

Testimonial Injustice in Witch Trials: A Case Against Fricker's Prejudice Hypothesis

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## Abstract

### Testimonial Injustice in Witch Trials: A Case Against Fricker's Prejudice Hypothesis

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In this paper, I intend to enrich or go beyond what I call the Prejudice Hypothesis, which says prejudice is the main cause of testimonial injustice. By 'a main cause of testimonial injustice', I mean something that is among the significant causes of testimonial injustice and which, following Fricker, may be what she calls a 'culpable' cause, the source of which, whether individuals or structure of individuals, can appropriately be assigned epistemic and ethical blame. To enrich or go beyond the Prejudice Hypothesis, I will argue for increased recognition and investigation of another cause of testimonial injustice: the pursuit and protection of social order. According to my Social Order Hypothesis, desires or attempts to pursue or preserve the dominant social order are often *among the significant causes* of testimonial injustice. Although in some cases these *social order causes* appear to interact importantly with prejudice in the production of testimonial injustice, we will also consider cases in which social order causes work independently of any prejudice. Insofar as current literature on testimonial injustice presupposes the Prejudice Hypothesis, it overlooks these roles played by social order causes and more attention to examination of such causes would help remedy this and improve our understanding of testimonial injustice. It would also better position us to investigate when social order causes are culpable causes in Fricker's sense.

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## Introduction

In this paper, I intend to enrich or go beyond what I call the Prejudice Hypothesis, which says prejudice is the main cause of testimonial injustice. By ‘a main cause of testimonial injustice’, I mean something that is among the significant causes of testimonial injustice and which, following Miranda Fricker (2007), may be what she calls a ‘culpable’ cause, the source of which, whether individuals or the structure of individuals, can appropriately be assigned epistemic and ethical blame.<sup>1</sup> To enrich or go beyond the Prejudice Hypothesis, I will argue for increased recognition and investigation of another cause of testimonial injustice: the pursuit and protection of social order. According to my Social Order Hypothesis, desires or attempts to pursue or preserve the dominant social order are often *among the significant causes* of testimonial injustice. Although in some cases these *social order causes* appear to interact importantly with prejudice in the production of testimonial injustice, we will also consider cases in which social order causes work independently of any prejudice. Insofar as current literature on testimonial injustice presupposes the Prejudice Hypothesis, it overlooks these roles played by social order causes and more attention to examination of such causes would help remedy this and improve

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<sup>1</sup> For Fricker, a factor does not count as a ‘main cause’ of testimonial injustice unless it is an ethically and epistemically *culpable* factor; she thinks the prejudice of agents often satisfies this condition when producing testimonial injustice. However, she does not thoroughly discuss this culpability condition on being a main cause. Also, culpability raises questions and complexities that will be orthogonal to my more modest aim of showing that social factors are plausibly among the significant causes of testimonial injustice. This is why my own characterization of ‘main cause’, in the text, requires only that the factor in question *may* be a culpable one in Fricker’s sense. I will not investigate such culpability further here.

our understanding of testimonial injustice. It would also better position us to investigate when social order causes are culpable causes in Fricker's sense.

To make these arguments, I will focus on the testimonial injustice involved in the epistemic interactions between the Catholic Church and women, to argue that my Social Order Hypothesis deserves increased attention when it comes to identifying the causes of excluding women from the process of knowledge-making and knowledge-sharing in religion.

To get detailed, I will zero in on distinct cases of testimonial injustice: cases of false extracted speech involved in the witch trials of the late Middle Ages and Early Modern periods in Europe. Although the Catholic Church was prejudiced against women during these trials, I show it is plausible to interpret the Church's actions as leveraging prejudice in order to serve its larger aim of preserving, and further pursuing, its desired social order.

I will begin the paper by providing an outline of Miranda Fricker's account of testimonial injustice. Next, I will discuss the testimonial injustice committed by the Catholic Church to bring into light the limitations of the Prejudice Hypothesis in providing a comprehensive understanding of the testimonial injustice that women suffer from. Then I will move onto a detailed discussion of the history of witchcraft, to begin showing in more detail how social order causes were plausibly at work in extracting, or otherwise silencing, the testimonies of women who were accused of witchcraft.

## Testimonial Injustice

In its most general terms, epistemic injustice occurs when the speaker's position of knowledge is, unjustly, undermined or denied (Fricker 2007, 1). In her book, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Fricker discusses two distinct types of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. For the sake of this paper, I will limit our discussion to testimonial injustice. According to Fricker "the speaker sustains such a testimonial injustice if and only if she receives a credibility deficit owing to identity prejudice in the hearer; so the central case of testimonial injustice is identity-prejudicial credibility deficit" (Fricker 2007, 28). This is to argue, or perhaps stipulate by definition, that a speaker suffers from testimonial injustice when, and only when, the listener attributes less credibility to the speaker's words *because* of having identity prejudices against the speaker (Fricker 2007, 20-21).

Fricker (2007) draws on a fictional trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird* to illustrate a case of credibility deficit that she recognizes as testimonial injustice. In the course of this trial, a black man, Tom Robinson, was found guilty of sexually assaulting a white woman by an all-white jury (23). Fricker notes that "it is obvious to the reader, and to any relatively unprejudiced person in the courtroom, that Tom Robinson is entirely innocent"(23). Fricker writes that in convicting Tom Robinson, despite clear evidence for his innocence, the white jury committed testimonial injustice by failing to give credibility to Tom's testimony because of having prejudices toward his identity as a black man. Fricker (2007) further explains that an epistemic exchange can be considered a case of testimonial injustice if the so-called identity prejudices "'track' the subject through different dimensions of social activity –economic, educational, professional, sexual, legal, political, religious, and so on" (27). Fricker points out that, in this case, Tom Robinson

suffered from testimonial injustice because “racial prejudices render him susceptible to a panoply of injustices besides the testimonial kind” (27).

Fricker’s account of testimonial injustice includes the Prejudice Hypothesis that I defined above, and has been discussed in different contexts. In this paper, I will limit our discussion to the process of knowledge-making and knowledge-sharing in religion. To be more specific, I will only focus on the epistemic interactions between the Catholic Church authority and women. However, I believe my criticism of the Prejudice Hypothesis in the context of religion can be expanded to other domains of testimonial injustice.

