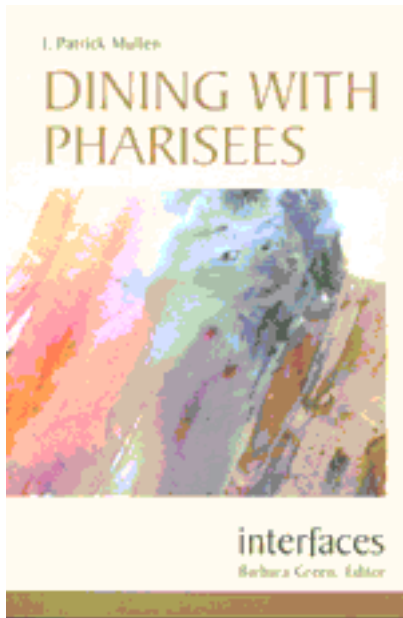


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**Mullen, J. Patrick**

*Dining with Pharisees*

Interfaces

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*Dining with Pharisees* is a welcome addition to former studies addressing Simon the Pharisee in particular and New Testament anointing passages in general. Intending to dialogue with questions raised by Synoptic Gospel texts and both Jewish and Christian traditions, Patrick Mullen offers the nontechnical reader benefits advanced by specialists of several critical fields in biblical studies.

This volume places itself centrally in the corpus of New Testament study that intentionally addresses texts and themes that have fallen prey to anti-Semitic readings, of which the Pharisees were a favorite target. It also contributes to the ongoing discussion of Jesus as a first-century Jew. Interfaces, a relatively new series edited by Barbara Green, sets New Testament characters in their own historical-cultural world amid others who co-existed at that time.

Patrick Mullen achieves the goal of the series by applying critical method to social constructs in which the Pharisees of Luke 7:36–50 are placed. His study consists of an introduction that engages in that which hampers cross-cultural communication that is addressed primarily from literary sources. As Mullen reminds the reader, “spoken and written words are only one way in which we communicate” (xi). The first two chapters

explain anthropological and redactional methodologies, respectively, in terms that the author calls “authentic cultural criticism” of the text.

Mullen begins by considering the layers of text-tradition that link Matthew, Mark, and Luke by exploring the role played by “Q” in the multiple source theory. Luke’s editorial product indicates him to be a “sympathetic and gentle emendator” rather than a “radical revisionist” (17). Next, Mullins postulates that anthropological analysis of his study is aided by contemporaneous writings of Josephus, Philo, and other extracanonical witnesses. It is here that the author seriously begins to lay a foundation that challenges anti-Judaic readings of New Testament texts as he discusses how ethnocentric subjectivity, metamorphic interpretation, cultural homogeneity, temporal continuity, and romantic historicism have each in their own way lead to misreading and faulty reconstruction of the past. Further, Mullen considers economical disadvantage, perspectival inclusivity, societal distinctiveness, as well as labels that so indicate them. In the latter case, for example, how “a culture describes its motivations and how things ought to be” (emic) need be distinguished from a “description of the culture’s actual practices as apparent to the perceptive observer” (etic).

The next two chapters apply critical theory to the cultural worlds of Jesus and Simon the Pharisee, offering a redaction-critical analysis of Luke 7:36–50. In the former, the author builds on Fitzmyer’s analysis of Luke’s ethnicity (*The Gospel according to Luke I–IX*, 41–47, in Mullen, 81 n. 7). At this point of conjecture the reader begins to reflect on the wisdom of modern linguistic claims that “the author is dead.” By establishing Luke’s narrative as unique, Mullen isolates two non-Markan details, the anointing and wiping of feet, as pivot points to shared material that plays subservient roles of antecedent scene-setting and subsequent interpretation or consequence. This allows Luke’s reader to focus on what he wishes to emphasize in his version of a shared text tradition: “shifting the focus from waste and the poor to gratitude and repentance” with the words of Jesus about the ever-present poor “gave Luke grounds for altering the ‘inaccurate’ depiction of Jesus he found in Mark” (99). Mullen’s reassessment of Jesus’ choice to dine with Simon the Pharisee counters the normative summary dismissal of Pharisees in general. The fact that Jesus dines with sinners, including Simon, is an unexpected reality that challenges “the ‘upright’ (i.e., the Pharisees) to inclusivity and humble honesty, and to recognition of their own need for forgiveness and gratitude” (125). In turn, silence concerning the woman’s sin, according to Mullen, permits women to attend to public eucharists of the early church while dealing with acknowledged sin and public awkwardness that would necessarily ensue. Admittedly, it is difficult for this reader to understand the leap from textual social meal to theological eucharistic meal or to conclude, with the author, that

“Luke affirms their need and invites them all to a meal with Jesus, where forgiveness is offered and great love acknowledged.”

A revised edition of this study should include references to the index of authors (e.g., to Josephus, Flavius, add pages 24, 42, 54–55, 56, 60, 71, 141–42), as well as to the index of citations (e.g., to Greco-Roman Authors: Flavius Josephus: *Antiquities of the Jews*, add page 48 to 13.288, 13.298 on page 48, 18.1.3 on page 67; *The Jewish Wars*, add 2.163 on page 72; to Rabbinic Writings: Mishnah, correct *Baba Batra* and add *Tamid* on page 66).

*Dining with Pharisees* by Patrick Mullen contributes an important service to New Testament scholarship by presenting critical methodological analysis and theoretical application that reinforce a positive reading of a specific text formerly marred by negative presupposition. It makes available to the informed nonspecialist reader a needed critique of Bible-based traditions.