the first World War, and indeed had by then become more necessary as the neighbourhood began to decline. The first Church Manual, which gave reports up to December 1870, in addition to the funds and agencies which might be expected, indicates that there was an Emigration Society, to provide clothes for poor people desiring to emigrate, a Maternity Society, a Psalmody Class, a Lecture Account, a Sick and Wounded Fund, "for our fellow creatures suffering from the agonies and horrors of war", and the collection of subscriptions for the British and Irish Home Missions as well as the B.M.S. The total income of the Church for its own and outside objects was £2,161.

Those were the exciting years of Gladstone's first and greatest ministry. Dr. Tymms's congregation would appreciate the sermons that became the basis of his books *The Private Relationships of Christ* and *The Mystery of God* (1885). Frequently the preacher summed up his message in an original hymn, of which several appeared in the 1880 supplement to *Psalms and Hymns*. One remains in the *Baptist Hymn Book*, though the original first line "Another Sabbath ended" has been changed to "Our day of praise is ended, its peaceful hours all flown".

As its own first treasurer, the church had W. R. Rickett, the treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society, and quickly became one of the most missionary-minded and generous congregations in London. Holman Bentley and his wife came into membership and Bentley completed his Congo dictionary in my grandfather's house with the assistance of his Congo boy Nlemvo and of two of my aunts. Herbert Dixon and his wife, who after service in Congo were two of the missionaries martyred by the Chinese Boxers, were also members of the Downs. A young German, Alfred Teichman, joined the church, found there a wife and went with her under the B.M.S. to India. And there were soon other names on the impressive Missionary Honour Board in the Schoolroom. Overseas interest was greatly

quickened by a visit from H. M. Stanley soon after one of his notable African journeys.

By 1883 the Church was strong enough to take a major part in the formation of a new cause known as Woodberry Down, a cause which quickly flourished, particularly in the last decade of the century when it had as minister George Hay Morgan, a Welshman who later gave up the ministry for politics and the law.

It was in the 1880s that a young man from Lancashire wrote for a social occasion some light-hearted verses, which were often quoted to me as a boy. Though the author probably had his tongue in his cheek when he wrote them, they convey something of the mood of the period and the place. I quote two of the eight stanzas:—

"Once more I tread the well-worn turf,
Once more I breathe the air,
And once again my senses thrill
As never otherwhere;
I turn from country air that tans,
From salt sea air that browns
For very gales from Paradise
Sweep over Hackney Downs . . .
Here art and fashion find a home
As nowhere else they may
And youth and beauty here resort
On every holiday,
Whilst that most subtle thing called 'style'
Is seen in coats and gowns,
When brave and fair enjoy the air
On sunny Hackney Downs."

The author, John Marsden, afterwards became well known in the public life of Blackburn and a trustee of the John Rylands Library.

Dr. Tymms was minister at the Downs from 1869 until 1891, when he was persuaded to become Principal of Rawdon College. The membership of the church then numbered 576 and to the agencies already mentioned there had been added a substantial lending library, a gymnasium, a flourishing literary society, a total abstinence society and Band of Hope and a Children's Sewing Circle, as well as collectors for a whole range of good causes. In 1892 the total income of the church was £2,809. What went on at the Downs may be compared with the enterprises started at Westbourne Park under the leadership of Dr. Clifford; these included an Institute and a Building Society (1886).

Tymms was succeeded in the pastorate by the Rev. Edward Medley, bearer of a name long known in Baptist circles, a distinguished, gentlemanly figure, married to a sister of Augustine Birrell, by then a well-established littérateur and Liberal politician. Medley was not able to repeat Tymms's success. It was a relief—engineered, I used to be told—when he was invited in 1896 to the staff of Regents Park College, where again his stay was not a long one.

After a rather lengthy interregnum, Medley was succeeded by

James Mursell, whose father and grandfather had been Baptist ministers. He was an early enthusiast for the Christian Endeavour Movement and quickly gained a hold over the young men of the congregation, taking them away on holidays and inspiring them with his own enthusiasm for cricket and stamp-collecting. Mursell was much in demand at C.E. Conventions and similar gatherings and formed the habits which later made him a wanderer between Australia and this country. No one who ever saw his remarkably shaped head, with its fringe of upstanding hair and its heavy jowl is likely to forget him. He left the Downs the year I was born.

