



# The Rector

*Michael Hicks Thompson*

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## **The Rector** Michael Hicks Thompson

Combine a suspenseful murder mystery with theology (the study and explanation of religious faith, practice, and experience) and you have The Rector--with an allegory of Christ's ministry!

Here's a brief synopsis: Martha McRae is a widow living in a small Mississippi Delta town in the 1950s. She's obsessed with the sudden death of her Episcopal church's young rector. A murderer could go free if she doesn't investigate. But Martha is torn. If she pursues the suspect, her Bible study friend's awful secret could be revealed. It would be devastating, and life-changing. When the new rector arrives, she encounters a new puzzle--one that takes her into Parchman Penitentiary, where she comes face to face with evil.

## **The Rector Details**

Date : Published January 12th 2016 by Shepherd King Publishing LLC

ISBN : 9780984528264

Author : Michael Hicks Thompson

Format : Paperback 342 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Christian, Christian Fiction

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# From Reader Review The Rector for online ebook

## Lori Donnester says

I enjoyed the character and plot development.

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## The Book Girl (Andrea) says

I have to say this is not a book I would have normally requested. Honestly I really didn't enjoy it all that much. I am unsure what even possessed me to request this book for review. I have a bunch of deadlines and commitments. Oh well though I took a chance on this book. I want to also state that this wasn't that bad of a book.

The Rector is a novel which takes place in Mississippi during the 1950's which is an era I enjoy reading about. This book has all the wonderful southern customs I am used to. I really enjoyed reading about things I am used to. This is a murder mystery that deals with the christian faith. This was honestly hard for me to understand and wrap my brain around.

The main character Martha McRae is a widow living in Mississippi, following the death of her church's young rector, she becomes obsessed with the case. In her mind a murderer will go free, if she doesn't investigate his death. Unfortunately she becomes suspicious of a friend from her bible study. If this is true it will be a life changing, devastating discovery that will rock her church to its core. When a new rector comes to take the place, she is face with unspeakable evil.

This novel is jam packed with great and interesting characters, a decent plot, and interesting discussions on various theological topics. Was it overly interesting? No. Was it life changing? Absolutely not. Was it a chore to get through? Yes.

The book had a okay plot. But lost me on the theological and faith side. There are a few places in this book where God, is used as a cuss word slightly. One big point for many Christians is not using God's name in vain.

Despite a few parts that had me scratching my head on whether the author did enough research or not, I did enjoy the book somewhat. Although if any readers are Southern Baptist, they may not enjoy some parts of the book that deals with the Episcopal denomination.

I can't recommend this book. I feel like the author wrote this book, and then thought hey, I will market a MURDER, mystery to Christians. It seemed like an after thought. It was not researched well. There are a big number of Southern Baptists, Fundamentalists, and other devout christian religions in the south. It made this book seem not realistic.

I received this book for free in exchange for my honest and 100% unbiased review. All thoughts and opinions are my own. Thank you Book Crash for supplying this book to me.

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### **Mary Van Everbroeck says**

Just when you think you've solved the mystery, something more intriguing occurs enabling additional possibilities.

Great Story. Hope this series continues. Enjoyed the Audio very much. Will also be purchasing paperback format.

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### **Lizenbyl says**

I really enjoyed this book--enjoyed the flow and the plot. I thought it was a good but quick read.

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### **Lynn Hobbs says**

Loved the setting of a by-gone era with party lines, and believable characters...one even pops her Juicy Fruit gum. Mystery and gossip keep growing in the town of Solo, Mississippi. Mr. Thompson delivers an astounding Christian novel that I read in four days. I highly recommend it, and look forward to reading his next book in The Solo Ladies Bible Study series, The Actress.

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### **Lisa Johnson says**

Title: The Rector: A Christian Murder Mystery (The Solo Ladies Bible Study #1)

Author: Michael Hicks Thompson

Pages: 370

Year: 2016

Publisher: Shepherd King Publishing LLC

My rating is 5 stars.

