authorize, v.

Pronunciation: Brit. /ˈɔːθəraɪz/, U.S. /ˈɔθəˌraɪz/, /ˈɑθəˌraɪz/

Forms: ...

Frequency (in current use): ...


Etymology: < (i) Anglo-Norman auctorizer, Anglo-Norman and Middle French autoriser, auctoriser, ...

†1. trans.

a. To vouch for the truth or reality of; to attest. Obs.

- 1393 Gower *Confessio Amantis* (Fairf.) vii. l. 2415 This I finde ek of record Which the cronique hath auctorized.
- 1489 Caxton tr. C. de Pisan *Bk. Fayttes of Armes* iii. i. sig. Lv, The more that a werke is wytnessed..the more it is auctorysed and more auctentyke.
- 1581 R. Mulcaster *Positions* iii. 11 The writers credite oftimes authoriseth the thing, and the truth of the thing doth make the man an authoure.
- 1616 Shakespeare *Macbeth* (1623) iii. iv. 65 A womans story, at a Winters fire, Authoriz'd by her Grandam.
- 1646 Sir T. Browne *Pseudodoxia epidemica* 75 Multiplying obscurities in nature, and authorising hidden qualities that are false.
- 1724 Aquilio Consolo *II. v. 43* Nay, not from me the News, "Twas Arrenion authoriz'd the Story.
- 1759 C. W. F. Walch *Compend. Hist. Popes* i. i. 36 The order attributed to him, that a Bishop should be always attended by two priests and three deacons is but slightly authorised.

b. With for or simple complement. To cause to be regarded as something specified. Obs.

- 1543 tr. Erasmus *Sileni Alcibiadis* sig. Aiii, This foole was onely auctorised a wyse man by the reuelacion of the goddes.
- 1579 W. Fulke *Confit. Treat. N. Sander in D. Heskins Ouerthrowne* 536 Neither is the credite of such late writers, as account them for successors of the Apostles..., sufficient to authoris them for such in deed, when their whole life and doctrine is contrarie to the writings of the Apostles.

2. trans.

a. To set up or acknowledge (something) as authoritative; to endow with authority. Now rare.

- 1393 Gower *Confessio Amantis* (Fairf.) vii. l. 1480 (MED), Bot Hermes Above alle othre in this science..hadde a gret experience..Whos bokes yit ben auctorized.
- 1400 Gower *Eng. Wks.* (1901) ii. 491 Cassodre, whos writinge is auctorized, Seith [etc.].
- 1450 Jack Upland’s *Rejoinder* (Digby) l. 239 in P. L. Heyworth *Jack Upland* (1968) 109 Pou authorisest your pride agenes his holi werkes.
- 1579 L. Tomson tr. J. Calvin *Serm. Epist. S. Paule to Timothie & Titus* 509/2 To the end the word of God may be authorized, and men must be heard.
- 1620 T. Shelton tr. Cervantes *Don Quixote* III. xvii. 116 Let the Courtier..authorize his Prince’s Court with Liveries.
- 1683 S. Patrick *Disc. about Trad.* ii. 35 These two Bibles thus equally authorised, as the onely authentick ones,

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abound...with contradictions, or contrarieties, one to the other.

2000 S. CONNOR Dumbstruck iv. 105 They also began to authorize their writings with accounts of their own direct promptings by the divine.

†b. To place (a person) in a position of power or authority; to appoint. Obs. except as merged with sense 3b.

1440 J. CAPGRAVE Life St. Norbert l. 1974 Þei wold not admitte no new prechour Til he was auctorized of Norbert.

1513 R. FABYAN New Cronycles Eng. & Fraunce (1516) I. lxxxvii. f. xxxviii, After that he of this Realme was Auctorysyd for kynge.

†c. refl. To base one's authority upon. Obs. rare.

1586 SIR P. SIDNEY Apol. Poetrie sig. D1, The Historian...loden with old Mouse-eaten records, authorising himselfe (for the most part) vpon other histories.

†d. refl. To claim authority for oneself; to exalt oneself. Obs. rare.

1590 SIR P. SIDNEY Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia II. xx. f. 192, Making her self an impudent suter, authorizing her selfe very much with making vs see that all favour & power..depended vpon her.

3. trans.

a. To give official permission for or formal approval to (an action, undertaking, etc.); to approve, sanction.

1425 (• ?1384) WYCLIF Sel. Eng. Wks. (1871) III. 357 (MED), Whanne þe pope avansiþ a shrewe, he autorisiþ his shrewidnesse.