The Catholic Church has long been accused of denying women’s testimonies about their distinct religious experiences because of having negative identity prejudices against women (Kidd 2017, 386). Pamela Sue Anderson (2012) believes that the origin of the Catholic Church's negative prejudices against women can be traced back to the Catholic interpretation of ‘the Fall’ (205). The Christian Church portrayed Eve as a gullible seductive woman who used her feminine charms to seduce Adam into eating the forbidden fruit, thus bringing evil and sin into the world. Following this tradition, women’s alleged mental and moral inferiority has been taken as a distinguishing sign of their vulnerability to the temptations of the devil and their propensity to evil (Anderson 2012, 205; Jackson 1995, 71). Anderson (2012) believes that these negative perceptions toward women not only result in discernible harms like sexual assault and abuse but they also diminish women’s position as knowers (205). She further explains this epistemic harm arguing that “women have been the knowers never acknowledged as knowing, the thinkers with novel ideas which were taken from them to give status and credibility to husbands, lovers, and heads of the house as, in a colloquial label, the “boss”” (205).



The patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church, in particular, relies on the teachings of Jesus, the Apostles, and Scripture to exclude women from ordination and priesthood; this is to say that the Catholic Church uses women's alleged natural susceptibility toward sinning and evil to justify their exclusion from the process of knowledge-making and knowledge-sharing in religion. In light of this exclusion, women experience difficulty relating to and following many aspects of the Catholic tradition, including its sexual and biomedical ethics (Secker 1991, 133). By drawing on the Prejudice Hypothesis, one can attempt to explain or identify the epistemic harm involved in such epistemic interactions between the Catholic Church and women by arguing that the hearer (the Church) refuses to give credibility to the words of the speaker (women) because of having prejudices against their identity. In contesting the prejudices against women in religious contexts, feminist theologians provided different arguments to support the increased participation of women in the Church and religious teachings. I see these efforts, on the part of feminist theologians, as a sign of optimism (on the part of the feminists) that the Catholic Church would eventually set aside its prejudices against women to listen to women's distinct experiences with religion. This indicates the feminists are among those identifying prejudice as the main culprit underlying epistemic injustices, including testimonial injustice.

Despite all these efforts to address women's position in the Catholic Church, women continue to suffer from unjust and inferior epistemic status within the Church. To provide further support for my claim about women's lack of epistemic participation in the Catholic Church I will draw on a recent letter named "Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World" published on July 2004 by the congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF)— a department within the Catholic Church responsible for supervising theological matters offering modifications and corrections when needed— signed by Cardinal Ratzinger and authorized by

Pope John Paul II (Beattie 2005, 20). The letter begins with a declaration recognizing the Church as the “experts in humanity”, clarifying the purpose of the letter by writing that “the Church is called today to address certain currents of thought which are often at variance with the authentic advancement of women” (CDF 2004, sec.1). The letter continues to argue that it intends to provide a biblical reflection “on the correct understanding of active collaboration” between the two sexes “in recognition of the difference between men and women in the Church and in the world” (CDF 2004, sec.1).

The letter draws on Scripture to affirm the sexual differences between men and women by arguing that “an ordered world is born out of differences, carrying with them also the promise of relationships”, emphasizing that “humanity is described as articulated in the male-female relationship” (CDF 2004, sec.5). In an attempt to explain the current conflicts in the relationship between men and women, the letter blames the original sin for the hostilities between the two sexes (Beattie 2005, 20). The Catholic interpretation of the Fall is inherently misogynist because of implicating Eve as the culprit for the fall of Adam and humanity in general. So bringing in the original sin to explain the conflicts between the two sexes is a way of placing the blame of gender hostilities on women. In continuing this line of thinking, the letter accuses the “new approaches to women’s issues”, namely feminism, for adversarial relations between men and women, explaining that feminism tends to “emphasize strongly conditions of subordination in order to give rise to antagonism” (CDF 2004, sec.2). In addition to this, the letter believes that feminism attempts to obscure the biological distinctions between the two sexes in order to “promote prospects for equality of women through liberation from biological determinism” which intends “to call into question the family, in its natural two-parent structure of mother and

father and make homosexuality and heterosexuality virtually equivalent, in a new model of polymorphous sexuality” (CDF 2004, sec.2).

Beattie (2005) criticizes the approach the letter has taken to address women’s issues by arguing that the letter is “implicitly anti-feminist” (20). She explains that the letter attacks feminism in its entirety for causing further conflicts between men and women by making “women [believe that] in order to be themselves, [they] must make themselves the adversaries of men” (CDF 2004, sec.2). However, she notes that the letter fails to acknowledge the patriarchal structure of the Church and its contributions to the lifetime conflicts between men and women. In the same manner, the letter disregards the history of male dominance in society and its role in authorizing different kinds of violence, e.g., sexual and epistemic, against women (Beattie 2005, 21).

I believe the process of producing this letter and its content accentuate the epistemic harms that women suffer from, and provide further evidence for the continuous exclusion of women from the process of knowledge-making and knowledge-sharing in the Catholic Church. As the title of the letter suggests, the letter was supposed to address the collaboration between men and women. However, as Beattie (2005) argues, the letter was written by “one exclusively male group (CDF is made up of twenty-five cardinals, archbishops, and bishops), and addressed to another exclusively male group (the bishops of the Catholic Church)” (20). This is evidence that women were inadequately represented in the process of producing a letter that intended to discuss the issues that concerned women. This further indicates that the Catholic Church refused to give proper credibility to women’s first-hand testimonies about their distinct religious experiences. In addition to this, the letter attacks feminism without providing a single quote from any of the feminist arguments that challenged the Catholic Church in the first place. The absence

of representations of first-hand feminist arguments makes it quite difficult to get a sense of the content of these arguments which, in turn, makes it difficult to evaluate the Catholic Church's response to these arguments. The epistemic exclusion of women in the Catholic Church is additionally indicated when the letter argues in favor of women's participation in the "world of work and in the organization of society", but continues to justify women's exclusion from priestly ordination, writing that "in this perspective one understands how the reservation of the priestly ordination solely to men does not hamper in any way women's access to the heart of Christian life" (CDF 2004, sec.13,16). Beattie (2005) notes that in addition to priestly ordination, the Church "prohibits women from being members of the magisterium, from administering the sacraments, or from preaching the homily during Mass" (22). Beattie explains that one way to understand the justification behind women's prohibition from priestly ordination is in the light of the claim the Catholic Church considers itself the "expert of humanity" thinking that they "know all there is to know about women so that women have nothing to teach them" (22).

