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COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE

Mark

by Matthew Henry

To the Students of the Words, Works and Ways of God:

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AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

MARK

We have heard the evidence given in by the first witness to the doctrine and miracles of our Lord Jesus; and now here is another witness produced, who calls for our attention. The second *living creature* saith, *Come, and see*, ^{<66B>}Revelation 6:3. Now let us enquire a little,

I. Concerning *this witness*. His name is *Mark*. *Marcus* was a Roman name, and a very common one, and yet we have no reason to think, but that he was by birth a Jew; but as Saul, when he went among the nations, took the Roman name of *Paul*, so he of *Mark*, his Jewish name perhaps being *Mardocai*; so Grotius. We read of John whose surname was *Mark*, sister's son to Barnabas, whom Paul was displeas'd with (^{<457>}Acts 15:37, 38), but afterward had a great kindness for, and not only order'd the churches to receive him (^{<304D>}Colossians 4:10), but sent for him to be his assistant, with this encomium, *He is profitable to me for the ministry* (^{<5411>}2 Timothy 4:11); and he reckons him among his fellow-labourers, ^{<502>}Philemon 1:24. We read of Marcus whom Peter calls his *son*, he having been an instrument of his conversion (^{<653>}1 Peter 5:13); whether that was the same with the other, and, if not, which of them was the penman of this gospel, is altogether uncertain. It is a tradition very current among the ancients, that St. Mark wrote this gospel under the direction of St. Peter, and that it was confirm'd by his authority; so Hieron. Catal. Script. Ecclesiastes *Marcus discipulus et interpres Petri, juxta quod Petrum referentem audierat, legatus Roma ... fratribus, breve scripsit evangelium* — *Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, being sent from Rome by the brethren, wrote a concise gospel*; and Tertullian saith (Adv. Marcion. lib. 4, cap. 5), *Marcus quod edidit, Petri affirmetur, cujus interpres Marcus* — *Mark, the interpreter of Peter, delivered in writing the things which had been preach'd by Peter*. But as Dr. Whitby very well suggests, Why should we have recourse to the authority of Peter for the support of this gospel, or say with St. Jerome that Peter approv'd of it and

recommended it by his authority to the church to be read, when, though it is true Mark was no apostle, yet we have all the reason in the world to think that both he and Luke were of the number of the seventy disciples, who *companied with the apostles all along* (⁴⁰²Acts 1:21), who had a commission like that of the apostles (⁴⁰⁹Luke 10:19, compared with ⁴¹⁸Mark 16:18), and who, it is highly probable, received the Holy Ghost when they did (⁴¹⁵Acts 1:15; 2:1-4), so that it is no diminution at all to the validity or value of this gospel, that Mark was not one of the twelve, as Matthew and John were? St. Jerome saith that, after the writing of this gospel, he went into Egypt, and was the first that preached the gospel at Alexandria, where he founded a church, to which he was a great example of holy living. *Constituit ecclesiam tantf doctrinf et vitae continentif ut omnes sectatores Christi ad exemplum sui cogeret* — *He so adorned, by his doctrine and his life, the church which he founded, that his example influenced all the followers of Christ.*

II. Concerning *this testimony*. Mark's gospel,

1. Is but short, much shorter than Matthew's, not giving so full an account of Christ's sermons as that did, but insisting chiefly on his miracles.
2. It is very much a repetition of what we had in Matthew; many remarkable circumstances being added to the stories there related, but not many new matters. When many witnesses are called to prove the same fact, upon which a judgment is to be given, it is not thought *tedious*, but highly *necessary*, that they should each of them relate it in their own words, again and again, that by the agreement of the testimony the thing may be established; and therefore we must not think this book of scripture needless, for it is written not only to confirm our belief that *Jesus is the Christ the Son of God*, but to put us in mind of things which we have read in the foregoing gospel, that we may *give the more earnest heed to them*, lest at any time we let them slip; and even *pure minds* have need to be *thus stirred up by way of remembrance*. It was fit that such great things as these should be spoken and written, once, yea twice, because man is so *unapt* to *perceive* them, and so *apt* to *forget* them. There is no ground for the tradition, that this gospel was written first in Latin, though it was written at Rome; it was written in Greek, as was St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, the Greek being the more universal language.