1567 T. DRANT tr. Horace Arte of Poetri sig. Aiiij, Who hath to iudge, autorish, reule, All maner speache at will.

1609 SHAKESPEARE Sonnets xxxv. sig. C4, Authorizing thy trespass with compare.

1813–14 Act 54 Geo. III c. 147 (title), An Act...for authorizing the licensing of a limited Number of Hackney Chariots.

1859 J. S. MILL On Liberty 15 The gentlest and most amiable of philosophers...authorised the persecution of Christianity.
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1934 Port Arthur (Texas) News 23 May 1/2 The federal emergency relief administration today authorized rehabilitation grants to Texas totalling $200,000.

1962 K. KESEY One flew over Cuckoo's Nest IV. 303 Every one of these people gave him a look like the whole thing had been planned by him, or at least condoned and authorized.


2013 New Yorker 2 Sept. 54/1 The 2001 resolution that authorized the use of military force against terrorists.

b. To give (a person or agent) legal or formal authority (to do something); to give formal permission to; to empower.


†4. trans. To give legal force to; to make legally valid. Obs.

1431 Rolls of Parl.: Henry VI (Electronic ed.) Parl. Jan. 1431 §32. m. 4, That all manere of enditementz, juggementz, ordinances and statutz, made.ayeins the saide Owen, mowe be affermed, auctorised and establised for lawe.


1644 Vindic. Treat. Monarchy iv. 27 Being authoritative, they authorize the Instrument, and give him an unresistance.

†5. trans.

a. To regard (a person) as an authority. Obs.
authorize, v. : Oxford English Dictionary

1535 W. Stewart tr. H. Boethius Bk. Cron. Scotl. (1858) II. 141 He had sic credens of the king, And wes with him auctorest than so hie.

1586 W. Warner Albions Eng. To Rdr. sig. a.iv, Euen Homer was slightly auctorised in Greece, but singularly admyred elswhere.

b. To extend one's approval to (a person); to support, favour. Obs. rare.

1713 R. Steele in Guardian 23 Mar. 1/2 For this reason I shall authorize and support the Gentleman.

6. trans. Of a fact, circumstance, etc.
a. To give good grounds for (an action or behaviour); to justify.

1589 T. Nashe Anat. Absurditie Ep. sig. ¶.iii, That little alliance which I haue vn to Arte, will authorize my follie in defacing her enemie.

1603 J. Florio tr. Montaigne Ess. III. viii. 559 The issue doth often authorise a simple conduct [Fr. L'issue authorise souvent une tres-inepTE conduite].

1656 Dryden Astrea Redux 10 Till some safe Crisis authorise their skill.

1748 B. Robins & R. Walter Voy. round World by Anson Introd. sig. c⁴, These reasons alone would authorize the insertion of those papers.

1798 Monthly Mag. Mar. 190/2 These observations...tend to authorize the segregation of a very fine set of oracles from those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

1831 Scott Castle Dangerous i, in Tales of my Landlord 4th Ser. III. 226 More..than the coldness of the weather seemed to authorize.

1862 Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. Dec. 414 Unfortunately, all the specimens were deficient in the operculum, which, when examined, may possibly authorize its transfer to a new genus.

1904 National Rev. Sept. (Special Suppl.) 4 Its first stage has been all but completed, and circumstances authorize a general review of the whole situation.


b. To provide justification or good grounds for (a person) to do something.

1750 D. Hume Philos. Ess. Human Understanding (ed. 2) xi. 228 Farther Attributes or farther Degrees of the same Attributes, we can never be authoriz’d to infer or suppose, by any Rules of just Reasoning.

1794 in R. J. Sullivan View Nature I. 73 Nothing which can authorise us to suppose it formed in the sea.

1843 J. S. Mill Syst. Logic II. iii. xxi. 83 Past experience of mortality authorizes us to infer both.

1892 O. W. Holmes Autocrat of Breakfast-table iv. 90 Some youthful antic...which...authorizes the intelligent constituency of autograph-hunters to address him as a harlequin.

1961 G. Devereux Mohave Ethnopsychiatry & Suicide vii. 290 The fact that death can be triggered off by psychic and/or psychosomatic processes does not justify a psychologizing of physiology any more than the influence of brain lesions or of drugs upon our psychic functioning authorizes us to physiologize psychology.

2006 New Yorker 27 Mar. 83/3 The superiority of our values authorizes us to act toward the rest of the world as benevolent hegemons.