On the same note, Mary Carlson examines a pastoral letter, titled "The Role of Women in the Society and the [Catholic] Church". In contrast to the previous letter on "The Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World", to write this letter, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) acted more justly by interviewing women about their religious experiences (Carlson 2016, 30). Based on these testimonies, the content of which was never revealed, the ad hoc committee proposed an action plan consisting of "seriously studying and discussing the all-male priesthood and diaconate; offering contrition for the past sins against women" (31). However, as Carlson reports, none of these actions were ever undertaken and the final format of the letter "begins the first paragraph by reiterating what women are *not* allowed to do (summarizing and affirming the teaching and practice that ordination is reserved for men ..."

(26). This brings Carlson to conclude that women's testimonies were "erased from later drafts, deemed not credible enough and/or sincere enough to hold truth" (31). However, Carlson notes that the ad hoc committee at least acted justly by giving women the epistemic credibility they deserved by considering them as knowers and listening to their experiences (32). Nonetheless, the Catholic Church hierarchy and a large group of American bishops failed to give credibility to women's voices and act according to their testimonies.

From the perspective of the Prejudice Hypothesis, the Catholic Church committed testimonial injustice in the process of composing these two letters. In the "Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World", the Catholic Church committed testimonial injustice by excluding women from the process of producing the letter and by failing to cite the first-hand feminist arguments that posed a challenge to the Catholic traditions concerning women. Carlson (2016) writes that in the second letter, addressing the treatment of women in the Church, the Catholic Church undermined women's epistemic position by denying credibility to women's lived experiences thus erasing their words in the letters (31).

Assuming that Fricker would indeed recognize these cases of unjust epistemic interactions as involving testimonial injustice, she would identify the Catholic Church's *prejudices* against women as the main culprit, arguing that the Catholic Church denied women's testimonies because of having negative identity prejudices against them. Indeed, as we see, Fricker's account of 'epistemic injustice' makes prejudice the main culprit by definition.

However, I believe that some, perhaps many, cases of testimonial injustice have complexities and variances beyond Fricker's anticipation; focusing on prejudice as the only main cause of such injustice prevents us from gaining a more comprehensive insight into testimonial injustice. For example, the context that silencing occurs in, the manner in which speakers voice

their testimonies, and most importantly the content of the speakers' testimonies can all influence the epistemic receptivity of the speaker's words. Here, I should clarify that I am not making any claims about the culpability of these contributing factors; I am proposing the prior step of examining cases of potential testimonial injustice to see whether these other contributing factors, additional to or in interaction with prejudice, result in credibility deficits that *may* be culpable. In short, I argue that simplifying the cause of all instances of credibility deficit to prejudice, without even considering the possibility that there might be other main contributing factors, provides an oversimplified and inadequate account of testimonial injustice.

To summarize some of the inadequacies in Fricker's account of testimonial injustice, I begin with arguing that recognizing prejudices against the identity of the speaker as the only main cause of testimonial injustice indicates that in the absence of prejudice, marginalized individuals cannot suffer from credibility deficit and silencing. In other words, according to Fricker, epistemic exclusion occurs *only if* prejudice is involved in epistemic exchanges. However, in my view reducing the cause of unjust silencing to identity prejudices against the speaker narrows down the scope of testimonial injustice, and increases the chance of leaving out legitimate cases of unjust silencing that are not necessarily caused by prejudice.

In addition to this, an account of testimonial injustice with exclusive attention to identity prejudices in epistemic interactions runs the risk of considering all cases of silencing and credibility deficit involving marginalized individuals as cases of unjust and culpable silencing without considering other contributing factors.

Moreover, focusing on prejudices against the identity of the speaker dismisses the possibility that speakers who are not the target of prejudice might also, nonetheless, suffer from unjust epistemic exclusion. This is to argue that Fricker's account of testimonial injustice, by

default, rejects the possibility that non-marginalized individuals can also suffer from credibility deficit and silencing.

To better understand such limitations in Fricker's account of testimonial injustice, one can think of the credibility deficit that non-marginalized whistleblowers experience when they reveal or speak against corruption in an institution. Here we can argue that non-marginalized whistleblowers suffer from testimonial injustice not necessarily due to prejudices against their identity but in virtue of what they are trying to communicate. However, in this case, because of the absence of identity prejudices, the Prejudice Hypothesis cannot account for the epistemic harm the whistleblowers experience, thus leaving out a legitimate case of testimonial injustice.

I believe we can begin to achieve a more accurate and comprehensive view of testimonial injustice and address the limitations I've introduced, if we go beyond prejudice to consider other factors that can work alongside prejudice—or even in the absence of prejudice—to cause testimonial injustice. Here, I should clarify that I am not arguing that social order causes are more fundamental than the prejudice cause; no such priority relations are implied, as the relations between causes may be various across cases. Instead, I am arguing that the tendency to preserve or pursue social order is among the overlooked and plausibly significant causes, and that this deserves more recognition and investigation.

As noted above, the additional main factor I wish to highlight and exemplify is the pursuit and preservation of social order, which is often a structural phenomenon. Before beginning the section on "Testimonial Injustice", Fricker (2007) briefly touches on the structural operations of power, writing that "purely structural operations of power are always such as to create or preserve a given social order" (13). However, I cannot help noticing that she makes no attempts to understand testimonial injustice in light of the tendency to pursue or preserve a social

order. This is to say that Fricker did not take into consideration the possible relationship between the tendency to preserve the social order and the silencing that marginalized individuals experience.

## Prejudice and its Function in Social Order Pursuits

To gain a more comprehensive perspective on the prejudice involved in epistemic interactions, and to further explore the relationship between prejudice and social order, I will shift the focus from *the epistemic harms of prejudice* to study the *function of prejudice* for the preservation of the social order. Crandall and Eshleman (2003) define prejudice as “a negative evaluation of a social group, or a negative evaluation of an individual that is significantly based on the individual’s group membership” (414). Simply put, prejudice is having negative generalized stereotypes against certain groups and their members. Prejudice has been associated with biological and psychological factors. However, Lawrence Pisoni adopts a distinct approach to prejudice, highlighting one of the less explored causes of prejudice, i.e., the sociopolitical function of prejudice (without discussing the causes of epistemic injustice). Pisoni (1995) writes that “the preservation of existing economic and social values is a deeply felt need in any society” (85). Prejudice, he argues, serves an important function for dominant groups and “aids them in the process of conservation” (85). He goes on to argue that for the dominant groups prejudice is “a means of combatting the threat... [prejudice] consolidates the internal membership of the groups, and it also rejects any alien group which might make inroads upon the unity thus achieved” (85). Indeed, identity prejudices against outgroups provide a rationalization for their exclusion and inferior position in society. Pisoni goes on to clarify that to have this function, a



dominant group need not explicitly understand or intend it as such. Prejudice can manifest as one among other means by which dominant groups preserve themselves tacitly.

