

*On saying that the same thing both constitutes and is constituted by*

There is a sense in which it is as true to say that the church constitutes the Christian witness as that the church is constituted by that witness. But it is also clear that this symmetry cannot exclude a profound asymmetry, in that the church is constituted by the witness in a different sense from that in which the witness is constituted by the church. The church is constituted by the witness in the sense that “*what*” the church is—its content—is determined by the witness, whereas the church constitutes the witness in the sense that the “*that*” of the witness—as act—is determined by the church as occurrence or event.

My question is whether, or to what extent, this point could be adequately expressed in terms of the distinctions between “causes” employed by orthodoxy. Could one say, for example, that, whereas Jesus Christ is *causa principalis*, the Christian witness is *causa instrumentalis*, while the church’s representative forms of witness (e.g., preaching, sacraments, special ministry) are *causæ ministeriales*?

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