



# The Gospel Hoax: Morton Smith's Invention of Secret Mark

*Stephen C. Carlson*

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Secret Mark first became known to modern scholarship in 1958 when a newly hired assistant professor at Columbia University in New York by the name of Morton Smith visited the monastery of Mar Saba near Jerusalem and photographed its fragments. Secret Mark was announced on the heels of many spectacular discoveries of ancient manuscripts in the Near East, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi gnostic corpus in the late 1940s, and promised to be just as revolutionary. Secret Mark presents what appears to be a valuable, albeit fragmentary, witness to early Christian traditions, traditions that might shed light on Jesus's most intimate behavior. In this book, Stephen C. Carlson uses state of the art science to demonstrate that Secret Mark was an elaborate hoax created by Morton Smith. Carlson's discussion places Smith's trick alongside many other hoaxes before probing the reasons why so many scholars have been taken in by it.

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