By bringing the sociopolitical function of prejudice into the discussion of testimonial injustice, we can argue that the tendency to pursue and preserve the social order oftentimes takes advantage of identity prejudices, i.e., leverages prejudices for the benefit of desired social order, to exclude marginalized people from the process of knowledge-making and knowledge-sharing. Here, we move from recognizing prejudice as *the* main cause of testimonial injustice to recognizing it as a collaborating factor that works interactively with the tendency to preserve the existing social order, to silence marginalized individuals.

In addition to this, giving extra recognition to the tendency to preserve the social order would allow us to account for testimonial injustice in cases that involve non-marginalized speakers who are silenced in virtue of *what* they are communicating, sometimes without prejudice against them. This can occur when non-marginalized allies are not assigned proper credibility because of speaking for the rights of marginalized individuals. Here, bringing in the tendency to preserve the social order allows us to argue that non-marginalized individuals suffer from credibility deficit and unjust silencing not because of prejudices against their identity but in virtue of what they are communicating.

This shift from marginalized identities to marginalized testimonies is particularly important because it brings into light one of the less discussed aspects of testimonial injustice, i.e., the *content* of the marginalized testimonies, and the ways in which the acknowledgement of these testimonies would demand drastic changes in the existing social order, thus intensifying the tendency to silence these testimonies in the interest of the social order. Systematic testimonial injustice indicates that there are individuals whose testimonies are repeatedly silenced and

disregarded. This means that marginalized individuals have been systematically ostracized from the process of knowledge-making and knowledge-sharing in different contexts. In light of this exclusion, marginalized testimonies tend to include contradictory contents that, if acknowledged, would challenge the well-established beliefs in the existing social order. By emphasizing the contradictory content of marginalized testimonies, I intend to argue for a greater recognition of the possibility that marginalized testimonies, if heard and acknowledged, would oftentimes demand significant changes in the existing social order, in which case, the prevention of drastic changes becomes a powerful motive for dismissing and silencing the marginalized testimonies that demand these changes.

From an epistemic point of view, we can argue that prejudice may often be contributing to the stability of the social order in such cases—contributing by providing a justification for dismissing and silencing marginalized testimonies whose acknowledgement would, oftentimes, pose a challenge to the existing social order. But we are also bringing attention to the social order side of this interaction. Dismissive treatments toward marginalized testimonies protect the existing social order by preventing marginalized testimonies from finding their way into mainstream epistemic systems, which, in turn, prevent conflicts between marginalized beliefs and widely held beliefs that maintain the existing social order. It is also worth mentioning that the motivation to preserve the existing social order can—under circumstances that are beyond the scope of this paper—also excite changes in the social order and give rise to new order. This happens when the tendency to establish a new social order provides the grounds for hearing the marginalized testimonies, whose acknowledgement would promote the desired changes.

Let us take these points back to the letters addressing women's position in the Catholic Church. First, let us clarify how prejudice seems involved here, then clarify how social order causes are plausibly also involved.

We can see that the process of producing the letters and the Catholic Church's response to women's concerns, in particular the Church's refusal to consider women for more influential Church positions, is evidence of the Catholic Church's reluctance to assign proper credibility to women's testimonies. Based on Fricker's definition of testimonial injustice, the fact that women, i.e., marginalized identities, are at one end of these epistemic transactions with the Catholic Church is sufficient to assume that any dismissive treatment toward women's testimonies are due to identity prejudices against women. Additional evidence for prejudice's involvement in women's unjust epistemic position in the Catholic Church comes from the two letters. When discussing the first letter titled "Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church", Beattie (2006) does not make any direct references to identity prejudices against women to explain women's exclusion from the Catholic Church. However, she argues that the Catholic theologians' reaction to feminist arguments "usually amounts to a subtle way of silencing or rejecting feminist arguments through a confident reassertion of the authority and wisdom of the Catholic tradition" (Beattie 2005, 19). This is to argue that, even in matters concerning women, the general assumption is that women cannot know something particular about their experiences with religion, that the Catholic Church, being the higher authority, does not already know.

In addition to this, the content of the letter provides further support for the involvement of prejudicial beliefs about women by its frequent references to sexual differences between men and women, and blaming the original sin, i.e., women's gullibility toward the temptations of the Devil, for the hostilities between the two sexes.

Similarly, to analyze the letter titled “The Role of Women in Society and the [Catholic] Church”, Carlson brings in Fricker’s account of testimonial injustice to make sense of the unjust silencing that women suffer from in order to contemplate the possibility of cultivating the qualities of virtuous hearing, i.e., “a corrective anti-prejudicial virtue”, within the Catholic Church (Carlson 2016, 33; Fricker 2007, 91).

But despite such involvement of prejudice in the epistemic exclusion of women, we can also plausibly see roles played by social order causes. Upon closer inspection of the letters and the current structure of the Catholic Church, we can come to interpret the Catholic Church’s unwillingness to give women proper credibility, in particular denying access to more influential Church positions, as an attempt to maintain the existing structure of the Catholic Church. In this regard and in support of my position, Beattie (2005) writes that “the most important areas of the Church’s intellectual and sacramental life remain closed to the active witness of women’s lives ... precisely because of the ongoing struggle to keep women under male ecclesiastical control” (22). In the alternative scenario, if the Church assigns women proper credibility and acknowledges their testimonies about their distinct experience with religion, then the Catholic Church has to embrace changes in its structure, from men losing their privileged access to Church positions, to re-understanding Catholicism from marginalized lenses. This brings me to argue that in addition to prejudice, the desire to preserve the existing social order within the Catholic Church motivates the Church to silence and disregard testimonies whose recognition would demand drastic changes in the existing social order of the Catholic Church.

Further investigation of current exchanges between women and the Catholic Church might bring more clarity to the roles played by social order causes in the production of testimonial injustice. But it is at this point that I want to take a different tack, turning to cases of

confrontation between the Catholic Church and women during the witch hunts of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. A main reason for this plunge into history is that, unlike the current cases involving the Catholic Church, the historical cases afford the clarity of hindsight. Over time, painstaking analyses of these cases have been developed at a remove from the fraught times in which they occurred. I believe this can help us turn up details in the relationships between prejudice, social order pursuits, and testimonial injustice, whose counterparts in our own time may, so far, be murkier.

