

Now this is the point where I would traditionally begin my reading. Only I'm not.

This may come as a shock to many of you, but I don't like readings. And not just my own. Any reading. Anywhere. By anyone. Well, except for everyone else doing a reading tonight and who will no doubt be the exceptions that prove the rule. But me, I've never been comfortable with self-promotion, particularly if I am promoting my own self. It makes me cringe. It embarrasses me and shames my long dead parents. On the other hand, I'm scared of my publisher, Sandra, and genuinely want to do what I can, in my own humble way, to promote my work since it lines her pocket.

Hence, this is my conundrum - how to do a reading that's not a reading, to promote a book that I don't want to promote, at the same time seeming appropriately humble while barely able to control my own bursting pride at the astonishing accomplishment of this work of genius, *The Book of Thomas, Volume I: Heaven*.

So, in an attempt to sidestep a painful and poorly delivered reading from my book that would, at best, dissuade people from buying the book, I've decided, to do something different. Instead, I would like to read a few short paragraphs I composed about my book. I've titled it,

Apology to Potential Readers of This Work

Dear Potential Reader of this work, I apologize sincerely for the book entitled, *The Book of Thomas, Volume I: Heaven*. In writing this book I had hoped to offend and outrage. I had conceived of a novel containing murder, incest, sodomy, rape, plague, disease, dismemberment, disembowelment, assassination, blasphemy, war, famine, and the ever popular genocide. I wanted to write a book that chronicled injustice of every conceivable kind, in particular cruelty to women, children and slaves (including handy tips on the beating, thereof). I wanted a book rife with witches, devils, dragons, satyrs, and all manner of false Gods. A book with perversions of every stripe, with ritualistic sacrifices, pointless mutilations and oxymoronic honour killings. A book in which fear and guilt motivate all, dictating the minutiae of life - no matter the lip service the characters might pay to loftier ideals. In short, I set out to write a book about how religion exploits the incalculable stupidity of mankind.

I apologize for my failure. [Holds up Book]

When I first conceived of this book (that is, before Brent Hayward stole the idea and so created the first book ever printed by Chizine), I had hoped to write a book more outrageous and offensive than any other. But in my research for *The Book of Thomas, Volume 1: Heaven*, I discovered that such a pernicious book already existed and was in fact already a bestseller. A book so perverse that it not only chronicles all the outrages I've just mentioned and many more, but does so in earnest and with great relish.

The book to which I am referring is, of course, *The Bible*.

How can The Book of Thomas hope to compete with such a book?

It can't.

So, dear potential reader, if you are considering purchasing my humble tome, you might want to reconsider, for you will surely get more bang for your buck in a copy of the Bible.

If, on the other hand, you want to stick a finger in God's eye, and show him he isn't the only one who can sell books filled with gratuitous violence and unspeakable cruelty, then The Book of Thomas, Volume 1: Heaven, is for you.

If I have offended anyone, I sincerely don't apologize. But if you are offended, why not buy a copy of The Book of Thomas and burn it to ashes to express your contempt for me and my ideas? Then we will be even and my publisher will be happy for the sale.

Thank you.