Then came F. G. Benskin, a rising star in the denominational firmament. He had already had a successful pastorate at West End, Hammersmith. For the five years 1903 to 1908 he drew the largest congregations the Downs had known or was ever to know. For monthly popular services on a Sunday evening it was necessary to put chairs in the aisles. Although I was little more than six years old when Mr. Benskin left for Broadmead, Bristol, I can still see him in my mind's eye in the Downs pulpit—a small figure, with both arms raised above his head as hearers listened intently to his carefully prepared and eloquent sermons.

I wonder whether I can help you to see the congregation as I first remember it. My grandfather was by then the senior deacon and a widower. After some years as church secretary, he had become treasurer. According to a custom long extinct, he sat beneath the pulpit at the communion table and led the first part of the service. This was partly to relieve the minister and indicates how seriously the latter's role as preacher was regarded. No doubt it also stemmed from the days when deacons were regarded as part of the separated, ordained ministry. After the notices and collection my grandfather, a short but impressive figure with a long white beard, walked slowly down the aisle and joined three unmarried daughters and an unmarried son in the back pew, which had been his since 1869. Then a strange thing occurred. Another bearded figure moved forward and stood in front of the communion table. Putting his elbow on the table, he cupped his hand to his ear. His name, if I remember rightly, was Mold. He was anxious not to miss a word of the "Long Prayer", but he returned to his seat for the sermon. He was, I believe, the brother of Mr. Mold, the undertaker. This venerable worthy, clad in a full frock-coat and with a top-hat in his hand, would enter the gallery by way of one of the choir vestries and from a point of vantage gazed down on the congregation as if wondering for whose funeral he would next be responsible.

The Downs organ is still one of the finest in any London church. Fifty years ago it was the pride of a greatly gifted organist and a fine choir. The leading contralto, in particular, had a remarkable voice and might have gone far as a professional singer, had she not been held back by nervousness. She lived on expectations of what might come to her from a wealthy aunt and on the small sums obtainable by giving singing lessons. She was a large woman, who

according to the fashion of the time wore large hats. These I remember, and also the extraordinary richness of her deeper notes. Anthems and solos were a regular feature of the services and I seemed to be back again listening to them when I visited the Oxford Terrace Baptist church in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Some of my earliest memories of services at the Downs are associated with the pictures in a little red-leather New Testament, of which I was the proud possessor; with the surreptitious counting of the pennies I had received as pocket money; and with watching either the sequins on the bonnet and cape of an elderly lady, who sat in front of us, or the strange behaviour of a young couple across the aisle, who as soon as the sermon began, clasped hands.

In the spring of 1908 my grandfather died. A few months later Mr. Benskin left the Downs for Bristol. Years later he told me that he could not cope with the rest of the diaconate without my grandfather. Whether or not this was the whole truth, it is certain that the church then entered upon a sad period in its history. There was a long interregnum, the members finding it difficult to agree on whom to invite as the next minister.

Unlike most of the other members of his family, and unlike my mother, my father had not become a member of the church. He described himself as a Quaker by conviction, but he was a regular attendant at the services; he had played the harmonium which preceded the organ; he was the secretary of the Sunday School; he had undertaken innumerable other tasks. My mother was the daughter of a Baptist minister, who after pastorates in Romsey, Biggleswade and Southampton, had come to live in Stoke Newington in 1886 on retirement. He and my mother joined the Downs in 1887, drawn there by the preaching of Dr. Tymms and the liveliness of its fellowship. When my grandfather Payne died, a number of people begged my father to become a member of the church so that he might succeed his father as treasurer. With some hesitation he agreed, provided it was understood that he would find it difficult to attend the Communion Service, because of his Quaker scruples. It was made clear that there would be opposition in the Church Meeting to his acceptance on these terms and my father at once decided that he would not apply for membership. A few years later, in circumstances yet to be described, he became Sunday School Superintendent and on a number of occasions occupied the pulpit.

