

# *The First Editor*

**JOHN RITCHIE (1853-1930)**



John Ritchie was born in 1853 in Old Meldrum, Aberdeenshire and he was born again in Inverurie in 1871. It was in the wake of the 1859/60 revival when

thousands were saved that Donald Munro and other evangelists had gospel meetings in Inverurie where John Ritchie was employed as a Grocer's

assistant. In one week in 1871 over twenty young men and women were converted, including the young man who would later become known world-wide by his initials, J.R.

The young converts soon realised that there was nothing from the pulpit to satisfy and develop the new life within them and so they began to meet to read the Scriptures and to pray. Not long after this, news came to them that Donald Ross and other evangelists were having meetings in the neighbouring village of Old Rayne and that believers there were meeting together to remember the Lord according to the Scriptures. As a result some of the young converts walked to Old Rayne on a Sunday morning and when they saw what took place they were "convinced by all" (1 Cor 14:26); they were baptized and thereafter commenced breaking bread in remembrance of the Lord.

It soon became apparent that the young Grocer's assistant was a gifted preacher. He preached the gospel in barns, houses, joiners' shops, in the open-air; in fact, wherever he could find an audience. Such, however, were the demands upon his time that he gave up secular employment and moved out in the work full-time with the commendation of his brethren.

In June 1877 he was united in marriage to Miss Jeanie Liveston of Forfar and they had 46 years of happy married life until Mrs Ritchie's home-call in 1924, a blow from which John Ritchie never recovered fully. The young couple's first home was in Dalmellington,

Ayrshire, where this servant of the Lord was engaged in a gracious work of God. In 1879 they moved to Kilmarnock where, as well as preaching, this busy man took up writing and from a little house in Princes Street, Kilmarnock, the first publication, *The Young Watchman* made its appearance in 1883. This small magazine was followed by *The Sunday School Worker* in 1885, followed by *The Little Ones' Treasury* in 1889 and then *The Believer's Magazine* in 1890.

John Ritchie was a prolific writer. In his lifetime he produced over two hundred books and booklets, in addition to hundreds of gospel tracts. Amongst his better known books are *The Tabernacle, From Egypt to Canaan*, and *Foundation Truths*. These have run to many editions and are still available from the Publishing House he set up in Kilmarnock.

Although he was committed to writing and publishing christian literature, this remarkable man set aside time for gospel campaigns and in the ministry of the word of God he travelled far afield. In later years when hindered by weakness of the body he was forced to curtail his travels and he devoted most of his time to the *Believer's Magazine*, until finally, after 37 years as editor, he passed the editorship over to J. Charleton Steen. In March 1930 this indefatigable servant of God was called home and his body was laid to rest in a cemetery in Troon, Ayrshire, to await the coming of the Lord he served so faithfully.

F.E.S.

# *The Second Editor*

## **J. CHARLETON STEEN (1865–1931)**

J. Charleton Steen was saved as a young man and spent his early days in Greenock, Scotland. He soon showed a desire to know the Scriptures and at the same time gave evidence of a zeal to preach the gospel. When he was twenty-three, he gave up secular employment and gave himself over to full-time service for the Lord.

His first experiences in gospel work were gained in Wigtownshire where, in company with a well-known evangelist before the turn of the century, Robert Miller, he preached faithfully. Soon after those early days he travelled further afield and his ministry took him all over the British Isles. He was singularly fitted for the public ministry of the Word and being himself a diligent student, he was always able to give help.



When John Ritchie, the first Editor of the Believer's magazine, began to show signs of failing health about 1926, Mr Steen was called upon to give help as a joint editor. On the death of Mr Ritchie in March 1930, he took over the editorship, a work for which he was well fitted. His own contributions were always of a helpful and Christ-exalting character; his Treasury Notes being a source of pleasure and profit to the Magazine's many readers.

In an appreciation of J. Charleton Steen, the late William Hoste wrote: "I have esteemed it a privilege to be associated with him in the Believer's Magazine and without the slightest jar in the course of the years. It is unnecessary to dwell on his gift as an exponent of the Scriptures. In spite of declining health his did not spare himself, and it was wonderful what he was enabled to carry out in all parts of the British Isles."

Mr Steen was engaged in ministry meetings in York Street Gospel Hall, Leicester, in September 1931 when he was called home. On the second last evening of the series, he suddenly closed his meeting and collapsed on the platform. Within a few hours he was in the Lord's presence.

Fortunately Mr Steen left much in written ministry and it is hoped to include a few articles in the Believer's Magazine during 1991. His well-known book "Christ Supreme" has been reprinted and may be obtained from John Ritchie Ltd, Kilmarnock.

F.E.S.

# The Third Editor

## William Hoste, B.A. (1861–1938)

Few readers who had the last issue of this magazine in their hands on 1st March were prepared for the tidings that the beloved Editor was already resting from his labours, having, in the early morning of that day, departed to be with Christ.

