

NOTES ON “THE FULL RIGHTS OF SONS”

Author: Kathryn E. Stegall

A Response to a Response

I have responded to Kathryn’s response in blue. As she notes below, her comments are in red and the plain text is either a quotation of her original book, as indicated by bullet points, or my review. I deleted the many pages in between the portions that Kathryn did not interact with for the sake of conciseness. If you want the context for all these statements I would encourage you to download [my original review](#).

[My responses are interspersed throughout this critique in red and enclosed in brackets. KS = Kathryn Stegall. If you use the ‘Find’ option for this document and search for ‘KS’ you will easily go directly to my comments. If I receive additional responses from others I will add them as I receive them. KS]

[Overall you, Daniel Kok, make no comment on the “What do we know to be true?” sections included with each chapter or on the “What truth can we apply to make this question slightly simpler?” sections in each chapter. These sections summarize biblical truth that I perceive as having a great impact of the topic of the full rights of sons. Have I put things in those sections which are not true? Why have you made no comments on those sections? KS]

I must admit that I find it strange for an author of a book to question a review having come short of its intended goal simply because it didn’t address every portion of the work. I suppose if I had offered a few, dismissive comments you could challenge my understanding of your book or its main points but I think that I can objectively say I have offered a fairly comprehensive critique.

In any case, from my recollection, having spent the time and energy reading the chapters and writing my critique I didn’t see any value in addressing summary points at the end of each chapter. After all, if the philosophy or framework of a thesis can be shown to be false, then the application likewise fails.

But do you think I have missed something crucial in my review which would challenge my initial and continued assessment of it? If so, please point it out to me.

Dedication

- “Seventy two years ago a young couple were planning their wedding. The bride asked, “Shall I promise to obey you?” The groom answered, “No. The Bible says we should submit to one another.” (page v) [Ephesians 5:21.KS]

This is contrary to [perhaps it might have been better to say, “In addition there is also this scripture...”.KS] 1 Peter 3:1. “Wives in subjection to your own husbands.” Note in particular Sarah is held out as an example to women as one who *obeyed* Abraham (vs. 6)

[This is really a critique of my father and not of me. I guess I should have footnoted the “submit to one another” passage of Ephesians 5:21. So since there seem to be two passages which Kok says are contrary to each other, perhaps we should ask the question: Which conforms more to the gospel? (1 Timothy 1:10-11) And then look for a more authentic way to interpret the passage that seems less in line with the gospel to bring it into alignment with the gospel. I did that in the book, pages 46-49.KS]

Kathryn may take it as a critique of her father but she noted it as an approved example since she dedicated the book to her parents and others: “These are they from whom I learned it.” (page v)

My point, however, was not to call attention to the people who made this statement but to the false dichotomy it presents to us in terms of scripture’s call to submit. As Kathryn may recall, I sent her a clarification of that statement after Pastors Baars, Hackett and I interviewed her on the *Contra Mundum* [podcast](#). I wrote:

I believe you misunderstood my intent or what I was actually referring to but due to the brevity of my statement I believe it was my fault in particular. I have added to the statement to make it more obvious as to what I was contradicting:

“Seventy two years ago a young couple were planning their wedding. The bride asked, “Shall I promise to obey you?” The groom answered, “No. The Bible says we should submit to one another.” (page v)

Though scripture expects mutual submission in Christian relationships (Ephesians 5:21) it is not equal or of the same kind of submission in a marriage which comes from one party. As Paul goes on to explain, the wife’s duty is to submit her husband (vs. 22 &31), whereas the husband’s duty is to love his wife. Furthermore, to say that a wife is not required to obey her husband is contradictory to 1 Peter 3:1. “Wives in subjection to your own husbands.” Note in particular Sarah is held out as an example to women as one who obeyed Abraham (vs. 6)

So I never said these passages are contradictory of each other. But I do maintain that the interpretation of Ephesians 5:21 that Kathryn’s father proposed (and which she seems to approve of) does contradict 1 Peter 3:1.

Finally, the author cites church authority (speaking of historic orthodoxy for example on the very next page as well as page 99) and the creeds of the church on numerous occasions. It appears this principle is only applied where it can be conveniently used to support her thesis and thus is disingenuous. [Everyone quotes authority to support their thesis. My point exactly. KS]

Yes but the statement above from page 2 (quoted on page 1 of my review) disavows any resources to help you determine what the truth of scripture is.