After an interval of nearly two years, the Rev. David Lindsay accepted an invitation to the pastorate. He had been trained at Manchester College, was in his mid-thirties and had already held two Yorkshire pastorates, gaining a reputation as an exponent of what was then called the "Social Gospel". A small volume of his sermons had recently been published and he at once began to deal with social problems in his evening sermons. The neighbourhood had begun to change. What went on on Hackney Downs was no better, if no worse, than were conditions on many another open space. Mr. Lindsay urged open air meetings. He encouraged some of the more

zealous ladies to form a "Fishers' Band". Before long the older and staid deacons, many of them survivors from the days of Dr. Tymms, were upset. Some of the things mentioned on a Sunday evening were not in their opinion fit subjects for a pulpit or for the ears of their children. A serious rift began to appear. Mr. Lindsay, feeling that he had perhaps made a mistake in coming to the Downs, offered his resignation. The prospect of another long vacancy caused dismay and the officers begged him to stay. Within a few months, however, relations were so strained that the deacons told Mr. Lindsay he had better leave. By then, however, he had his own strong following among the members and the congregation.

The result was a split, and a very grievous and damaging one. After many months of tension, the whole of the diaconate and their families began to absent themselves from the Sunday services in an effort to force Mr. Lindsay's departure. Friendships were broken and families divided. I was by then a schoolboy of eleven or twelve and have memories of constant comings and goings, and of heated conversations between my parents and my aunts. The former, though not approving all that Mr. Lindsay said and did, were sure one had no right to leave the church. My aunts supported the diaconate. During the troubles Mr. Mursell was invited to preach and try his skill as a reconciler. I remember his morning text, though not the contents of the sermon. He preached from Philippians 4:2: "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord". It was no doubt well meant, but it cut much too near the bone, for some of the chief trouble-makers were daughters of the church secretary.

In the end it became necessary to consult Dr. Shakespeare and other Baptist leaders. On their advice those who had withdrawn from the services were warned that, if they did not return to the Communion Table, their names would be removed from the roll of members and that they would have to give up the posts they had continued to occupy in the main Sunday School and at Rendlesham and Waterloo Rooms. Very vividly I recall the Sunday School the Sunday the dissentients took their leave, and the following Sunday when volunteers arrived to take their place. It was then that my father became Superintendent, though at the time heavily involved in Borough Council work as well as in his profession. The dissentients scattered, many of them to Congregational churches in the neighbourhood. Years afterwards a number expressed regret for their conduct and sought reconciliation with Mr. Lindsay. The Downs was beginning gradually to recover somewhat from the blow to its standing and reputation when suddenly in August 1914 the first World War broke out.

This is not the occasion on which to describe what that war meant to a London schoolboy. One watched the obvious shock to an older generation unprepared for such a disaster; the appalling casualties on the Western Front (three brothers who had sat not far from us in chapel were killed one after the other); the gradual food shortages,

involving rationing and hardship much more severe than anything experienced in World War II; then the air raids, first by Zeppelins at night, then by Fokkers by day.

Clapton and the Downs Chapel emerged into the 1920s greatly altered. The district began to look drab and down-at-heel. When in 1911 I started at the Hackney Downs Secondary School, there were some thirty Jewish boys who did not join the rest of us for the shortened form of Morning Prayer which the Headmaster led each morning. When I left in 1919, there were nearly 150 Jewish boys. Clapton and Stamford Hill had become a stopping-place on the way from Whitechapel to Golders Green.

During those years a borough which in the 1870s and 1880s sent to Parliament Henry Fawcett, the blind Postmaster-General, and later had among its members Sir Albert Spicer, became the happy hunting-ground of the mountebank and charlatan Horatio Bottomley. From South Hackney he launched many of his schemes and more than once became M.P.