The epistemic significance of the witch hunts becomes more explicit when we discuss the witch *trials* of the late Middle Ages. The witch trials are a distinct case of testimonial injustice, i.e., extracted false speech, which provides us with a unique perspective toward understanding the contemporary cases of testimonial injustice within the Catholic Church. This approach will allow us to go beyond seeing marginalized individuals—in this case, women—as the victims of unjust silencing, to perceive them as potential *rivals* whose testimonies, if heard and acknowledged, would call for drastic changes in the existing social order. In addition to this, the witch confessions give us an insight into the crucial role that confirmatory witch confessions played in stabilizing the Christian social order, which in turn, emphasizes the importance of silencing marginalized testimonies for the sake of preserving the existing social order. These order-maintaining injustices against women have, I shall maintain, their less dramatic but still marginalizing counterparts in today's exchanges between women and the Catholic Church.

## Diabolic Witchcraft

Belief in witches and witchcraft has a long and varied history in European societies. Types of recognized witchcraft and the attributes that were used to identify witches have

changed drastically over time. Such changes may pose challenges to providing a conclusive account of witchcraft. Prior to the sixteenth century, many peasants believed in what Goodare (2016) described as *village witches* (10). Village witches were oftentimes seen as quarrelsome, hostile women believed to cause harm to their neighbors (10). The possible explanation for village witch accusations is that peasants would attribute everyday misfortunes, including sickness, sudden death, and crop failure, to witchcraft or *maleficium*, i.e., harmful magic (Sidky 2015, 76). This indicates that referring to witchcraft and supernatural powers was a way of explaining the otherwise unexplained misfortunes. But this does not mean that referring to village witchcraft was the only way of making sense of the occurring misfortunes. In addition to village witchcraft, peasants would refer to vicious ghosts and angry spirits to explain the everyday misfortunes (Goodare 2016, 90). However, one advantage that witchcraft accusations had over alternatives was that the label ‘witch’ determined a human perpetrator as the source of misfortune thus providing a remedial procedure, i.e., witch persecutions, as a solution to rectify the harms (Goodare 2016, 90; Sidky 2015, 77). This is to argue that people who carried the label ‘witch’ functioned as scapegoats who could be reckoned with, when taking the blame for the calamities that happened in the village.

Associating witchcraft with *maleficium* continued up until the sixteenth century. However, in that time the Catholic Church transformed the concept of witchcraft from *maleficium* into *diabolism*, associating it with devil worship in particular. Julian Goodare draws a distinction between *maleficium* and diabolic witchcraft, arguing that the village witch was a concept of common people and was born out of their immediate and practical fear. This is to argue that the village witch became the object of fear because of the assumption that witches could bring harm to their neighbors. The belief in diabolic witchcraft, on the other hand, was the

product of intellectual theories developed by the Catholic Church (Goodare 2016, 9). The diabolic witch was not simply guilty of causing harm to others but of invoking satanic powers to cause these harms, consequently committing a crime against God (Goodare 2016, 12)

This particular way of articulating diabolic witchcraft, i.e, associating it with devil worship, can be traced back to the Christian beliefs about heretical groups. During the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, the Christian Church was involved in persecuting heretical movements such as Cathars and Waldensians (Goodare 2016, 34-35). It was briefly after this time that witchcraft became a “new heresy” in which people went beyond worshiping the God in wrong ways to worshiping the devil. Laurel Zwissler (2018) explains the association between heresy and diabolic witchcraft arguing that the Catholic Church combined the “elite Medieval Church heresy stereotypes... with non-elite, popular ideas of witchcraft as a system of cursing and curing, tracing back to ancient times” (2). In other words, activities that were previously attributed to heretical movements were now associated with diabolic witchcraft. Pact with the devil became the heart of Christian witch persecutions. Christian theologians believed that witches gather secretly during the Sabbath to engage in sexual activities with the devil and commit other blasphemous acts including cannibalism and infanticide (Goodare 2016, 10).

To discuss this history and relevant features of diabolic witchcraft further, I next want to focus on the *identity* of the people who were accused of such witchcraft. Historical records from European society suggest that women were overwhelmingly most likely to be accused of witchcraft. Over eighty percent of declared witches were women (Goodare 2016, 267). *Malleus Maleficarum*, authored by the Dominican demonologist Heinrich Kramer, was among the most consulted books for witchcraft. Catholics and Protestants relied on *Malleus Maleficarum* to identify witches and persecute those who were accused of witchcraft. The most prominent

feature of this witch-hunt manual was the *rationalization* of women's involvement in witchcraft. Kramer not only used Christian theology to provide an ideological rationale for the great witch-hunts, but it also explicitly associated witchcraft with women (Hanegraaff 1995, 302). In *Malleus Maleficarum*, women are portrayed as "liars, unfaithful, immoderate, sexually insatiable, and downright evil..." (Barstow 1988, 11). This negative image suggests that women, by nature, are more vulnerable to temptations of the Devil to seduce them into the heresy of witchcraft.

I believe this negative view toward women in the witch-hunt manual can, in part, be traced back to the Christian interpretation of the Fall. The Catholic interpretation of 'the fall' portrays Eve as a lustful and seductive woman who uses her feminine charms to deceive Adam into eating the forbidden fruit (Anderson 2012, p.205). Recognizing Eve as the culprit for the fall of Adam provided the grounds for considering women as the weaker sex, whose moral and intellectual inferiority make her susceptible to the temptations of the devil. Hanegraaff (1995) draws a direct link between the presumptions about women's sexual nature and witchcraft accusations, writing that "among the many vices attributed to women her carnal nature which tempts men into sin is highlighted as the characteristic of witchcraft *par excellence*" (302). It was in following this line of thought that *Malleus Maleficarum* brings forward the idea that "all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable" (Institoris and Sprenger 1970, 47).

It was not until the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries that women were routinely and systematically persecuted for their alleged involvement with witchcraft. Prior to the sixteenth century, belief in *maleficium* resulted only in very few witch persecutions, but as Sidky explains those earlier persecutions were neither legal nor systematic (Sidky 2015, 76). This changed during the late Middle Ages as the Christian Church increasingly acknowledged



diabolic witchcraft, which, in turn, contributed significantly to the rise of the great witch-hunt era, i.e., the systematic persecution of people who were accused of witchcraft.