The joy of reading a story by a new author at times defies description and here is such a case in point! I love mysteries, especially those that have me thinking about clues and trying to deduce who the culprit or culprits may be. Sometimes I just enjoy the adventure of the mystery along with the tension that builds at times subtly till the conclusion.

Michael Thompson has written a wonderful mystery that really engaged my whole being and more so with each page I turned. There were clues that weren't clues, but were used to throw me off course and other times he would reveal something I never saw coming! The author's main character is a lady named Martha who writes and publishes her own local newspaper as well as running a local boardinghouse in her home. What seems like a really neat man who cares about his parish, Pastor Cain, boards at Martha's place for a while. However, events come about where he leaves the community and the bishop sends another pastor to look after the small flock. Now, at first glance, a reader might be fooled into thinking it isn't very exciting or perhaps just an average mystery novel. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth let me assure you! I became enthralled into the slowly woven web craftily put forth by the author that centers on a church which seems to have a problem. However, the problem it has might surprise you or maybe not. Either way the excitement builds chapter by chapter until the conclusion has you turning pages faster than ever to see what

happens next!

The novel is filled with various themes, and at the end of the book is a list of books Michael suggests for further reading and some of them are very good, having read them myself. So, if you're looking for a suspense-filled, cleanly written, engaging novel, look no further! If you know of others who would just love to read, discuss or perhaps a book club looking for its next book, share this one! Then, seat yourself down for a wonderful, exciting time lost in the pages of a thriller!

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received one or more of the products or services mentioned above for free in the hope that I would mention it on my blog. Regardless, I only recommend products or services I use personally and believe will be good for my readers. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255. "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

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## **Nathan Albright says**

[Note: This book was provided free of charge by Bostick Communications in exchange for an honest review. Spoiler alert, obviously, because this is a review of a mystery novel.]

As someone who is very fond of genre literature in general and Christian mystery novels in particular [1], this book was a very worthwhile one to get. I was a bit puzzled by the fact that the book came with an apron, because the author said that Martha (the investigator at the heart of this symbolic novel) wore the apron while cooking and trying to solve the crimes of the gossipy small town of Solo, which sits at an important crossroads shown in Northern Mississippi. The author considers this to be a work of serious Christian literature, and I am inclined to agree with him. Fortunately, serious in this case does not mean too serious or weighty to be enjoyed, for this is a ripping good story. It is serious in the sense that anyone reading it, if they are not familiar with the Bible, especially the attributes of Satan discussed in the New Testament, or C.S. Lewis' Mere Christianity, or the general gist of the Gospel stories and their timing, will find a lot of the reading difficult to understand. Those who are familiar with these things will see this novel as the sort of serious-minded Christian fiction that C.S. Lewis and others are fond of writing, which do not see writing about Christian faith and doctrine as any excuse not to write sparkling prose with strong characters.

Without revealing too much, I hope, of the fantastic mystery to be found in this novel, there is complexity at the heart of this novel. Specifically, there are four rectors for the small Episcopalian church in Solo, Mississippi, where the novel's action mostly takes place, aside from some courtroom drama and other action in neighboring small towns in the same general area. Given the shortage of Episcopalian priests, the fact that a single town was looking for its fourth when three of them had come to untimely ends within the short period of a few years would be a subject of considerable alarm. The town of Solo is small, only a few hundred people, which makes the large number of per capita murders and suicides a very painful matter. Of course, mystery novels do tend to amp up the level of death to alarmingly high levels to make for compelling plot action, never mind the implications on demographics. The action blends vivid and colorful characters, sparkling dialogue, and thoughtful reflection on matters of faith, of sin and redemption, of justice and vengeance in a format that makes the reader look forward to reading more about Martha's adventures with her gossipy neighbors, the long-suffering sheriff, and the alarmingly large number of widows and divorcees around town.

