

## BOOK REVIEW

Waterhouse, Steven, *Papias and Matthew, Papias and his Elder John* (Amarillo, TX: Westcliff Press, 2014). viii + 100 pp. Pbk. USD4.98.

Steven Waterhouse is Pastor of Westcliff Baptist Church in Amarillo, Texas. He has served as senior pastor for over thirty years, and has authored more than twenty books. He is an example of the pastor-scholar model that is much talked about lately. One of his most recent books, *Papias and Matthew, Papias and His Elder John*, is a good example of his desire to serve the church through writing.

Waterhouse is explicit about his intentions for the book. It has an evangelistic appeal for ‘readers to place faith in God the Son, the risen Savior’ (p. vii). Moreover, the three topics that comprise the book were a request from a member in Waterhouse’s congregation who was battling cancer. It is refreshing to see a pastor taking on a writing ministry for the benefit of the congregation. It is additionally encouraging, because far too many circles of the church today, both in the pew and pulpit, show little interest in studying and learning. Moreover, Waterhouse deals with an especially neglected area, that is, Early Church history. The pastoral heart of Waterhouse to serve a member of his church with such labor of love is something this reviewer enjoyed seeing.

The first topic looks at Papias’s notorious comment concerning the authorship of the Gospel of Matthew. Waterhouse explores multiple facets of the line, ‘Matthew collected the oracles [Greek logia] in the Hebrew [Aramaic] language...’ (p. 3). What exactly this means for Gospel authorship, dating and source material is a well-known scholarly debate. The book considers what exactly logia refers to, the potential for Papias being mistaken or confused and, most importantly, the possibility of there being a document written by Matthew in Hebrew or Aramaic before the Greek Gospel.

After Waterhouse considers various features of what the line from Papias might mean, he forms a two-part conclusion. The first is that

Papias distinctly qualifies to be treated as historically reliable in light of his early date (c. 110 AD) and his ministry connections (pp. 42-43). Therefore, the line from Papias likely indicates that Matthew wrote a substantial, early, gospel-like document in Hebrew/Aramaic, and then later used this document in creating his Greek Gospel. Waterhouse believes this all occurred at the beginning of the 60s, if not even earlier.

The second article examines another quotation of Papias found in Eusebius, 'the presbyter [elder] John' (p. 51). The quotation is significant in discussing the authorship of the Gospel of John, 1–3 John and Revelation. Many take the reference in Papias to indicate that there were two leaders in the early church named John, which would imply that this later non-apostolic John is the author of the Gospel. But Waterhouse concludes that the early date of Papias makes him reliable in contrast to Eusebius's prejudicial presentation. Since the apostle John lived to be 98 years old, and Papias is writing in 110 AD, then Papias likely knew the apostle John. For Waterhouse, this suggests that the reference to the 'elder' John is simply a more informal manner of reference to the apostle. Consequently, this historical connection is support for apostolic authorship of the Gospel, 1–3 John and Revelation.

Additionally, if one accepts Papias's direct knowledge of John, and Waterhouse does a decent job in substantiating this claim, then there are two further conclusions. If Papias knew the Apostle John, then Papias's testimony concerning Matthean authorship of the Gospel of Matthew and Markan authorship under Peter's directive should also be trusted. Even though many of these arguments hang upon the debate concerning the direct contact between Papias and John, Waterhouse does offer some interesting things to consider.

The last article, though not indicated in the book title, is a short pastoral presentation of the Bible's being a 'book of supernatural origin' with reference to the messianic prophecy of Jesus Christ (p. 80). Here Waterhouse quickly examines verses from Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah and others as being fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is the shortest and simplest section written in a nearly bullet-point format.