He was born to the estate of "an English gentleman," with every prospect of social position and worldly honour. His father was General D.E. Hoste, C.B., late Commander of the Royal Artillery. His grandfather was Colonel Sir Geo. Hoste, C.B., Gentleman Usher to Queen Victoria and Deputy Governor of Jersey.

His boyhood days were passed at his father's residence in Dover Castle, an ancient and noble pile, dating back in part to Saxon times — a building which, on account of its prominent position, attracts the attention of travellers crossing from the Continent of Europe or passing through the Straits

of Dover.

He was educated at Clifton College, one of England's greatest public schools.

From Clifton he proceeded to Cambridge University, where he was a member of Trinity College, and took a theological course under the direction of Dr. Handley Moule.

Brought up in a sturdy evangelical environment, it was his joy in early life to enter into the knowledge and experience of God's salvation. After graduation at Cambridge, it was his intention to enter the ministry of the Church of England, and he went through the studies necessary for ordination as a clergyman. When, however, the time drew near for his

ordination he found himself unable, on conscientious grounds, to subscribe to the doctrinal formulas.

From his studies in the Holy Scriptures he was convinced that the Church of England was in grievous error on such matters as baptismal regenera-



*William Hoste B.A.*

tion, episcopacy, apostolic succession, and the whole conception of the "clergy" as a class among God's people distinct from the less privileged "laity" (so-called).

Here then was the crisis of his career. After waiting on God his mind was made up. He must obey God rather than man. At the sacrifice of earthly prospects, valued friendships, and present gain, he determined to abandon all thought of ordination. When he left Cambridge it was to enter on a pathway of service, depending for further leading on the never-failing guidance of the Lord.

As fuller light was granted, he found that if the Holy Scriptures were to be obeyed, he must not only abandon the thought of ordination in the Church of England, but its fellowship also. Taking this further important step, it was his joy and privilege to be baptised by immersion, and to identify himself with assemblies gathered only to the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Being proficient in European languages, he spent several years in arduous evangelistic labours in France, Italy, and other Roman Catholic countries.

Mr. Hoste was profoundly interested in missionary work in every part of the world. He undertook extensive tours of India and other countries for the encouragement of the workers, and made two toilsome journeys to Central Africa in days when travel in that conti-

nent was attended by dangers and discomforts almost unknown to-day.

The Lord's work in Ireland had a special place in his heart, and for many years he paid an annual visit to Belfast and neighbourhood at the time of the well-known Lurgan Conference.

Mr. Hoste thus became widely known as a preacher and teacher in many parts of the world. But he was still more extensively known as a prolific writer on Biblical, evangelical, and prophetic subjects.

For about seven years prior to his death he was editor of *The Believer's Magazine*. In this service he found great delight and adequate scope for the exercise of his singular gifts as a scholarly, devout, and exact expositor of the Holy Scriptures. Almost to his last day on earth he was occupied with his editorial concerns and with planning the contents of the magazine.

The end came after but a brief illness. He felt that the Lord was about to call him, and when no longer able to read for himself he asked Mrs. Hoste to read to him John 14 and Rom 8. He smiled and said, "I have no fear," and passed peacefully into the immediate presence of the Lord.

Of him it may well be said that the Word of Christ dwelt in him richly. The secret of his Christian life is in large measure to be found in the majestic words of Deut 6.6-7. These words, so descriptive of our brother's life and walk.

# The Fourth Editor

## AN APPRECIATION THE LATE ANDREW BORLAND 1895–1979

Andrew Borland was one of the outstanding octogenarians who have served assemblies well and whom the Lord spared to us for a long while. Born in the little Ayrshire town of Galston and saved while still young he completely dedicated his life and talents to the Lord.

Scottish assemblies largely emerged from the 1859 Revival and were largely working class in background. Andrew Borland would be one of the first from that kind of background who went to university, graduating with an Honours Degree in English which he used well for the Master. That would be during the First World War when Andrew took his stand as a conscientious objector, in which capacity he first came into contact with the late E. W. Rogers. Andrew was gospel-minded and at least once spent his holidays from school in the Ayrshire Tent in harness with the late Jimmy Houston at the village of Coylton. He was a member of the Ayrshire Tent Committee for years.

Some 55 years ago Andrew moved to Irvine and as a result we are inclined to recall him as Andrew Borland of Irvine. Until he retired he taught in Kilwinning Higher Grade School, the rector of which said on funeral day, "There aren't many Andrew Borlands". His principal interest, however, was in spiritual things and therefore promotion passed him by, except that he was latterly Depute Rector. The writer once asked a former pupil of that school if he knew Mr. Borland to which the reply was, "He's kind of fond of



his Bible, isn't he?"

Andrew came into great demand for ministry and was well known as a conference speaker throughout Scotland and beyond. The effects of his painstaking ministry were far-reaching. Three young men from the Needed Truth meeting in Galston found their way to an open-air missionary conference at Newmilns and heard Andrew speak on John 10:16, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold", and two of them became missionaries: the late Willie Templeton of Trinidad and R. C. Allison of Angola and Rhodesia. The late Robert Auld of New Zealand heard him speak at a conference in Airdrie and that address transformed a very ordinary Christian into an extraordinary one, Robert Auld becoming a power for God in that country and greatly

influenced missionary expansion into New Guinea. The assembly meeting in Brisbane Hall, Largs celebrated its jubilee on June 9 and invited one of the speakers from the 1929 opening conference to speak again – Andrew Borland, but that day was Andrew's funeral day.