The changes caused by the war were felt only gradually at the chapel. Few of the surviving ex-service men returned to the churches. Their experiences had been grim; the gap between those who had fought and the civilian population was too great; and no denomination had in Edwardian times proclaimed a gospel adequate to the human emergency. We who were teenagers went on getting older. Mr. Lindsay had remained at the Downs throughout the war, save for a short spell in France with the Y.M.C.A. The Jubilee of the chapel was celebrated hopefully in 1919, but the following years were not very easy. As a result of the split Mr. Lindsay had become more cautious and less radical. I do not think he spoke very effectively to my generation, though I remember gratefully a series of Sunday evening sermons on "Famous Johns of History". I got rather at cross-purposes with the minister, particularly after I started at Kings College in the Strand and when he took what I thought was a disingenuous line over women deacons and showed himself less sympathetic than I and some others were to Dr. Shakespeare's book *The Churches at the Crossroads*.

During my schooldays internal missions had been held from time to time, several conducted by John Wilson, of Woolwich. But the one that really stirred me was that led by Dr. A. C. Dixon, then at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. My religious convictions were shaped by my home and by what I learned of a long family tradition of Non-conformity; by the large place the chapel played in our daily lives and by the influence on many of us of an elderly woman, who ran a typing agency. She prepared us each year for the N.S.S.U. Scripture Examination and she and her sister trained us for the cantata or demonstration which was always part of the Sunday School Anniversary. The younger sister, Miss Gertie, played the piano with a hard staccato touch. On the rare occasions when Miss Nellie played, she put on two pairs of spectacles but never managed to synchronise her two hands. But she had a remarkable power of winning a response

from both fellows and girls. I think I was baptized in 1917 because of the importunity of the minister's wife. But Miss Nellie approved my joining the church. Our equivalent of the modern Young People's Fellowship or Youth Club was a meeting each Tuesday evening called the Downs Christian Band at which we listened to addresses and occasionally read papers of our own. My mother watched my intellectual and spiritual growing pains with wonderful restraint and understanding. There were deepening shadows over our home caused by illness and this, combined with the war and its aftermath, and the heady experiences of University life, caused me a long period of uncertainty about my future. The shortage of Sunday School teachers in the last years of the War had led to several of us having to take classes before we were ready, particularly as there was no Preparation Class. But I owed a great deal in those days to T. R. Glover's *Jesus of History* and to his Saturday columns in the *Daily News*, and also to the books of H. E. Fosdick.

Towards the end of 1921 I finally made up my mind to apply to Regents Park College and made my way there in October 1922 with a copy of George Adam Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* as a parting present from the Downs. During the three years I was there, if not taking services at the little places supplied by our Preaching Station Society, I went in the morning to the City Temple to hear Dr. Norwood or to the King's Weigh House to hear Dr. Orchard, and in the evening to the Downs. But my parents moved from Clapton to Potters Bar in 1924. My aunts had attended the Round Chapel since the split of 1911-12, so that my direct contact with the Downs ceased in the mid-1920s.

The last forty years have been ones of growing difficulty for the church. Mr. Lindsay stayed until 1927, which made his the longest pastorate apart from that of Dr. Tymms. He was succeeded by F. C. Bryan. His five years at the Downs were a kind of Indian summer with a warmth and promise that soon disappeared, though it was at this time that Walter Campbell entered the ministry via Regents Park College and another name was put on the Missionary Honour Roll, that of Margaret Stevens (Mrs. W. D. Grenfell). George Evans, who followed F. C. Bryan, saw the tide slowly running out, as he had already done at Maclarens old church in Manchester. Then came World War II during which services were somehow kept going by E. H. Hobday (1940-45), who to do so travelled from Loughton. The chapel suffered considerable, but not irreparable damage from the bombing. A handful of people, led first by L. P. Cook (1946-49), living nine miles away, then F. J. Morris (1951-58), then by R. A. D. Collins (1960-65), straight from Spurgeons College, tried to restore and maintain the work, but with few encouragements. The percentage of Jews in the community declined, but their place was taken by coloured immigrants. The Congregationalists closed one of their nearby churches many years ago. The Presbyterians have left the neighbourhood. The Methodists disposed of part of their buildings. The Downs remains, restored and redecorated with War Damage money in 1955,

but with part of the galleries enclosed and let. It would still seat many hundreds and has its fine organ and its Edwardian air. But the congregation rarely numbers fifty and they are bravely led by a deaconess, Eileen Holton.*