The Great Commission is given to the church as a whole, not to individuals isolated from the rest. Its fulfillment does not depend on any one person but on the concerted effort of the entire Body of

Christ. Otherwise, infants, the disabled, the mute and others who are incapable of speech would be guilty of not fulfilling the Commission. [But women do have maturity, abilities, speech. Are you really saying women should not be motivated and compelled by the Great Commission?! KS]\

Yes in terms of directly fulfilling the commission in the authorized role of pastor and elders. No in terms of supporting the men in those roles. For that matter, many men in the church are not called to preach either and yet have maturity, abilities & gifts in speech. Children too but I digress.

As I wrote in my original review:

Every member in the church has a responsibility to bring the gospel to the world. However we should distinguish between the Great Commission being fulfilled by the various parts of the body of Christ who are commissioned for/to particular tasks & the Great Commission being given to the Church as a whole body. As Paul explains, some are teachers, some are preachers but not all (Romans 12:4ff.; Ephesians 4:11ff.). Only some are stewards of the mysteries of the gospel (1Corinthians 4:1ff.) and should administer the sacraments. That is, not every believer can or should try to fulfill every particular aspect of the Great Commission because they are not called or gifted to do so.

The church fulfills the Great Commission as a whole by supporting in prayer, finances and love those who are commissioned for the work of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:14-16). The church is also responsible for calling (sending) the missionaries and evangelists (see Acts 13:1-3; Galatians 2:9). Finally, as a body, the church supports the Great Commission by living a life worthy of the gospel that is proclaimed within the midst (Philippians 1:27). That is, every believer can and should try to see that the Great Commission is fulfilled by contributing to its fulfillment through the lawful means God has granted to them.

- “Straightforward as these passages are, orthodox Christianity has not accepted the obvious meaning.” (page 3) The author cites the following passages as examples (with her own comments):

Colossians 1:15 “We do not believe that Jesus is a created being, but rather God himself.”

1 Corinthians 15:29 “Nor do we believe that one can earn salvation for another who has died in unbelief by being baptized for him.”

James 2:24 “We certainly do not believe that a person can be saved by his own good works.”

Romans 13:1 “Nor do we believe that everything a king or ruler does or says is from God and is therefore subject to no earthly authority.”

Ephesians 6:5 & 1 Peter 2:18 “Nor do we believe that it is right for one person, whether cruel or kind, to own another person as a possession or slave.” (pages 3-4)

In each of these instances there are other scripture passages we use in order to find the meaning of those passages (i.e. comparing scripture with scripture – the *analogia fidei*).

[Wasn't this precisely the point of my entire first chapter? KS] Thus the author has erred in

comparing these controversial issues with disagreement about women in office simply because there is *no verse* in scripture that speaks positively to the role of women in authoritative positions within the church. [There are many such verses and I have listed as many as I am aware of in The Full Rights of Sons. <https://smile.amazon.com/Full-Rights-Sons-K-Stegall-ebook/dp/B00FL4L4JG/> KS]

The statement was not meant only for you but for those who might read the review. But, in fact, I believe you are actually addressing two distinct questions, one being the perspicuity of scripture (WCF 1.7) and the scripture's infallible rule of interpretation (WCF 1.9). One of the ways that we may achieve a proper interpretation of a passage is through the latter, but I think you are confusing these issues. We would also have to agree between ourselves that any particular passage in question is clear or unclear.

Furthermore, though I did not broach this matter in my original review, your statements regarding these texts are actually false. For example, we could and can say that Christ is a created being insofar as Christ took on a body conceived by Holy Ghost. Just as I could say that God's blood purchased the church's redemption (Acts 20:28) and yet I would qualify that to mean it referring to Christ's humanity hypostatically united to his divinity. Other qualifications could be made that are in perfect harmony with our theology. This matter is not inconsequential for it reveals the consistent way you reason to your error: by presenting false dichotomies (as per below from the original review):

Indeed we have many texts about the ministry that relate to the male and female distinction that exist throughout scripture. These cannot be argued away by a wider lens because their very point is to clarify the larger principles of scripture or reign in what would be unwarranted applications of those principles. This is not unlike any other ethical or practical matter that scripture addresses which itself exists to make it clear that creational and ethical norms continue in the gospel age (e.g. marriage & family, Sabbath, magistrate etc.). The tension only exists in the mind of the author and so she feels compelled to find a solution when it is not needed.

This seems to be a problem throughout the whole book. The author sets up an interpretive dilemma (imagined or otherwise) that is solved by looking at the whole scripture's teaching (see also chapter 3 on Favoritism). But it should be noted that the problem is not a matter of interpretation, per se. The texts, even as they stand alone, can and should be properly understand because scripture's meaning is one (WCF 1.9).