Having presented these strengths of the book, there are also some weaknesses in its pastoral content and argumentation. The author should have been more consistent in appreciating the knowledge of his targeted audience. On p. 23, he references Q without any explanation;

thus, many lay-level readers would likely be lost in reading this section. Similarly, on p. 84 he writes, ‘Babylonian Talmud Sabbath 15a’. Few lay readers will know what is being referenced, and any academic writing would have used the short form, *b. Sabb.* 15a. He also makes conclusive statements that have nothing to do with his argument or evidence. In the first article, he states, ‘this means the historical material in Matthew is reliable’ (p. 21; cf. p. 14). However, he has said and done nothing to explore the historical veracity of the content of Matthew. His sole focus in the section is on the date of authorship for Matthew as being before 70 AD.

Furthermore, even though the book is short, it is very repetitive. For instance, while Waterhouse discusses various potential reasons for his conclusions in the first two articles, it really comes down to giving ‘Papias the benefit of doubt...since Papias was early’ (pp. 42-43). However, Marcion is early, and so are the opponents of Paul. Simply living at a certain point in time is not *ipso facto* proof of trustworthiness or theological reliability. I am sure Waterhouse does not wish to be viewed as less trustworthy in his preaching Christ simply because he lives two millennia after the events.

Despite my general and favorable applause for the labor of love of Waterhouse towards his church, I have another significant problem with the book. If I were to review it as a church tract exclusively with a lay audience in mind, I would not be overly critical in my statements. Unfortunately, that is not the only focus of Waterhouse. He calls his work a ‘scholarly booklet’ (p. 50); I find this devaluing scholarship.

For starters, the book is functionally self-published. Westcliff Press is an extension of Westcliff Church. The works are available for free online, which is commendable for evangelistic purposes, but clearly not for scholarly material. Further, Waterhouse is far and away the primary author in Westcliff Press. There is no external peer review or academic standard mentioned anywhere on the site. The lack of editorial oversight is seen in the terrible and inconsistent format and style of the book. At points, the font selection is downright childish (see pp. vii, 49, 79). The middle article has a different footnote style and layout than the other two articles.

Furthermore, the lack of academic standard is seen in many aspects of the book, but I draw attention to the sources he cites in the book. While it is granted that Waterhouse has a number of footnotes, at least in the first article, the choice of what to cite is suspect. For example,

sometimes significant and controversial claims are made with no citation (e.g. p. 63). Moreover, most citations are taken from commentaries and introductory works. Rarely are monographs or articles presenting original research cited. The worst example is citing his book concerning archeological discoveries. This is inappropriate, since he was not the archeologist or the one who published the findings (see p. 91 n. 153). At other times, his footnote appears academic but has nothing to do with his claims (e.g. p. 64 n. 116).

Additionally, while it is not wrong to cite yourself, Waterhouse is hugely overly reliant upon his earlier self-published works. However, the citation that is most troubling is on the last page; he writes, ‘for a full defense of the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection see Waterhouse, *Jesus and History*’ (p. 100 n. 160). It hardly seems appropriate to call six pages in a self-published work a ‘full defense’. It is upsetting that he does not refer to any of the dozens of truly scholarly books that immediately come to mind, some of which he even footnotes elsewhere (e.g. Bauckham’s *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*).

I do not wish to appear harsh. In fact, I am generally thankful for what Waterhouse is doing. But trying to pass off church tracts as scholarly literature does egregious injustice to both. Many authors are engaged in both pastoral ministry and academics at the same time. But good authors recognize that there is a particular manner of writing for the different audiences. There are distinctions between pastoral and academic work, even if both efforts are intended to build up the church and solicit faith in Christ, as Waterhouse so desires.

The peer-review process is what sets the standard for academics. Waterhouse has tried to escape the scholarly peer-review process by self-publishing and yet still wants the title of scholarly work. Consequently, the moment Waterhouse commends his work as ‘scholarly’, it solicits scholarly criticism, which is what I am offering here. Despite the criticism and internal confusion of the book, it does offer a nice pamphlet for those interested in a cursory glance at the topics covered. No scholar or student will make use of it, since there are far better resources, but the length and amount of information are about right for a lay introduction.

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