

**HISTORY OF
EARLY
CHRISTIANITY
PART EIGHT**

**THE LONGER
GOSPEL
OF
MARK**

30 C.E. TO 310 C.E.

IN MEMORIAM

**This class is dedicated to the
memory of my close friend**

GREG SAMPSON

**whose inspiration led me to this
Gospel. As he wished, I will keep
searching for answers.**

**THE LONGER GOSPEL
OF MARK**

OR

**THE MYSTICAL GOSPEL
OF MARK**

THE NAME OF THE GOSPEL

A more spiritual text can in principle be read by anyone, as was the case with the Gospel of John. We perpetuate the false impression that this text (LGM) was concealed from the masses because of its secret or illicit contents when we call it the Secret Gospel of Mark.

From New Testament Scholar Scott Brown.

LECTURE

ONE

THE THREE VERSIONS OF MARK

- 1. Original Mark: This is the version written around 70 A.D. and used by Matthew and Luke to write their gospels.**
- 2. LGM- This version was written some time around 90 A.D.**
- 3. Canonical Mark – This version is an edited down version of LGM.**

ADVISORY ON LECTURES -1

The Longer Gospel of Mark's (or Secret Mark) plight constitutes a warning to all scholars as to the dangers of allowing sentiments of faith to cloud or prevent critical examination of evidence or a stubborn refusal to deal with information which might challenge deeply-held personal convictions.

ADVISORY ON LECTURES - 2

It is good to keep in mind an unofficial directive of the Jesus Seminar: “Beware of finding a Jesus entirely congenial to you.” And we must avoid letting our modern ideas or personal preferences influence our historical judgments. One must look at the written past and interpret what it says, not what we want it to say.

ADVISORY ON LECTURES - 3

If information from the past challenges one's belief, it is best to examine the data and try to determine what the author was trying to convey to their contemporary Christians. From such an exploration, one's own faith may actually be strengthened by an early forgotten Christian belief system.

SCHOLAR REACTION TO THE LONGER GOSPEL OF MARK - 1

“...a morbid concatenation of fancies...”

**“Characteristically, his arguments are
awash in speculation.”**

“...ill-founded...”

“...science fiction...”

**“...does not belong to scholarly, nor
even...discussable, literature...”**

POPULAR REACTION TO THE SECRET GOSPEL OF MARK - 2

“simply absurd!” “. . . Unacceptable”

**“. . . highly speculative” “. . . numerous
other fundamental weaknesses”**

**“. . . irresponsible . . . will not fool the
careful reader.” “Unfounded . . . wildly
speculative...pockmarked with
irresponsible inferences.”**

REACTION TO THE LONGER GOSPEL OF MARK - 3

One reviewer, named Fitzmeyer, saw it worthwhile to point out that Morton Smith was bald. Whatever importance we may attach to the thickness of a scholar's hair, it seems that detached scholarly and popular criticism fails when certain tenets of faith are called into question.

OVERVIEW FOR THE LONGER GOSPEL OF MARK - 1

In 1958, a graduate student in biblical studies named Morton Smith found at the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Mar Saba a copy of an ancient letter purportedly written by Clement of Alexandria, a 2nd and 3rd century bishop of the proto-orthodox church. He took photos of the letter. He later translated and published his findings.

OVERVIEW FOR THE LONGER GOSPEL OF MARK - 2

The publication of his results set off a firestorm (see earlier comments) from scholars, theologians, and members of many Christian denominations. He was roundly accused of fabricating the letter. The members of the Greek Orthodox Monastery were accused of collusion. So strident and vicious were the attacks that the letter was taken and “hid” in a library

OVERVIEW FOR THE LONGER GOSPEL OF MARK - 3

at Jerusalem. Access to see the letter has been forbidden by the Orthodox hierarchy which has led to charges that the letter never existed. Finally after several years, a second group of scholars was allowed to see the letter. Also color pictures were made available to refute these charges. The controversy over the letter itself raged on for over 30 years.

OVERVIEW FOR THE LONGER GOSPEL OF MARK - 4

Morton Smith died in 1991. Since his death, most modern New Testament scholars now accept the letter as authentic and its contents as being written by Clement of Alexandria, an early Bishop of the proto-orthodox Christian sect. Many current scholars feel that Smith was attacked out of religious closed mindedness and professional jealousy.