[Isn't the one meaning of the Scripture the Gospel? The glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? The essence of sound doctrine is that it conforms to the glorious gospel of our blessed God. 1 Timothy 1:10-11. KS]

No, I don't agree with that. The gospel, while glorious, is the proclaimed means by which God effectually calls us to new life in Christ and faith in him. But if there is one "meaning of the Scripture" it would be God himself or God's glory in particular, as our catechism explains. LC, Q&A 1.

Thus nothing is proven with respect to the central thesis of the book considering the status of women in the church as it applies to the offices because, in isolation, these principles can prove pretty much anything about women and men. [The central thesis of the book is the full and complete equality of women with men in the church as in the gospel. KS] Case in point, homosexual advocates in the church have used such arguments to baptize their aberrant sexuality.

The reader can read my comments under Chapters 15&16 in my review to see how I interact with that point in more detail. For the sake of brevity I will simply post a portion of my original reply which Kathyryn has not yet interacted with:

Consider Titus 2:1-5: “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.” Here we see that the gospel or sound doctrine teaches us about the submissiveness of wives to their husbands due to a particular calling and honour that they alone possess. It also teaches men to love their wives as Christ loves the church. I am thankful that it does both.

The “obvious” meaning is the original meaning or that intended by the author (particularly as moved by the Holy Spirit (page 3). Difficult passages are not a pretext for muddying a rather clear(er) passage of scripture (1 Corinthians 14:34). The author debates the meaning of words, not simply the meaning of the text. [So....We disagree. I’m afraid you do not understand what makes a particular passage difficult or unclear. Do you disagree with WCF1.9? Do you disagree with this?

Can you give me an example of a passage you consider unclear and why you consider it unclear? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALB63ZfAexA&list=UUPSyoVX2zzQ3hwIbZp9FdBw&index=31> Begin at minute 2:15. **If so, we have no basis for discussion.** This is what I learned from childhood in the RPCNA <https://www.facebook.com/rpcna/> and reinforced at RPTS <https://www.facebook.com/RPTSeminary/>. KS]

I certainly hope I do not disagree with WCF 1.9 for my sake since I have taken vows to uphold it. So no, not as far as I am aware, I do not disagree with or contradict it. I think I made that clear by my assertion about the *analogia fidei* above. You and anyone else is welcome, however, to challenge my understanding of or fidelity to it.

You write: I’m afraid you do not understand what makes a particular passage difficult or unclear. This is an assertion, not an argument.

Can I give you an example of a passage I consider unclear and why I consider it unclear? No, I consider nothing in scripture as unclear, only my understanding of it or misunderstanding of it is the issue. I say this not to mock you but to clarify what the issue is, at least for me. I take your word that you believe that your hermeneutical approach is consistent with WCF 1.9. But I have

taken to task your exegesis of many biblical passages. It won't do to cast shade or doubt on my approach; you are the author and you have to take responsibility for your statements. If they cannot bear just criticism, then they are faulty and you have to change your approach or, better, your convictions.

We have no basis for discussion unless I can produce a Bible passage that I consider to be unclear? Is this an accurate presentation of what you are saying? When I originally contacted you about your blog posts on this subject you asked me to read your book in order to have a full understanding of your position. I have done that and I reviewed it. We have a basis for discussion and we are having it right now: the basis is your thesis, not mine.

The author speaks of "we" which implies a body of believers (page 3). And yet she claims not to use commentaries or other aids in her research (page 2). [Did you read paragraph 3 on that page? You already told me why this is not acceptable to you. No need to search for ways to call me a liar. KS]

Incoherent and contradictory yes. But, for my part, as I must assume the best of my neighbour (LC, Q&A 144) I did not "search for ways to call [you] a liar."

[Do you accept WCF 1.9 as the way we should interpret Scripture? How would you explain what WCF 1.9 means? KS]

One of the core ways yes though not the only way. Scripture interprets scripture so we must seek to understand biblical questions & mysteries by scripture.

Chapter 2

- "It's not just that they became one. They quit being two. This is an amazing statement. Jesus is saying that the oneness is so complete that two separate identities cease to exist and are blended into one new identity." (page 10 – referencing Matthew 19:1-6)

This is an unwarranted conclusion. They become one but Jesus does *not* say that they quit being two. ["So they are no longer two..." Jesus' words in Matthew 19:6. KS] Yes two separate(d) identities cease *insofar* as they come together to be one in marriage, but as scripture and life teaches us, the man is still a man and the woman still a woman. He says that a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves with his wife.

