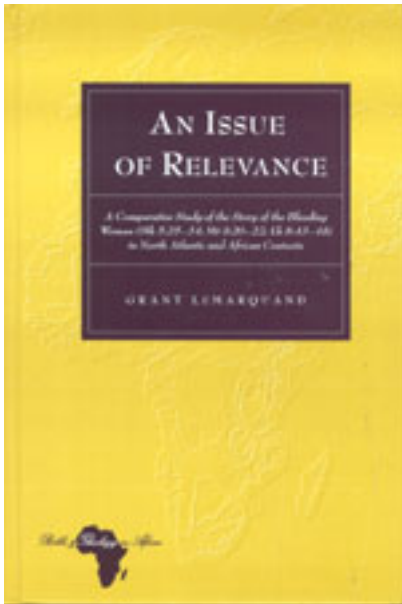


RBL 03/2005



**Lemarquand, Grant**

***An Issue of Relevance: A Comparative Study of the Story of the Bleeding Woman (Mk 5:25–34; Mt 9:20–22; Lk 8:43–48) in North Atlantic and African Contexts***

Bible and Theology in Africa 5

New York: Lang, 2004. Pp. xvii + 284. Hardcover.  
\$72.95. ISBN 0820469289.

Wesley J. Bergen  
Wichita State University  
Wichita, KS 67117

This book is a revision of LeMarquand's dissertation at the Toronto School of Theology, under the supervision of Ann Jervis. LeMarquand's contact with African scholarship includes teaching at St. Paul's United Theological College in Limuru, Kenya. There are hints in this book of other long-term contacts with Africa, but he does not make these explicit.

The introductory chapter serves as a general introduction both to the specific topic under study and to African biblical scholarship in general. LeMarquand informs us that the story of the bleeding woman was chosen for this study because there are more studies on this text in African scholarship than on any other New Testament text (18). This fact alone gives us a significant clue regarding the differences between African and North Atlantic scholarship.

The body of the book is divided into three sections. In each section, various North Atlantic and African authors are studied as they respond to particular aspects of the biblical account. The first section (ch. 2) focuses on the narrative as a story of healing. The next section (ch. 3) takes into account that the story is about a woman. The final section deals with the ways scholars have responded to the issue of blood (ch. 4).

The final chapter is a rather brief conclusion. This is followed by two appendixes, bibliography, and indexes of authors, subjects, and sources. The bibliography is extensive, but readers interested in a broader range of biblical studies from Africa should consult LeMarquand's bibliography in West and Dube's *The Bible in Africa* (633–800). The first appendix, where he compares African scholarship to the concerns of the early church, may be of special interest to some.

The book provides an excellent introduction to African biblical studies. The format of comparing authors and ideas provides entry into the motives and goals that separate African scholarship from North Atlantic scholarship. It also provides numerous examples of how much African biblical studies has to offer to North Atlantic readers.

The discussion of African scholarship is nuanced, with clear distinctions made between the various African voices. For example, LeMarquand notes that African women scholars are less likely to view all things African in a positive light than are their male counterparts (143). African perspectives are often identified by region and tribe, which highlights the differences among African people. He steers well away from any simple stereotype of Africa good–America bad, while still allowing the African voices the upper hand in significant aspects of the discussion.

My major point of contention with LeMarquand is his choice of the term “relevance” without really exploring what he means by that term. One of the better discussions is on page 113, where he suggests that North Atlantic scholars minimize the miraculous element of the story “in an attempt to make the text relevant for modern North Atlantic readers.” At other points he notes that relevance is not a direct issue for much of North Atlantic scholarship but can only be approached implicitly (5). A more explicit discussion of the politics and economics of North Atlantic academia would have been helpful. In addition, the constraints of secular academic positions could also have been noted. (In LeMarquand's defense, a dissertation may not have been the place to explore these issues.)

This book would serve well as a general introduction to biblical studies in Africa. It would also serve to provide numerous examples of the relationship between exegesis and hermeneutics. Unfortunately, its price (\$72.95) and lack of visibility (it is not currently listed on the peterlangusa.com website) will keep it from the wide readership it deserves. One hopes that a paperback edition will soon follow.