**THE LETTER OF
CLEMENT OF
ALEXANDRIA**

WITH COMMENTARY.

WHAT EXISTS OF THE LETTER OF CLEMENT

The letter that Smith found was a 17th century copy of the original. He found it pasted into an ancient book. It was scholastically proven that the copy was done by someone in the 17th century. Examination of the letter in the photos lead many scholars to agree that the contents were from a 2nd century author.

LETTER OF CLEMENT: VERSE 1

1 You did well in silencing the unspeakable teachings of the Carpocrations. For these are “wandering stars” referred to in the prophecy, who wander from the narrow road of the commandments into a boundless abyss of the carnal...

CARPOCRATIONS

The Carpocrations were a radical Gnostic subsect who were accused of performing extreme carnal and bodily sins. Clement used very typical words of condemnation for what he perceived to be heretics who were using “the knowledge” or “gnosis” in support of Satan. These acts were a step on the road to hell.

LETTER OF CLEMENT: VERSE 2

2 Such men are to be opposed in all ways and altogether. For, even if they should say something true, one who loves the truth should not, even so, agree with them. For not all true things are the truth...

TWO TRUTHS

Clement states that there are two very different truths: one is of a human origin which he accused the Carpocrations of disseminating and the other is from the faith which his Alexandrian Church possessed. And since they are heretics, they must be opposed in every way that is possible, especially denying their truths.

LETTER OF CLEMENT: VERSE 3

3 Now of the things they keep saying about the divinely inspired Gospel according to Mark, some are altogether falsifications, and others, even if they do contain some true elements, nevertheless are not...

A 'FALSE' VERSION OF MARK

From the way the statement is written, it is easily deduced that this subsect took a copy of the Gospel of Mark and either added verses to support their false claims or they are misinterpreting verses to support their acts or they are doing both. Modern scholars generally agree that it is the third option and that this group did create their own version of the Gospel of Mark.

LETTER OF CLEMENT: VERSE 4

4 As for Mark, then, during Peter's stay in Rome he wrote an account of the Lord's doings, not, however, declaring all of them, nor yet hinting at the secret ones, but selecting what he thought most...

WHO (& WHEN) WROTE THE GOSPEL OF MARK - 1

There is no question from the perspective of Clement that an individual named Mark, who was a disciple of Peter, wrote the original version of this Gospel in Rome shortly after Peter's death. The timeframe would have been around 66 A.D. to 72 A.D. This same Mark, afterwards, traveled to Alexandria in Egypt.

A LONGER VERSION OF MARK

Here Clement declares that the evangelist Mark wrote a second version to his Gospel that incorporated information that was intentionally not put into the original copy. The second version was intended for those lay people and clergy more experienced and requiring a deeper, more intricate understanding of the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

LETTER OF CLEMENT: VERSE 5

**5 Nevertheless, he yet did not
divulge the things not to be uttered,
nor did he write down the
hierophantic teaching of the Lord,
but to the stories already written he
added yet others and, moreover,...**

SECRET KNOWLEDGE

This passage declares that there is certain teachings and sayings of Jesus of Nazareth that were intentionally reserved as a “Secret Knowledge” for those who would be able to understand their metaphorical and spiritual meanings. But the word “secret” does NOT convey that it was hidden or forbidden knowledge.

LETTER OF CLEMENT: VERSE 6

6 But since the foul demons are always devising destruction for the race of men, Carpocrates, instructed by them and using deceitful arts, so enslaved a certain presbyter of the church in Alexandria that he got...

STOLEN COPY OF LGM

The accusation was straightforward. The heretics used demonic possession of an Alexandrian priest to obtain a copy of the LGM. Using the powers that control this individual, the heretics were able to force him to recite their interpretation of the special knowledge that was contained in this version of the Gospel.

LETTER OF CLEMENT: VERSE 7

7 To them, therefore, as I said above, one must never give way; nor, when they put forward their falsifications, should one concede that the Secret (Mystical) Gospel is by Mark, but should even deny it on oath. . . .

PROTECTING THE LGM

In order to protect the secret knowledge and the “correct” interpretation of the contents of LGM, an individual will do whatever is necessary to accomplish those ends, including lying about the very existence of the LGM itself. From these statements, scholars deduced that there were very few copies of the LGM in existence.

THE LONGER GOSPEL OF MARK

WITH COMMENTARY.