What are we to say to this story? It is neither unique, nor typical, but just an episode of Baptist life, a small footnote to the larger story of Christian witness in this country during the past century. There are certainly things in it to regret. The bitter quarrels of 1912 ought not to have occurred in a church whose original covenant was in the terms I quoted. The dispute was an illustration of how difficult Christians find it to recognise and adapt themselves to social and intellectual change, and how easily the veneer of charity and loyalty rubs off. The failure to change old methods, cut losses and abandon buildings is a near universal failure, and is clearly seen in the story of the last twenty-five years, some might say the last forty years or even longer. We are all blind and cling to old ways. The remnants worshipping in some of our buildings, not only in London but in many other parts of the country, seem to cling to them with more determination than did our forefathers in similar circumstances.

Ought we not to be more adventurous in deliberately encouraging the movement of families, as Stovel did a century ago, deliberately planning our strategy accordingly? There are few recent parallels to what H. G. Hoare did in the developing Harrow-Ruislip neighbourhood more than a generation ago. Also we are perhaps too reluctant to recognise that there are particular kinds of district and social patterns to which our type of service and churchmanship makes a readier appeal than they do elsewhere. To admit this would involve us in questions of joint Christian planning and of Christian unity, for which many in our ranks would appear to be less ready than were the founders of the Downs Chapel a hundred years ago.

It should also be noted that it was Christian apologetics of a bold and open-minded kind which drew hearers in the early decades of the church's history. Contrary to some modern misconceptions, those were not days of easy faith. Evolution, biblical criticism and doubts about the doctrine of double predestination led to much intellectual and spiritual perplexity. Dr. Tymms had to meet the repercussions following Darwin's *Descent of Man* (1871), the works of Herbert Spencer, the novels of Thomas Hardy, and Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888). It was the Edwardians who read Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* (1907) and were many of them disturbed by the novels of H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, as well as by the "New Theology" of R. J. Campbell. What they heard and experienced at the Downs helped more than one generation to a sure foothold. But, looking back, it would seem that it was in the 1890s and the earliest years of the present century that ministries and

*Followed by Sister Margaret Popham (1970-74). There has now been a further reconstruction of the premises, allowing for more letting to the local authorities and the work is led by the Rev. L. C. Taylor. There are 26 members, according to the Baptist Union Directory, 1976-77.

congregations—at the Downs, and elsewhere—failed to realise what was going on around them.

It is sad to think of that imposing building now so inadequately used and of the brave group who worship there. It is difficult to believe that this type of building will again meet the needs of the neighbourhood. But let us remember all those influenced for good in the past; how lines have gone out into all the world and how many think gratefully of the witness and service of the Downs. Let us remember also that there are still causes in the growing districts on the outskirts of London that are fulfilling very much the function that the Downs fulfilled before World War I and are in effect repeating its successes. It will be for a later generation to record and preserve their story.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

Ephemera—with more than a passing interest

Dr. J. T. Whitney (Head of Religious Studies, South East Essex Sixth Form College) is making a collection, partly for teaching purposes, of picture postcards with a religious theme. He is particularly interested in cards issued by missionary societies and cards reflecting aspects of the temperance movement (e.g. Band of Hope Motto series), and he would be glad to hear from any reader with information or examples which will reinforce his collection. His address is: 38 Hazlemere Road, Benfleet, Essex.

An article by Dr. Whitney, recently published in the *Picture Postcard Collectors' Gazette*, showed how postcards may be used as historical evidence. Entitled "Edwardian Religion", it analysed six early 20th-century card series which illustrated the clauses of the Lord's Prayer. The prevalence of other-worldly, banal and fatalistic interpretations made Dr. Whitney conclude: "It is hardly surprising that religion interpreted sentimentally could not stand in the decades of war and depression which followed". The evidence of the postcards thus confirms the impressions of popular attitudes which are revealed by other religious artifacts (e.g. memorials) and verse of the age.