

assessment can be made each year, or oftener if necessary, and each member be left at liberty to pay more or less as he sees fit. This is better than having annual dues of a fixed sum, as many may feel interested enough to pay more, and some whose interest is just as great may not feel that they can afford anything, and all should be equally welcome in the Association. Then, too, where annual dues are required, one ceases to be a member when he ceases to pay his dues, which we do not want to be the case in our Associations.

(Concluded next month)

EVOLUTION OF THE HEBREW CONCEPTION OF GOD.

XII.

The first eleven chapters of the First Book of Kings give the history of the reign of David's son and successor, Solomon. This sketch, as we learn from chap. xi., verse 41, was mainly derived from an earlier work called the "Acts of Solomon." The two books of Kings were originally incorporated with the two books of Samuel, but were separated in the Septuagint translation. Like the books of Samuel, they are compilations from various sources, and the writer, or more correctly speaking, the editor of the books was a captive at Babylon. The histories extend from the death of David, 1,018 B. C., to perhaps the middle of the captivity, a period of about 450 years. The writer, as all the early Hebrew historians seem to be, was exceedingly ingenuous, and whilst he early introduces in his history a reference to the Law of Moses, (I. Kings ii., 3), as though it were the *law of the land* at that time, he artlessly follows it by the introduction of items that show not alone the non-observance, but the non-existence at that time, of that which is now known as the Law of Moses. Thus (chap. iii., 4 ff), Solomon offers sacrifices upon an altar at Gibeon, and

this sacrifice is evidently represented as being acceptable to the Lord; whereas the Law of Moses, as stated in Deut. (xii., 13-14), limits the places of sacrifice to one only, and in Levit. (xvii., 3 ff), it makes it obligatory that the sacrifice shall be made by a priest of the family of Aaron. The fact is, the reference to the Law of Moses in the 2nd chapter of 1st Kings is an anachronism. The sacerdotal epoch had not yet come; the meridian period of the prophetic era was near. The Hebrew religion was still in embryo; the conflict between Jehovah and Baal had not yet been decided. Solomon was hospitable to the gods of the surrounding nations, and erected temples for the deities of the Moabites, Ammonites and Phœnicians (I. Kings, xi., 7). But above all these he exalted Jehovah, and upon the summit of Moriah he built the most magnificent temple the world had ever known, in the inner chamber of which he placed the ark of the Lord. There can be no doubt that this work did much to give stability to the national religion. On the other hand there were causes that tended to weaken the Hebrew faith in Jehovah. Solomon, unlike his father, was not a warrior, but he was eminently a diplomatist. As such he cultivated the friendship of the surrounding nations, and he took unto himself wives from several of these. His example was followed by his subjects, who married also with women of the Canaanitish tribes. Solomon also instituted commerce with all the surrounding countries, and built ships for trading with the maritime nations, trading thus with Egypt, Arabia and Phœnicia. This traffic sent the Hebrews into heathen nations, and brought the people of the outside world into Palestine, so that the Jews more and more lost their clanishness. To the Hebrew who had inherited from his ancestors the faith that Jehovah, as their national god, brought to them all the material blessings that they possessed, the knowledge gained by travel in foreign countries, where similar prosperity existed,