LGM – Preamble

To you, therefore, I shall not hesitate to answer the questions you have asked, refuting the falsifications by the very words of the Gospel. For example, after “And they were in the road going up to Jerusalem” and what follows, until “After three days he shall arise” (Mark10:34), the ‘secret’ Gospel brings the following material word for word:

LGM – Verses 1 - 2

- **1 They come into Bethany, and there was a woman whose brother had died**
- **2 and [she] approaches and bows down before Jesus and says to him, “Son of David, have mercy on me.”**

COMPARE TO: John:11.1 - 32

THE PLEA FOR HELP

The ensuing story is closely related to the “Raising of Lazarus” as depicted in the Gospel of John. In this version, only one sister exists and is unnamed that came out to plead with Jesus to do something about her dead brother. The greeting has a majority of scholars feeling that she had met Jesus before.

LGM – Verses 3 - 5

3 But the disciples scolded her.

4 And Jesus got angry and went with her into the garden where the tomb was.

5 Right away there was a loud voice from the tomb.

COMPARE TO: John:11.33 - 41

THE REACTION BY JESUS

The Gospel of Mark does not portray the Apostles in a very favorable way. They often misunderstand what is said, ignore Jesus instructions, and here they show irritation rather than sympathy for the woman's cause. The author states bluntly that Jesus gets quite mad at them for their callousness. Note the loud cry.

LGM – Verses 6 - 8

6 Then Jesus went up and rolled the stone away from the opening of the tomb.

7 He went right in where the youth was, reached out a hand and raised him, taking hold of [his] hand.

8 The youth loved him at first sight and began to plead with him to stay.

COMPARE TO: John:11.42 - 44

“THE BELOVED DISCIPLE”

Jesus enters the tomb in this version as opposed to commanding the youth to come out. The description of the “love” of Jesus from the youth is very close to the wording that is used in the Gospel of John when describing the “the disciple that Jesus loves”. A number of scholars have concluded that it may be possible that this youth is this beloved disciple.

LGM – Verses 9 - 13

9 And coming out of the tomb, they go to the young man's home for he was rich.

10 And six days later Jesus called him.

11 And when evening came, the young man went to him wearing a shroud over his nude body.

12 And he stayed all night as Jesus taught him the secret of the kingdom of God.

13 From there he gets up and goes back across the Jordan.

THE PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM?

The linen shroud has often been related to Baptism and Burial coverings. The Greek word 'sindona' is the same word used to describe the wrap put around Jesus body before Joseph carries him into the burial chamber. Some scholars feel that the final verses are relating the special teaching that a new and close disciple will receive prior to his/her Baptism.

ACCUSATION BY CLEMENT

And these words follow the text, “And James and John come to him” and all that section. But “naked man with naked man” and the other things about which you wrote, are not found.

THE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE

Clement is adamant that the phrase “naked man with naked man” is NOT in the LGM. It is one of the distorting phrases that the heretics put in. It is this idea of possible homosexual relations that is behind a lot of the resistance to accepting the validity or even existence of LGM. The words “shroud over his nude body” conjures up misleading images to anyone who wants to find them.

FROM MARK 10: 46

46: And they came to Jericho.

**And as he was leaving Jericho
with his disciples and a great
crowd...**

LGM – Verse 14 (after Mark10:46)

And after the words, “And he comes into Jericho,” the ‘secret’ Gospel adds only,

14 “And the sister of the young man whom Jesus loved was there, along with his mother and Salome, but Jesus did not receive them.”

THE JERICHO SIDE TRIP

This verse in shorter Mark has long been a problem for theologians and Biblical scholars. Why did Jesus go there and then just leave? This extra verse from LGM explains that he was going to visit these three women even though, for whatever reason, he ended up not talking to them. But it brings logic to a dangling event and creates a smoother flowing narrative.

FROM MARK 15: 40

40: There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.

SALOME

The name, Salome, only occurs once in the four Gospels and that is in Mark. Who is she? Where did she come from? This extra verse at least shows that she is a companion of Jesus's mother who accompanied her on the trip to Jerusalem. Some scholars feel this verse also supports the notion that she may be one of the daughters of Mary (Mark3:32).

THE

GETHSEMANE

YOUTH.

FROM MARK 14: 51 - 52

51: And a certain youthful man was accompanying Jesus who was clothed with a linen shroud over his naked body: and they seized him.

