

Quotes from Thomas Sheehan

Even Christian clerics and scholars within the powerful sister-church of the Anglican Church, the Catholic Church, have been challenging the traditional Christian doctrines. Professor Thomas Sheehan is considered a brilliant scholar of Catholicism/Christianity. He views Jesus Christ as a prophet of God who came to end religion, not create religious institutions. Dr. Sheehan, who wrote the book, *The First Coming*, said the following at a public, 1987 colloquium in Chicago:

“Most Catholics were taught that the Gospels provided something like that, something like a film, a literal historical record of what Jesus actually said and did from his birth in Bethlehem, to his preaching, crucifixion, Resurrection, and ascension into the clouds”

“But not any more. Nowadays in an academic setting like this, no one is scandalized when Roman Catholic biblical scholars tell them that Jesus was probably not born in Bethlehem, was not visited by three wise men, did not get lost in the temple, that he did not say that he was God, that he did not physically come back to life on Easter Sunday morning three days after he died, and that his dramatic ascension into heaven, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, was not an historical event.” (To read the full text of Sheehan’s response, [click here](#))

Sheehan says (emphasis ours):

“Fifth, who did Jesus claim to be? Negatively, we may say with certainty, that he made no claims to be God’s son. Very few Gospel sayings in which Jesus calls himself the Son have much chance of being authentic. The only one which we may be sure of is the one where he says, ‘I do not know anything about the end of the world.’”

Again:

“What historical data, since that is what we are looking for, do we have about Easter Sunday? What about the Resurrection? Negatively, we must say that the Gospel narratives of Easter are not records of historical events...”

“...The word ‘resurrection’ is metaphoric. The Greek verb to resurrect someone means to wake them up from sleep. Transposed in the New Testament, resurrection means to awaken someone from the sleep of death, the ultimate night, and to bring them into the day of the Lord. Now that is not an event in space and time. It does not mean coming back to life like Lazarus. Rather, it means that who you are is definitely rescued by God and validated in his presence, with no commitment at all to the preternatural physics of how that happened.”

Regarding the purpose of Jesus' advent, Sheehan states:

"In any case, the parousia or definitive coming of God among humankind, which Jesus proclaimed, had already begun, according to him. Now this does in fact mean the end of religious mediation, because it means the fulfilment and therefore surpassing of religion with the presence of God."

"The bridegroom is with them,' we read in Mark. The phrase, 'the end of religion,' affirms the perfecting of the human relation to God in an intimacy and an immediacy that always remains mystery. That is why Saint John can say, again in the Book of Revelation, 'I saw no temple in the city, because the Lord God and the Lamb are its temple.' That I maintain was the passionate excitement of Jesus' message: not more religion, or a different religion, or a better religion, or the true and perfect religion, but no religion. In the Kingdom of heaven, there are no sacraments, no priests, no Scriptures, no rituals, no hierarchy, no Codes of Canon Law."

Sheehan openly admits that Christian scholars have hidden this opinion regarding Christ as human, Christ as prophet, from the ordinary Christians (the laity), and he called it a scandal:

"Nonetheless, there is a scandal about Catholic exegesis, a threefold scandal, I think. First of all, it is a scandal that so little of this exegetical information has reached down to the laity in the pews. Just the other day, believe it or not, one of my colleagues, one of the brightest members of the faculty, I think, told me and allowed me to tell you that up until very recently, he actually thought that for Christians the Resurrection of Jesus meant that he came back to life in the sense of being reanimated and resuscitated on Easter Sunday morning.

"A second and greater scandal is that the news apparently has not reached even some Catholic theologians, so that at some universities (not at Loyola) they still teach pre-Copernican Theology courses that insist on the historicity of the events described in the Easter narratives, or otherwise fudge the matter a bit."

The following short excerpt, taken from the opening remarks of Jesus Seminar founder Robert Funk, presented at the Seminar's first meeting, March 21-24, 1985 in Berkeley, California, serves to powerfully highlight the intense importance of this subject in the eyes of Christian religious academia:

"Make no mistake: there is widespread and passionate interest in this issue, even among those uninitiated in the higher mysteries of gospel scholarship. The religious establishment has not allowed the intelligence of high scholarship to pass through pastors and priests to a hungry laity,

and the radio and TV counterparts of educated clergy have traded in platitudes and pieties and played on the ignorance of the uninformed. A rude and rancorous awakening lies ahead.”

Sheehan continues:

“If he [Jesus] were to return today, as he was alive once, would he recognize in Christianity the fulfillment of his message? I think the answer is, ‘No.’ Not as an institution—who wants to do away with the institution? Not I. But I am talking about the christological affirmations”

Again:

“There are many interpretations of the meaning of Jesus. There are official Roman Catholic interpretations, based not simply on historical data in the New Testament, but on two thousand years of official teaching, official statements, and development of doctrine. There are also Protestant and Jewish and Islamic interpretations, and yet even Marxist ones. Jesus is now a public text disseminated into a plurality of interpretations.”