authorize, v.

Pronunciation: Brit. /ˈɔːθəˌraɪz/ , U.S. /ˈɑθəˌraɪz/ , /ˈɑθəˌraɪz/ 

Forms: ...

Frequency (in current use):


Etymology: < (i) Anglo-Norman astructor, 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, Authorizd 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 Confiut. Treat. N. Sander in D. Heskings Ouerthrowne 536 Neither is the credite of such late writers, as account them for successors of the Apostles,, sufficient to authorise 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.
To authorize, v.: Oxford English Dictionary

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> a1393  **Gower Confessio Amantis** (Fairf.) VII. l. 1480 (MED),  Bot Hermes Above alle othre in this science..hadde a grete experience..Whos bokes yit ben auctorized.

> c1400  **Gower Eng. Wks.** (1901) II. 491  Cassodre, whos writinge is auctorized, Seith [etc.].

> c1450  **Jack Upland's Rejoinder** (Digby) l. 239 in P. L. Heyworth **Jack Upland** (1968) 109  bou autorisest ȝour pride aȝenes 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 know that we 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, 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.

> a1450  (**c1430**)  **Lydgate Daunce Machabree** (Huntington) l. 177  Ful ofte sithe I haue ben auctorised [a1500 Lansd. autorised] To hye Emprises & thynges of grete fame.

> a1513  **R. Fabyan** New Cronycles Eng. & Fraunce (1516) I. lxxxvii. f. xxxviii,  After that he of this Realme was Auctorysyd for kynge.

> 1548  **N. Udall et al. tr. Erasmus Paraphr. Neue Test.** I. Matt. iii. f. 17,  Did manyfestly auctoryse his sonne.

> 1649  **Milton Tenure of Kings** 16  The Dragon gave to the beast his..authority: which beast so autoriz'd most expound to be the tyrannical powers and Kingdomes of the earth.

> 1659  **J. Gauden Ἱερὰ Δακρυα** III. xxvii. 357  The Bishops and Ministers of their Christian and Reformed Religion, so much heretofore authorised & reverenced by the voice of the whole Nation in its Parlaments?

> 1770  ‘Junius’ Stat Nominis Umbra (1772) II. xli. 126  Will you..tell the world by what law..you were authorised?

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

> a1586  **Sir P. Sidney Apol. Poetrie** sig. D1′,  The Historian..laden 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 Pembroke's 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  Wyclif Sel. Eng. Wks. (1871) III. 357 (MED), Whanne þe pope avansiþ a shrew, he authorisiþ his shrewidnesse.

1430  Wyclif Sel. Eng. Wks. (1871) III. 326 Crist and alle his seyntis..autoriseden it.

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

1583  in J. D. Marwick Extracts Rec. Burgh Glasgow (1876) I. 106 All that passis to ony derrar brydallis, and auctorizeis the surfetnes thairof..sall pay aucht schillingis.

1609  Shakespeare Sonnets xxxv. sig. C4, Authorising thy trespas with compare.

1673  H. Hickman Hist. Quing-articularis 488 He would have prevailed with some of them to authorize his Book.

1749  Ld. Chesterfield Let. 26 Dec. (1932) (modernized text) IV. 1474 The season in which custom seems..to authorise civil and harmless lies, under the name of compliments.

1775  E. Pendleton Let. 23 Dec. in Lett. & Papers (1967) I. 140 The Committee Authorise the hiring of labourers for this unlad, to ease the Soldiers from such an increase of duty.

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.

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.

1528  Proclam. Henry VIII maintayninge Archery (single sheet) (verso), That no person (nat laufilly auctorised to haue and vse Crosbowes) presume to bye the same.

1571  in J. Raine Wills & Inventories N. Counties Eng. (1835) I. 353, I appoint and authorishe hym to call for and receyue..all suche debts.

1609  Ld. Burghley Let. 15 Sept. in H. Ellis Orig. Lett. Eng. Hist. (1824) 1st Ser. II. cc. 261 We will and by warrant herof authoriss you to procede.

1660  W. Segar Honor Mil. & Civill i. 1 Justinianus desiring to vnite Lawes and Armes, authorised one Officer to command both Martially and Ciuilly.

1669  R. Coke Elements Power & Subjection 249 in Justice Vindicated To authorize any forreigne Prince to invade or annoy him or his Countries.

1768  J. Erskine Inst. Law Scotl. (1773) II. iv. iii. §17 691 The Scots privy council..granted letters of fire
and sword, authorising the sheriff to dispossess him by all the methods of force.

1796  J. Morse Amer. Universal Geogr. (new ed.) I. 148  His Majesty may authorize the governor to fix the time and place.

1828  Hobart Town Courier 19 Apr. 1/2  Nothing herein contained shall authorize any Settler to make use of force against any Aboriginal.

1855  MACAULAY Hist. Eng. IV. 551  A royal message authorising the Commons to elect another Speaker.

1937  A. HUXLEY Let. 12 July (1969) 423  With regard to the handling of my work, I am prepared to authorize you to take up the matter with film studios.


2012  M. R. GORDON & B. E. TRAINOR Endgame xi. 181  They were authorized to wear it on their right sleeve.

†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, move be affermed, auctorised and establised for lawe.


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

1692  tr. C. de Saint-Évremond Misc. Ess. 87  New Titles to Authorize a new Power.

1785  R. HINDE Mod. Pract. Chancery 435  A decree nisi, against an infant partakes so far of the nature of an absolute decree, as to authorize proceedings under it, as in ordinary cases.

†5. trans.

a. To regard (a person) as an authority. Obs.

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

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

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 vnto Arte, will authorize my
authorize, v.: Oxford English Dictionary
http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13352?redirectedFrom=authorize#eid

Visited 06/10/2016

follie in defacing her enemie.

1603 J. FLORIO tr. Montaigne Ess. III. viii. 559 The issue doth often auctorise a simple conduct [Fr. L’issue auctorise souvent une tres-inepte conduite].

1656 A. COWLEY Davideis IV. 137 in Poems If humane strength might authorize a boast.

1660 DRYDEN Astraea 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 authoriz us to suppose it formed in the sea.

1843 J. S. MILL Syst. Logic II. iii. xxi. §3 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.

2000 New Yorker 27 Mar. 83/3 The superiority of our values authorizes us to act toward the rest of the world as benevolent hegemons.

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