52: But he left the shroud cloth behind and fled naked.

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

For almost two millennia, this individual has been a source of much controversy and discussion by new testament scholars, theologians, and even casual readers of this Gospel. He appears out of nowhere and then disappears afterwards, never to be referred to again. The verses from the LGM may provide the solution to the identity of the “Gethsemane Youth”.

THE YOUTH

The Greek word used to describe this individual is ‘neanikos’ which is used to denote a young person or at times a servant who is generally between 20 to 30 years of age. The same Greek word is also used in the LGM to describe throughout the narrative the risen young man.

THE SHROUD

The Greek words used to describe the youth following Jesus and the guards are ‘peribeblemenos sindona epi gymnou’ or ‘wearing linen over his naked body’.

These are exactly the same words to describe the youth raised by Jesus in LGM. And this phrase is only used in these two Gospels and nowhere else. Coincidence???

THE

BELOVED

DISCIPLE

GOSPEL OF MARK 10:17, 21

As Jesus started on His way, a man ran up and knelt before Him. “Good Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus looked at him, loved him, and said to him, “There is one thing you lack: Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

GOSPEL OF MARK 10:22, 23, 25

But the man was saddened by these words and went away in sorrow, because he had great wealth.

Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!

It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE -2

The description of the “love” used here in Canonical Mark about Jesus reaction to the “youth” (same word as in LGM) is the same phraseology that is used in the verses of the LGM mentioned before. Some scholars feel that the rich youth, the risen youth, the Gethsemane youth, and the Beloved Disciple are one and the same person.

SUMMARY

OF THE

**LONGER GOSPEL OF
MARK**

SUMMARY OF THE LGM - 1

From NT Professor Scott Brown:

“Bear in mind that when scholars form opinions on non-canonical gospels they rarely stray from their religious commitments. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the assessment of LGM.”

SUMMARY OF LGM - 2

The opinions that scholars express in these forums often reveal little more than the religious and philosophical predilections of the authors and to be as predictable and presumptuous as the opinions expressed by political pundits.”

COMMENT ABOUT LGM

From the Catholic Answers Website:
Question: I heard there was a “secret Gospel of Mark” which contained additional material not found in the canonical Gospel of Mark. Is there any truth to this? What are we to make of this report?

Answer: Not much. (8/4/2011)

COMMENT FROM COLD CASE CHRISTIANITY WEBSITE

“Like other late non-canonical fabrications, these texts (LGM) were rejected by the Christian community even though they sometimes contained **nuggets of truth related to Jesus. They are elaborate stories, fabrications, and legends, written by authors who were motivated to alter history of Jesus to suit their own purpose.”**

COMMENT 3 ABOUT THE BIBLE

**From the Southern Baptist
Convention (2/5/2017):**

**The Southern Baptist stand on
Scripture and its treatment in our
schools and lives is uncompromising.
The history of Bible criticism reveals
that the Bible has no errors, but the
critics do.**

SUMMARY ON LGM - 1

The verses from the LGM have not been incorporated into any translation of the Gospel of Mark. There appears to be stiff resistance to accepting and adding new phrases. There seems to be a fear of change for doctrinal, dogmatic, or institutional reasons that vary from denominations, supporting lay groups, or lay or religious individuals.

SUMMARY ON LGM - 2

This rejection may change at some future time when a group of translators decide that these verses will make the “original” Gospel of Mark actually a better, more understandable and, thus a more meaningful story. The LGM is often accused of being Gnostic because of its original title (Secret) given to it by Morton Smith who refused to change it.

SUMMARY ON LGM - 3

The more Morton Smith was attacked, the more stubborn he became. Even at the time of his death, when many New Testament Scholars had accepted his find as legitimate and important, he stood by his original “translation”. The arguments against LGM reuse those first brought up which have long been discredited. This issue will simmer on for many more years.

Q & A

THE FALL OF 2019 SCHEDULE

- 1. December – Two Christmas Stories – The Gospels of Matthew and Luke**

THE SPRING OF 2020 SCHEDULE

- 1. January – The Lord of the Rings: The Guardianship of the Valar**

FUTURE CLASSES - 2020

APRIL 2 – The Different Gospel of John

APRIL 9 – The Author of the Gospel of Matthew

APRIL 16 – The Great Omission of the Gospel of Luke

APRIL 23 – The Primacy of the Gospel of Mark