



# **The "Lost Book of the Nativity of John": A Study in Messianic Folklore and Christian Origins With a New Solution to the Virgin-Birth Problem**

*Dr. Hugh J. Schonfield*

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Hitherto few scholars have treated John the Baptist as an independent personality, apart from the subordinate position accorded him in the Gospels of forerunner to Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The policy of the Gospel writers, crystallized in the saying put into the mouth of the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel, "He must increase, but I must decrease," was consistently directed to utilizing this historic figure as the supreme witness to the Messiahship of Jesus, and then, his purpose served, to relegate him to the limbo of forgetfulness. Here and there, however, even in the Gospels, we catch a glimpse of a higher role which many of his generation assigned to the Baptist." The history of the Baptists after the death of John is a very strange one, and still remains in many places obscure. Some further particulars, however, have in recent years become available by the publication of part of the literature of the Mandaeans of the lower Euphrates, the present-day survivors of the sect. This short introduction on the Baptist and his disciples will have served its purpose if it has drawn attention to the Messianic character of the life and teaching of John in the period of Jewish history which more than any other was full of Messianic expectation, and also to the undoubted fact that John was regarded as Messiah by a numerous following.

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