Importantly for my emphasis on the Social Order Hypothesis, these changes in viewpoints on and treatment of perceived witchcraft in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries coincided with times of dire social circumstances. Economic crisis, the plague outbreak, and religious conflicts were all increasingly threatening the social stability of European countries (Sidky 2015, 75). In fact, many began to see those times as the “last days of the world before the Second Coming of Christ” during which a satanic conspiracy threatened Christendom and the Devil adopted special measures to spread moral weakness (Goodare 2016, 157). Two of the most important events that had a significant impact on the rise of the great witch-hunts were the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation (Goodare 2016, 155). Despite their animosity toward each other, both denominations joined forces to overcome a common enemy, namely the witch (155). Julian Goodare believes that the motive behind this alliance between the Catholics and the Protestants can be traced back to their tendency and desire to achieve a particular social order: to establish a godly state (155).

Pursuit of a godly state was partly a Christian Church response to the great social turmoil that characterized the late Middle Ages. The establishment of a godly order was expected to restore order and stability in a society that was overwhelmed with dire circumstances. In the absence of a proper cause for these social calamities, the Christian Church used witches as a scapegoat to blame them for the misfortunes that occurred at that time (Sidky 2015, 75). The main function of scapegoating is to provide a plausible–yet misplaced–cause for the social circumstances that threaten the social order. In times of fear and social instability, society relies on its prejudices against deviant groups to find a flesh-and-blood culprit to blame for the

misfortunes that they cannot otherwise explain. When it comes to scapegoating witches, Christian demonology employed negative stereotypes and prejudices against women, i.e., their natural vulnerability to the temptations of the devil, to give rise to an imaginary group, i.e., witches, in order to explain the misfortunes that befell the Christian society.

An important yet oftentimes unemphasized point in the discussion of witchcraft and scapegoating is that no people were actually witches. This means that there existed no women who were born with an innate supernatural power to, for example, cause harm to others. Similarly, scholars dismiss the assumption that witches attended shabbat to worship the devil and engage in deviant sexual activities (Krause 2015, 23). I believe accusing women of diabolic witchcraft, despite reasonable doubts about the reality of witches, raises an important question about the function of witches' perceived existence for the Christian Church. In this regard, we can argue that during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the Christian Church reconstructed the label 'witch' for the purpose of establishing a godly state.

Julian Goodare (2016) describes the *process* of establishing a godly state as the “process of striving after godliness, and of using state authority to enforce godliness” (156). On its path to establish a godly state, the Christian Church had to first address the social calamities of the late Middle Ages. And to deal with these issues, the Church brought together the existing prejudices against women, and the negative image of diabolic witchcraft, to use witches, i.e., women who were supposedly involved with the devil, as a scapegoat.

Scapegoating would oftentimes involve a remedial action to eradicate the sources of misfortune. Diabolic witchcraft was rectified through capital punishment, namely the execution of the convicted witch (Goodare 2016, 217). While enforcing godliness, the Christian Church was also battling the icons of ungodliness. Recognizing witches as the allies of the devil, thus

justifying their execution, provided the Christian Church with the opportunity to wipe out its rivals on its path to godliness. Mary Campbell (1978) described the process of establishing a godly order as the process of becoming the ““One True Church” in which the Church had to eliminate its competition” (62). In this process, witchcraft came to be recognized as a “demonic religion, a sinister organization created by Satan to destroy Christendom” (Sidky 2015, 77). In response to the threat of witchcraft, the Christian Church “defin[ed] the boundaries of legitimate religious belief” to provide criteria for identifying the women who deviated from the acceptable social norms (Campbell 1978, 63).

From a feminist point of view, we can argue that people who were accused of witchcraft were oftentimes women who refused to act in accordance with the feminine social norms of the Middle Ages—they were amongst those perceived to disrupt the desired social order. The label “witch” could describe almost anyone who trespassed the religious, moral, and sexual boundaries of the late Middle Ages. Therefore, it is not an easy task to provide an exhaustive list of the presumed violations that these women engaged in. Hans Peter Broedel and Louise Jackson, for example, provide two distinct, nevertheless, closely related images of women who were accused of witchcraft. Broedel (2018) discusses the relationship between diabolic witchcraft and sexual deviancy, arguing that from the perspective of the dominant culture, “witches were “sexual outsiders” whose activities threatened the natural order of society with the wrath of God” (Broedel 2018, 179; Ruggiero 1985, 140). Louise Jackson provides an alternative image of these women arguing that “the witch was the stereotypical opposite of the good wife. She was the woman who was trying to act entirely independently of male control, asserting her own powers, sexual and otherwise, to gain financial reward or carry out revenge on her enemies” (Jackson 1995, 72).

Regardless of the difference in the account of diabolic witchcraft, we can still come to the conclusion that witch suspects were women who violated the feminine social norms of the late Middle Ages, thus posing a threat to the Christian social order that emphasized their subordination to the feminine norms. In response to this threat, witch suspects were taken to court to be prosecuted for the crime of witchcraft. In the next section, we will look into the testimonial injustice that witch suspects suffered from, to further detail the Social Order Hypothesis' argument for the greater recognition of the protection of social order as being among the significant causes of testimonial injustice.

## Witch Confessions

Rachel Ann McKinney (2016) described extracted speech as a “speech that is unjustly elicited from an agent” (258). The key idea behind extracted speech is that power is not only capable of silencing speech, but is also capable of forcing people into producing a speech that they would not have produced in the absence of force (258). This can, in turn, wrong the speaker in their capacity as a communicative agent “who is capable of choosing when to speak and what to say” (259). McKinney goes on to argue that extracted speech becomes *unjust* extracted speech when the process of eliciting speech involves questionable methods like torture and intimidation. Producing speech by means of torture and intimidation is unjust because the threat of force coerces the speaker to produce the speech that the speaker doesn't believe and which the listener is demanding. In addition to this, oftentimes, extracted speech is perceived as authorizing more harm or punishment to the speaker. This for instance happens when a false confession under duress results in the unjust imprisonment of the speaker (265)

Our available accounts of witch trials are records narrated by male court scribes (Jackson 1995, 64). These records suggest that in the course of the trial, almost all the confessions moved from denial to admission of guilt by means of torture (Krause 2015, 23). In the beginning, witch suspects denied their involvement with witchcraft. However, later in the course of the trial, suspects came to produce a false confession that involved admission of guilt and details of demonic activities that they engaged in (Krause 2015, 23). Based on the aforementioned account of extracted speech, I believe we can argue that witch confessions are a case of unjust extracted speech because the process of extracting confessions involved torture and intimidation. And, in turn, these forced confessions were taken to license more harm to the suspects by providing the grounds for their execution.

