

## JEWISH MESSIAHS OR MAHDIS.

BY MAJOR-GEN. J. G. R. FORLONG, F.R.S.E., F.R.A.S., ETC.

[Condensed from "Short Studies in the Science of Comparative Religions." By Major-General Forlong. London: Quaritch.]

WE have seen in the Eastern religious movements that Messiahs, Avatars or Incarnated Gods, Mahdis, and Imams are a prominent feature of faiths, and more especially when a people are oppressed and can find no arm of flesh to protect them. Then they turn to heaven and cry for a Savior; or, if the matter be purely one of faith, a "Buddha" or saint; and the demand creates the supply.

The Jews thought they had found a "Savior" in Cyrus, and again in Judas, the brave Maccabean, to whom, say some learned critics, most of the last sixty Psalms apply. When Judas failed them, many Messiahs or Mahdis appeared, especially up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion in 71-74 A.C. Indeed they continued to appear down to Barkobat, of 135 A.C., between whom and "Judas the Gaulonite" there arose in Palestine some fifty, and quite as many more in Christian Europe. (See Buck's Theol. Dict., pp. 590-5; McClintock & Strong's Cyclo., ii. 141-4.)

Our term Messiah is here very inappropriate, for it was applicable to any "Anointed One"—that is, to all Christians or persons admitted to a faith or sect by the "Chrism" rite—oiling—for which we have substituted water, perhaps as more cleanly.

Dr. Davidson, in his Revised Old Testament, says:

"Mashiê is never applied to a great Deliverer whom the prophets expected, though sometimes to heathen kings . . . even in Daniel 9: 25-26, 'The Messiah' cannot be intended, for there is no article."

Mah-di, a Guide or Divine Leader, is the proper term, especially as this is popularly understood as a Maha Deo, or Great

Lord, or God; one inspired, infallible, and in communion with Heaven, like Mahomet, the Khalifa of the Soudan, the Hindu Avatars, Rama, Krishna, etc.; the Babylonian Silik-Mulkhi, of 3,000 B.C.; the Sosisch of Nainans, of 2,500 B.C.; and our own distinguished Carpenter Messiah of the Punjab, who compelled us a quarter of a century ago to place an army of over ten thousand men in the field to suppress him and his. He began by working many miracles—some most interesting to our Engineers in the way of stretching beams to whatever length was required: but he ended in collecting rebellious multitudes, which cost many lives and required sharp and painful measures, resulting in the Carpenter returning to his trade—but within a prison. The rulers of the Jews were not so lenient, and we may here notice a few of their typical "Messiahs" of the first century.

JUDAS THE GAULONITE, a Messiah of B.C. 4 to A.C. 14.—According to Jewish history, this Galilean and one Sadoka, a Pharisee, raised the divine standard, saying "they would acknowledge no earthly rulers save of the Lord's people." Their rebellion came to an untimely end during the taxing of Cyrenius, Governor of Syria, 13 A.C., in the reign of Augustus. Discreet Jews, like Josephus, Philo, and all who knew the power of Rome, called such Messiahs "dangerous fanatics . . . poor deluded souls, who only led the multitude to their destruction." The historian even avoids calling attention to them, saying that to such foolish teaching and resistance was due the misfortunes which befel the city. Yet Judas was a good and pious man. "He lived frugally, despising all