

What, exactly, is the *auctoritas causativa* of the Christian witness?

The causative authority of the Christian witness is its power and right to generate and confirm re-assurance, in the sense of “a general confidence about the future” (Toulmin). As such, it is analogous to the power and right of one person’s word to another, which holds out a promise or pledges fidelity, thereby generating or confirming re-assurance in a situation marked by infidelity and distrust.

The great difference, of course, is that the promise that the Christian witness holds out, or the fidelity it pledges, is such as to restore “a *general* confidence about the future,” the *long-term* future, the future *as such*, taking account of *all* the conditions that may render any naïve assurance problematic. Even so, the causative authority of the gospel is closely analogous to the causative authority of any word from one human being to another that so holds out a promise or so pledges fidelity as to generate and confirm trust and hope and, on the basis of trust and hope, returning fidelity and love.

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