Witchcraft was recognized as a crime but a distinctive aspect of this crime is that women who were accused of witchcraft did not commit any of the actions associated with witchcraft. Again, the consensus among scholars suggests that witches, as articulated by Christian demonology, did not exist (Goodare 2016, 190). (The women accused existed, of course.) The fact that it was unlikely that the suspected women engaged in satanic activities, makes it possible to argue that witch confessions were not only a case of unjust extracted speech but also a case of *false confession*. Rachel Ann McKinney does not discuss false confession as a distinct case of extracted speech. However, I believe it is important to recognize that extracted speech does not necessarily imply false confession. Setting aside the injustice involved in extracting speech, extracted speech can sometimes convey truth. For example, a murder suspect can truthfully give up the names of their accomplices during the course of an interrogation. However, this was not the case with witch confessions. Despite their innocence, fear of torture forced innocent women into making a false confession that involved details of demonic activities that they did not take

part in. The emphasis on the details of witchcraft activities came from the presumption that innocent women would not be able to provide the details of demonic activities that they did not engage in (Goodare 2016, 214).

There are, however, two concerns about the presumption that innocent women would know the details of witchcraft activities: on the one hand, the court failed to take into account the possibility that many people who lived in Europe during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries came to know about witchcraft activities simply because of living in that period of time. In other words, it was not participating in witchcraft but the prevalence of demonology and folklore that made many people capable of fabricating false testimonies (Goodare 2016, 214). On the other hand, the judge or the interrogator were not passive listeners. Depending on the structure of the judicial system, they would collaborate with the suspects to tailor a coherent confession. Leading questions were oftentimes used to steer the suspects toward narrating a confession that would involve the most fundamental details, in particular, the demonic pact and sabbat (Goodare 2016, 215). Krause draws on the French judicial system to explain that “the judge’s goal was to get the “witch” to adopt some version of a ready-made narrative: “I have been to the sabbath, I have signed the pact with the devil, I have had sex with demons” (Krause 2015, 23). The fact that women did not have the freedom to choose the manner and the content of their speech is evidence that women were not autonomous participants in the process of speech production. Indeed, women were only speakers in the sense that they followed the lead of the interrogators to give voice to the predetermined confessions.

This being said, I believe, providing a forced false confession and the diminishment of their communicative agency were not the ultimate harms that witch suspects had to endure.

We can also argue that the Catholic Church was also forcing women into a particular epistemic position — a position that was artificial in a sense, since there was no actual witch knowledge for a witch to know — partly in virtue of prejudices against their identity. Women who violated the social norms of the late Middle Ages – I will call them deviant women – faced the danger of witchcraft accusations. To better explain the unjust epistemic position of these witch suspects, I will focus on the members of heretical groups who were among the most vulnerable to witchcraft accusations.

Worshipping the non-Christian God was wrongly associated with worshipping the devil and performing other blasphemous acts (Goodare 2016, 124). The underlying assumption behind this false association was that if someone worshiped the non-Christian God, they would by default know about witchcraft activities in virtue of participating in them. Most of the time, identities are rightly matched to the things that the person who holds that identity might know. For example, a historian is rightly expected to know about history. But, sometimes, as is the case with witch confessions, prejudice causes someone's identity to be wrongly associated with knowing something that they do not know. This, for example, occurs when Muslim identities are wrongly associated with having information about terrorist activities. Once the witch suspects were wrongly placed in an epistemic position, the use of extracted false speech was erroneously perceived to confirm their epistemic position as a witch. In other words, reiterating the predetermined confessions, which involved the admission of guilt and details of demonic activities, provided further perceived proof (an epistemic concept) for the conviction of the accused women.

The case of false extracted speech draws attention to the function of false confession for the Catholic Church. Rachel Ann McKinney (2016) does not expand much on how false

confessions work in the interest of the interlocutor. Nevertheless, she briefly notes that “here I define elicited speech as speech that is uttered in order to fulfill a special set of intentions of an interlocutor, or a procedure that functions as such” (267). I take this to be arguing that extracted speech fulfills the intentions of the listener who forced the speaker into reiterating the speech that he narrated in the first place. The Christian concept of diabolic witchcraft— as articulated by the Catholic Church during the late Middle Ages—established the theoretical foundation for the great witch-hunts. Witch confessions as a case of false extracted speech were particularly important for the theoretical and practical justification of the witch persecutions. Julian Goodare (2016) argues that “witchcraft was notoriously a secret crime” (193). It was widely believed that witches would secretly gather during shabbat to engage in sexual orgies with the devil and to perform other evil deeds. Because of the secrecy involved in witchcraft, the alleged witch was the only person who could have known about the satanic activities that she engaged in. For this reason, judges and jurors took confessions to be “the most incontrovertible form of evidence” (Jackson 1995, 69). The Catholic Church, initially, developed a demonology to give an account of who witches were and the activities that they engaged in. However, the Catholic Church needed confirmatory confessions from witches to prove their existence in the first place. A more detailed examination of the content of witchcraft would reveal that predetermined confessions were deliberately narrated with an emphasis on the demonic pact and the shabbat (Krause 2015, 23). The Christian theology relies on binary oppositions including good and evil, saints and sinners, and God and devil (Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo 2020, 110). The reality of witches and their confessions mattered because witch confessions grant insight into the clandestine world of the devil, thus providing proof for the existence of the devil and consequently that of God.



The deliberate articulation of the witch confessions with an emphasis on witches' pact with the devil, positioned witches, i.e., deviant women, in opposition to the Christian Church. Witches came to be seen as the allies of the devil posing a threat to the Christian social order. Goodare (2016) explains this by arguing that "witch-hunting was part of the contest between the divine ruler, seeking godly order, and the Devil, seeking ungodly order" (159). Considering witches as a threat provided the justification for the extreme measures that were taken to eradicate ungodliness. However, in reality women who were accused of witchcraft were not guilty of witchcraft. They were, in fact, women who posed a challenge to the Christian Church by practicing heretical religions and refusing to abide by the feminine roles of the late Middle Ages.