No longer two with respect to what? What of their original identity is erased? That was my point. I am certain you do not embrace the madness of those in our culture who do not hold to any distinction between men and women based on the mere whim of an individual. So you would have to qualify your quote above if someone took it in the way of blurring the natural distinctions of men and women.

Furthermore, the original context of Jesus' statement is in the context of divorce and remarriage. Thus the bond is not ontological but ethical. [This sounds remarkably like Mark

7:6-13. By using one word, 'ontological' = 'corban', you set aside the entire meaning of a scripture. KS]

I used the word ontological to describe *your* position. If you prefer another word, by all means provide a substitute. For my part, I am using the word "ethical" to particularly describe what I believe, from the context, Jesus is driving at. He is discussing marriage and divorce, which is an *moral and covenantal matter*, that requires us to come to the conclusion that the being of a man and the being of the woman are not completely erased because they have become married. Some men in Jesus' day were quite loose about their marital relationships but Jesus says they cannot separate because they are one in the marriage covenant. In addition, when we compare scripture with scripture, the oneness of marriage requires the submission of a wife to her husband, just as the oneness between Christ and the believer requires his or her submission to him (Ephesians 5:22ff.).

- "In the church our differences are all assembled together into one living organism, so there is no division, but rather equal concern for each other. Furthermore, each of our differences is necessary for the common good." (page 14)

Precisely what stands as the reason for the distinction between the role of men and women in the church which everywhere scripture teaches. If men did what women were meant to do and women did what men were meant to do we would no one doing anything uparticular which would lead to a loss to the body as a whole.

[Are you saying that 'Oneness', the topic of this chapter, is not a biblical theme and that it has no bearing on the status of women in home, church and society or on how men and women are to relate biblically? If you agree that it is a theme of Scripture, how does it relate to the status of women in home, church, and society? KS]

No. For example, other women not being my wife and thus not one with me in marriage are not required to submit to me in the same way my wife is. I would also say that being faithful to my wife with whom I am one requires me to love her in a way that would not be appropriate with any other woman.

Chapter 3

[Are you saying that 'No Difference', the topic of this chapter, is not a biblical theme and that it has no bearing on the status of women in home, church and society or on how men and women are to relate biblically? KS]

Yes it is not a biblical theme insofar as the idea has nothing to do with the matter of whether a woman should be in a position of authority over a man. Also, as I pointed out in my original review (comments under Chapters 4,12&15), the scripture makes many distinctions between people in the church dependent upon many variables.

Chapter 4

[Are you saying that ‘Servanthood’, the topic of this chapter, is not a biblical theme and that it has no bearing on the status of women in home, church and society or on how men and women are to relate biblically? If you agree that it is a theme of Scripture, how does it relate to the status of women in home, church, and society? KS]

No. Yes it has a bearing on women since God has called them to serve their husbands and children in the home and not take on authority & positions from which they are barred. Also men who, in their calling as husbands, do not serve their family in love and leadership fail to be servants of the Lord Jesus as he has called them to be.

Chapter 17

- “men and women, all brothers, are equal as to worth, privilege, service, status, rank, freedom, and authority” (Matthew 23:8-12) (page 263)

The teaching of Christ in this passage certainly lays waste to the idea of an episcopacy in the church [Complementarianism is a form of episcopacy, as it is a hierarchy of authority. KS] or any other form of church government that places elders over each other in priority or power. It should be plain that it is Jesus’ intent to speak to ‘ecclesiology’ since He contrasts His messengers with the scribes and Pharisees (vs. 2ff.). Ironically, however, Jesus acknowledges their authority, even over His own disciples because they “sit in Moses seat” and thus His disciples must “whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do” (vs. 3). Clearly then, this passage cannot be used to teach equality of privilege, service, status, rank and authority since not all in the kingdom of Christ possess these characteristics or responsibilities.

We all hold to some levels (eschewing the word “hierarchy” because of its negative connotations) of authority, even as Presbyterians. Do elders not possess ministerial authority over others in the congregation who do not possess that authority? Do parents not have authority over their children which authority the child does not have? Government and its constituents? etc. Believing these things do not make us Episcopalian or really anything that a label can define.

[I’ll end this response as the book ends: “Examine the Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, to see if these things are true. (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:15)” KS]

Having read and thoroughly interacted with Kathryn’s book, I have found it wanting. The reader can decide for themselves by reading my full review and then compare it with the book.