

Editorial

From the long years of the Mughal Empire in India (1526–1857), a story is told about a courtesan. It's not a historically verifiable story, even though the 17th century British traveller William Finch (died 1613) makes a reference to it in his records eleven years after the event. This was India's Persia-inspired period of marble monuments and symmetric gardens, of poetry and music, of a detail-rich style of painting, and of a cuisine that comes down to the present day as "Mughlai." The courtesan of this time was a unique amalgam of a cultural idol and an intellectual. She entertained and engaged the Mughal nobility with her mastery of the fine arts. She was trained in classical dance and music. She was an authority on court etiquette. She contributed to the literary traditions of the day.

Anarkali (died c. 1600) was one such. Her name meant "pomegranate blossom." The crown prince Salim fell in love with her. When this came to the ears of his father Akbar the Great (1542–1605), the displeased Akbar put an end to the affair by having Anarkali executed by immurement. This meant being entombed while still living. Finch's account of it reads: "[T]he king caused her to be inclosed quicke [alive] within a wall in his moholl [palace], where she died." In her execution, she was literally excluded.

Across history and across cultures, it appears that women are not difficult to exclude or even to execute. Women are to stay within circles that men chalk out for them. Any transgression of the boundary can invite death. This issue illustrates this stark story, repeatedly played out within the history of Christianity.

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Priscilla Papers is the academic voice of CBE International, providing peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary scholarship on topics related to a biblical view of women and men in the home, church, and world.

Joe Early traces the trajectory of witch-hunting across the Middle Ages into the centuries beyond to arrive at what it might look like in the church today in terms of victimizing women by excluding them. **Christy Hemphill** and **Marissa Burt** look at the preconceptions that surround menstruation leading to associating a natural and neutral process of female physiology with sin.

Michelle Dawn Meyer and **Taylor Yoder** consider women who were not only excluded, but executed. Meyer presents Anne Boleyn of the proverbial "Thousand Days," who, within that brief period, exerted a pro-Reformation influence in the court of Henry VIII and was schemed against, at least in part, for it. Yoder surveys women of the early centuries of the church—Thecla, Perpetua and Felicitas, and Macrina—who tenaciously stood their ground against the expectations of the culture of their time and paid for it with either exclusion or execution.

Nick O'Brien's contribution to the theme is to lay out the chilling roots and possible ongoing liaison between genderized exclusion and racial exclusion in Western Christianity.

I pray that this issue of *Priscilla Papers* encourages us when we put our shoulder to the wheel of resisting unbiblical norms, traditions, and systems that exclude and, in some sense or the other, execute women who resist.

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