Once the Church prepared the grounds for putting deviant women in such epistemic positions, women were simultaneously prevented from expressing what they would have liked to say in the absence of force and intimidation. This is evidence that extraction oftentimes can involve silencing. The fact that the label "witch" could encompass various identities makes it difficult to provide an epistemic account of what people with these various identities knew, and what they would have expressed if they were not silenced. Mirjam Mencej (2017) focuses on traditional medicine practitioners arguing that "any knowledge that in any way distinguishes a person from others was considered suspicious and linked the person who possessed it with witchcraft" (331). According to her, oftentimes, having "extra knowledge" raises the suspicions of witchcraft. However, I find the phrase "extra knowledge" to be misleading because it would be difficult to argue that women who were accused of witchcraft had more knowledge compared to other people. Therefore, I prefer to use the phrase "alternative views" to argue that witch suspects either knew or believed things that others did not, or held alternative views toward the

world. I think we can argue that, in the absence of force and intimidation, the witch suspects would have often expressed views that others around them thought those ‘witches’ *should* not have or *could* not have. The former, i.e., a case of knowledge women should not have, can describe the epistemic status of women who were members of heretical, i.e., non-Christian religions, and knew about non-Christian practices. The fact that Christianity was striving toward becoming the “One True Religion” by means of eradicating the practitioners of non-Christian religions created such an ambiance in which knowing and participating in heretical religions turned out to be forbidden. And this prepared the grounds for accusing heretical women of witchcraft.

The latter, i.e., a knowledge women could not have, can describe the epistemic position of women who practiced traditional medicine and had medical knowledge about women’s sexuality, in particular, women’s reproductive system. During the late Middle Ages, the common assumption was that women did not have the capacity to know about topics like medicine that were reserved exclusively for men. Consequently, women who had knowledge of healing practices were associated with witchcraft.

## Philosophical Summary of the History of Diabolic Witchcraft

Now we can sharpen the main points that have emerged from investigation of witch trials and confessions, and connect these back to contemporary testimonial injustice.

Julian Goodare explains that “witch-hunting was also about religious power over deviant belief and practice, and again this highlights the role of the authorities – religious, rather than secular—who sought to enforce orthodoxy” (Goodare 2016, 388). In the witch era cases of testimonial injustice in the Catholic Church, identity prejudices against women are involved in

causing testimonial injustice, but so too are social order causes. As documented above, the extreme nature of the witch hunts and the fact that they took place at the time that social and religious conflicts were threatening the stability of the Catholic Church unveils the importance of the social order causes in bringing about the witch persecutions. Identity prejudices against women existed long before the witch hunts, yet it was not until social order factors were also in play that witch persecutions transpired. It was indeed during the late Middle Ages that the tendency to preserve the social order took advantage of identity prejudices against women to persecute them for the crime of witchcraft.

Recognizing the crucial role played by the tendency to preserve the social order in the historical case of testimonial injustice is particularly important because identifying the social order causes as an active force that uses identity prejudices for its own benefit is more challenging in the contemporary cases in which the Catholic Church is not thoroughly under active scrutiny. This being said, I should clarify that I am not arguing that the social order causes *precede* or are in some sense *deeper* than the prejudice causes. Nor I am implying that social order causes are more important than the prejudice causes, in the production of unjust silencing. I am instead arguing that the tendency to preserve the social order deserves more recognition than thus far received, as a contributing factor that works with prejudice to cause testimonial injustice.

The above discussion of historical details helps establish this conclusion. Understanding the historical context of the witch hunts, in particular the intellectual development of diabolic witchcraft with an emphasis on devil worship, revealed that during the social instabilities of the late Middle Ages, the Catholic Church indeed leveraged identity prejudices against women, but did this in an attempt to preserve the godly state (Christian) social order. This is to argue that the Catholic Church — more specifically Catholic demonologists — took advantage of women's

alleged vulnerability to the temptations of the devil, to turn deviant women, i.e., women who trespassed the the socioreligious norms of the late Middle Ages, into the icons of ungodliness, i.e., witches.

The creation of diabolic witchcraft, on the one hand, enabled the Catholic Church to use deviant women as scapegoats, i.e., to offer a remedial response to the misfortunes of the late Middle Ages. On the other hand, by scapegoating deviant women, the Catholic Church also eradicated the perceived rivals of the Catholic Church in the process of establishing a godly state. In addition to providing the Church with the justification to eradicate the perceived rivals that threatened the Catholic orthodoxy, the label “witch” also served the Catholic Church epistemically.

Witch confessions, once again, emphasized the importance of testimonies for the stability of the social order. Confirmatory witch confessions, i.e., extracted false speech, with an emphasis on demonic pact, firmly established the existence of witches and that of the devil, which in return, reinforced the theoretical foundation of the Catholic Church by providing further proof for the existence of the Christian God. From a practical point of view, the confirmatory confessions provided a justification for the Catholic Church’s extreme measures to prosecute and execute witch suspects. The production of the forced confessions further prevented witch suspects from saying what they would have said in the absence of torture and intimidation. This is particularly important because it shows that in virtue of placing women in unjust epistemic positions, thus forcing them into producing false testimonies, the Catholic Church, simultaneously, prevented women from expressing testimonies that, if heard and acknowledged, would threaten the Christian social order.

To shed light on contemporary cases, these lessons from witchcraft history can help us look beyond recognizing women as mere victims in unjust epistemic transactions; the lessons can help us see women as potential rivals for the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church. One common point between witch suspects and contemporary women who are striving for proper epistemic credibility in matters pertaining to religion is that they are both seeking “emancipation from patriarchal oppression” (Zwissler 2018, 12). Similar to witches, contemporary women try to stretch out the boundaries of acceptable feminine norms to seek the termination of male domination within the Catholic Church.

Viewing women as potential rivals who call for changes in the patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church helps us move beyond identity prejudices against women to consider the Catholic Church’s tendency to preserve the existing social order in the Church, i.e, the patriarchal orthodoxy, as an interacting cause that works alongside prejudice to silence women. The Catholic Church does not engage in extreme actions like the witch hunts to eradicate its rivals. However, the Catholic Church strives toward preserving the existing structure of the Church by preventing women’s voices from being heard and acknowledged and denying women influential Church positions that would bring about changes that would change the dynamics of male domination within the Catholic Church.

## Conclusion

We began by narrowing in on testimonial types of epistemic injustices, and Fricker’s account on which prejudice is the only main cause of these. Looking at present day examples of testimonial injustice against women by the Catholic Church suggested prejudice *is* indeed, at least sometimes, among the culpable significant causes of testimonial injustice, but also began to

suggest additional significant causal roles played by desires and attempts to maintain social order. To examine such roles and their relationships with prejudice more closely, we stepped back into the history of European witch trials and confessions. This clarified how social order causes can work, sometimes in concert with prejudice, to produce testimonial injustice, suggesting how to examine contemporary cases for this broader suite of significant causes of testimonial injustice. Such work has the potential to inform attributions of culpability, as well as intervention efforts that may help reduce the injustices that women continue to suffer.

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