

# Life Lessons for Me from the Epistle to the Hebrews

Topic Study for Nov. 7th—Feb. 12. 1-7

BY REV. J. H. MCARTHUR, S.T.D.

**T**HIS epistle differs from most other epistles in the New Testament. In that it is anonymous. Paul and Peter, and James and Jude, in their epistles inscribe their names. But the author of this epistle has not done so. Who he was, we do not know. He was almost certainly not Paul. He writes differently from Paul; he argues differently; he quotes the Old Testament Scriptures differently. The character of the epistle would indicate that the author was a converted Jew, for he was an adept in the use of the Jewish Scriptures. He was, in all probability, an Alexandrian Jew, for when he quotes Scripture, he quotes from the Greek version, that was used by the Jews of Alexandria, and, further, he shows an intimate acquaintance with the Alexandrian type of philosophy. Such a description would answer to Apollos (Acts 18: 24), and yet there is no certainty that he was the author. It is, after all a matter of little importance as to who the author was, so long as we know that he was a man with a message. God spoke through him. It is ours to receive his message.

The epistle was written to the Hebrew Christians at a time when many of them were in danger of apostasy, on account of the persecutions that were waged against them by their compatriots, the Jews. To become a Christian in those early days meant a great deal. It meant that one would be subjected to the taunts of both enemies and friends. So great were the sufferings of these early Jewish Christians that many of them seem to have been in danger of falling away from Christ. This epistle is written to them for their encouragement.

Our author undertakes to show the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, from which they came, and back to which some of them were tempted to go. He does not underrate the Jewish reli-



REV. DR. CHOWN.

This stalwart Canadian, our well known and much beloved General Secretary of Temperance, Prohibition and Moral Reform, was one of the most popular and powerful speakers at the Convention. His sturdy figure and smiling face, as shown in our street snap photo, will appear quite natural to many of our readers. The Epworth League has a staunch friend in Dr. Chown.

gion. It was a glorious religion. God had given it to the fathers of old through prophets, and priests, and angels. God spoke to the fathers at sundry times, and in divers manners. He spoke through angels and men, through prophets and priests, through poets and philosophers; by visions and dreams, by Urim and Thummim; in the events of Providence and of history, in victories and in defeats. In many ways God spoke to the fathers. But great as was this Old Testament revelation, it was still inferior to the revelation made in the New Testament. In the New Testament God speaks unto us through His Son. As the Son is greater than prophets or angels or priests, by so much is the Christian religion superior to that of Judaism. Therefore, argues the author, because of the superiority of the Christian religion which we have espoused, we should continue steadfast unto the end no matter what our hardships may be.

The following outline of the epistle will give us an idea of the author's line of argument:

**Theme**—The pre-eminence of Christ, the founder of the Christian religion, as compared with the founders of Judaism.

(1) Christ is superior to the prophets.—1: 1-3.

(2) Christ is superior to angels.—1: 4; 2: 18.

(3) Christ is superior to Moses, the mediator of the Old Covenant.—3: 1; 4: 13.

(4) Christ is superior to Aaron, the first high priest of the Mosaic Covenant.—4: 14; 5: 39.

(a) He is a priest after a higher order than Aaron, unchangeable and sinless.—Chap. 7.

(b) He is the priest of a better covenant.—Chap. 8.

(c) He is the priest of a better tabernacle.—Chap. 9.

(d) He is the priest of a better sacrifice.—Chap. 10.

His closing chapters contain an appeal to them to continue steadfast and true to Christ. His argument is interspersed with words of exhortation, and warning, and comfort.

The passage selected for our special study contains

## AN EXHORTATION AND AN ENCOURAGEMENT.

We are exhorted to continue in the Christian race. We are exhorted to lay aside every weight that might impede our progress, just as the athlete must rid himself of every unnecessary weight, even to superfluous flesh. Some Christians try to carry with them a weight of care and worry, a weight of trial and trouble, a weight of pride and arrogance. These things are sure to impede our progress. We must lay aside the sin which clings so easily beset us, the sin which clings closely to us, that seems to have become a part of ourselves, the sin that seems to have been born with us, or acquired by long years of habit. Unless this sin is laid aside, with all others, it will hinder us in the Christian race, just as surely as heavy and loose flowing garments would impede the progress of the athlete. We are exhorted to run with patience. Patient endurance is necessary to success in all lines of life, and not less necessary for the Christian.

The fact that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witness—O. T. saints (see Chap. 11)—whose lives bear witness to the power of faith to overcome every difficulty, is a source of encouragement to us to remain steadfast unto the end. For, if they overcame, how much more should we who live in better times, and serve God under better conditions. We are encouraged to look unto Jesus. He is the founder of our



REV. G. W. KERBY, B.A.

Few men are better known in Methodist circles than the successful pastor of the Central Church, Calgary, Alta. We snapped him in several attitudes, but this is the best. It is a natural and characteristic pose, for Bro. Kerby is hawk-eyed when anything's doing, and keeps himself thoroughly posted on both men and events as they move in the great world.



REV. J. H. RIDDELL, D.D.

The worthy Principal of our own Alberta College of Edmonton was one of the most effective speakers at Seattle. Though charged with many official duties, Dr. Riddell keeps his eye on the young people's work, and his counsels on our General Board are always wise and timely. Few men are touching the young life of the West and influencing it for God as our brother is doing.