

THE AUTHORITY FACTOR IN GENDER RELATIONSHIPS

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Glance at the list of Shakespeare's plays while asking yourself where he's having fun with the theme of this Thinksheet. He's having so much fun so often that I consider this a major theme of his. To rollick his audience, he'll sometimes throw in a fragment of a to-them familiar ballad, eg the Old Cloak in Othello. (Says the balladier, "Bel, my wife, she loves no strife, / Yet she will lead me, if she can: / And to maintain an easy life / I oft must yield, though I'm good-man." The humor: The husband has the power to go buy a new cloak, but the wife has the authority to persuade him to put on the old one & go take care of the cow that's out in the bitter cold. The power/authority split is only theoretical: in action, they are one; so the powerless farmer can only comfort himself with the thought that he's nevertheless [theoretically!] head of the house, as it was his decision to act in the interest of domestic peace & quiet.)

1 "Authority" is the power (1) to establish what's considered so, true, authoritative, (2) to make things happen, & (3) to prevent things from happening. Along with Shakespeare & other wits through the ages, we can enjoy, as well as being serious about, the play of authority always & everywhere in our lives & world. I hope you get as big a laugh as I did over these two drawings sent me by Sally Bailey of the Connecticut Hospice. (Her excellent CREATIVITY AND THE CLOSE OF LIFE, The Conn. Hospice, Branford CN/90, is unique: in the preface, Florence Wald, founder of the hospice movement in the USA, credits Sally with adding the creativity dimension to the movement.)

Sally leans toward laughter, as all God's chillun should. When she saw this



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on the nurses' bulletin board, her laughter led straight through her creativity to produce this:



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2 Should I spoil it for you, & insult you, by interpreting the drawings? Of course not. But oh the temptation!

3 Widely influential evangelical theologian J.I. Packer ("Let's STOP Making Women Presbyters," CHRISTIANITY TODAY, 11 Feb 91), while calling for "effective partnership between men and women in the pastorate," would revise Sally's revision by putting the male footprint above the female: "by envisaging a presbyterate of manly men, the New Testament indicates that the truest womanly ministry will be distinct from this." "The creation pattern, as biblically set forth [Gn.2.20-23 ICor.11.3, 11f Eph.5.23], is: man to lead, woman to support; man to initiate, woman to enable; man to take responsibility for the well-being of woman, woman to take responsibility for helping man.... Presbyters are set apart for a role of authoritative pastoral leadership. But this role is for manly men rather than for womanly women." Not a word, of course, about equal pay for the (unordained) women.