Andrew was also using his talents in writing. He was editor of Ritchie's production, *The Christian Worker* and later for 36 years editor of *The Believers' Magazine*. He wrote a regular article in his magazines and his ministry became world-wide. There was never anything frivolous or light-hearted about Andrew Borland's ministry. He seldom repeated himself and covered a wide variety of subject matter – in depth. He was never given to repeating clichés and was prepared to take up the unusual as well as the topical.

Other writings included children's books in earlier days e.g. *Crusaders for Christ in Heathen Lands* which showed his wide knowledge of missionary enterprise and each story was illustrated by an original poem, for Andrew Borland was no mean poet. He also wrote a book for young Christians entitled, *Love's Most Excellent Way* which no doubt showed his own approach to love, courtship and marriage. Later books included *Romans Chapter Eight* and *Narratives of the Nativity*.

Andrew Borland had a lifelong interest in missionary work and was a trustee of the Lord's Work Fund, later the Lord's Work Trust, from its inception till his home-call. His addresses at missionary farewell meetings were memorable, for he usually practised some form of laying

of hands at the end of his address. Probably his last public meeting was R.C. Allison's farewell when once again he spoke on John 10:16 and ended by almost embracing that eminent servant of the Lord. His final joy was when his grandson, in pursuit of a medical career, chose to go to West Pakistan to places like Murree and Multan but he didn't live to hear Gordon's report.

He never neglected his local responsibilities. He was long an elder in the Irvine assembly and took a full share of responsibility both for taking meetings and for arranging them. Always an assembly man he practised what he preached. He was always there – ready to take part. His last little message on a Lord's Day morning, just before his last illness, was on 2 Cor 9:15: "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift".

Andrew Borland was among the unworldliest of men. He never owned a car and lived in a council house. There he nursed his dear wife during her last illness. Their needs were simple and their interest in divine things totally absorbing.

For the last twenty years the Borlands were familiar figures in Stoke where their daughter resided and while Mrs. Borland was poorly until the Lord took her home, Andrew endeared himself to the saints in the area. From there the Lord called him home.

"A prince and a great man has fallen in Israel". And yet Andrew Borland only wanted to be known as a man of God. Shall we not rather say, "This is a holy man of God" (2 Kings 4:9)?

*The Editors*

## *Robert McPike (1904–1991)*

WHEN Andrew Borland retired from the editorship of the Believer's Magazine in 1974, a panel of four brethren, of whom Robert McPike was the senior, took over. He continued in this position until 1984. Magazine readers were not unfamiliar with his name as he had been contributing papers since the 1920's. He also wrote for other magazines, such as "Counsel" and "Threshed Wheat".

Bobby McPike, as he was familiarly called, was born into a miner's family in the Ayrshire village of Annbank. He was not saved until he was 18 and that great event took place down a coal mine. He was in danger of being led astray by his companions, but on conversion he called at their meeting place and told them, as he would say in his testimony "My old companions, fare ye well, I will not go with you to hell, I mean with Jesus Christ to dwell, will you come?" He then gave up his part-time mining studies and concentrated on studying his Bible.

The newly-converted youth threw himself into the work of the local assembly. The members were building their first Gospel Hall with their own hands; one of the brethren lending them the money for building materials, so Bobby took up colportage work so that he could use the profits to reduce the assembly's debt. This work brought him into touch with John Ritchie's of Kilmarnock and he joined the firm. After six years the claims of National Service caused him to return to coal-mining where he remained for the rest of his working life.

In his long association with Annbank assembly Bobby McPike filled almost every office. The first was the Bible Class and from the early 1930's many youths from Annbank and district attended it. There are still survivors who speak of the help and blessing received. This work continued for twenty years. In his time as Sunday School Superintendent, numbers reached as high as several hundreds. Although deeply involved in the work of his home assembly he had a wide ministry. He purchased a motor-bike to get to Ritchie's but he used it extensively to travel to meetings until petrol rationing made this impossible. He ministered the Word throughout the British Isles and paid two visits to Canada. On one occasion he spent his annual holidays in tent work in Manchester with the evangelist, Jimmy McCulloch of Prestwick.

Bobby McPike's influence was much felt in the county of his birth. He was one of the conveners of the Ayrshire Bible Readings and a committee member of the Ayrshire Gospel Tent work. He married in 1927 and the Annbank assembly had the honour of treating Bobby and his wife Bessie on the occasion of their golden and diamond wedding anniversaries. They did not have a family of their own, but they reared an orphan nephew of Bessie's and a niece also spent much of her youth with them.

It was a surprise when Bobby was called home before his wife, but in her advanced age and almost complete helplessness her fortitude has been magnificent.