At slightly more than 300 pages, this is a novel that reads relatively easily but leaves plenty of material to think and reflect upon. If we were presented with a Satanic minister who had mimicked the right liturgy in

our denominational book, would we be able to tell? The Satanic false minister here is an adulterer, a murderer, greedy for money, preaching the prosperity gospel and a rapist to boot. But he is far from the only sinner to be found. There are other murderers here, a poisoner, a man who tries to cover his impotence with fierce wrath, a remorseful former prostitute who ends up with an unwanted pregnancy, and is divorced in her grief and shame and guilt, but who seeks to make the best of it, and a witty part-time writer and full-time keeper of a boarding house who is not perfect but is witty and decent, and a lot of other people, vivid characters that show one cannot judge a book by the cover, or judge a town simply for being full of eccentrics. When one reads a book that on any given page can be showing a beloved rector giving a message on C.S. Lewis' argument that a good man knows how bad he is, but a bad man thinks he is pretty good, and on another page read about a lonely woman asking why she can't have a man in her life and having a crush on every single male rector that passes through the town, one knows very quickly if this is the sort of broad and thoughtful fiction that one likes. Fortunately, I do. I suspect many others will as well, and it's no mystery why: this is a well-crafted novel that is worthy of reading, and in spreading the word of this mystery writer to those who are not yet in the know, but soon will be.

[1] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.wordpress...>

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.wordpress...>

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.wordpress...>

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.wordpress...>

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.wordpress...>

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## **Pam says**

I reluctantly agreed to review “The Rector” because it seemed that others were not requesting it. Afterwards I even questioned my sanity for taking on a novel I was not that interested in reading. I really did not need any more commitments – I have plenty of other books I want to read languishing on my shelves waiting for me to find time to read them. Well, as usually happens, I ended up being glad that I read the book!

“The Rector” is a somewhat lengthy but quite clever mystery that takes place in Mississippi during the 1950s which is not that far from where I have spent my entire life. Being somewhat familiar with the area and the Southern customs, I found the story of particular interest. “The Rector” actually includes three different rectors within its pages although the reader actually meets the first rector after his death.

A lot goes on within the pages of “The Rector” and Martha is right in the middle of all of it. At times I thought Martha was a real busybody and at other times I thought she had a strong gift of discernment and a quest for truth and justice. Whatever it was, Martha was largely responsible for solving the mystery of “The Rector”. I enjoyed reading the story from Martha’s point of view and was constantly entertained by the unique and quirky residents of Solo, Mississippi.

I am happy that I took the time to read “The Rector” and would recommend it to any who love a good mystery or a story with a Southern setting.

### **Jennifer says**

I wanted to read this book after I saw a review of its sequel, *The Actress*, in the latest edition of the Ole Miss Alumni Review. The author and I are both Ole Miss graduates. I discovered that this one was first and read excerpts of both. The author's main character is a woman named Martha who narrates in the first person. This series reminds me of the one written by Jan Karon for two reasons. First, both have Christian themes with Southern Episcopal churches. Second, both have narrators who are of the opposite gender from the author. Both authors write very well this way. The book is mostly clever and often humorous. I admire Martha's courage and kindness very much. I disliked the mistakes and typos throughout. I would have given four stars without them. I still look forward to reading *The Actress* soon. I hope it had better editing.

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### **Buttercupp77 says**

I'm not sure exactly what I was expecting, but I know that what I read wasn't it. This, of course, makes it very difficult for me to discuss this novel, but I shall endeavour to approach coherence.

My confusion isn't a reflection on the author's execution. The book was very well-written. There was, perhaps, a bit more preaching than I thought was strictly necessary to drive the plot forward, but this is billed as a Christian murder mystery about the death of a rector, so I should have anticipated this.

The story is set in a small town in Mississippi in the 1950s, and the narrator is a widow who is also the town's reporter. Her personality - especially her tenacity and inherent nosiness - makes her exceptionally well-suited to her work. The story spans a number of years, which allows the pacing to feel more realistic, and for some court proceedings to take place and reach resolution.

The characters all came across as mostly realistic to me, aside from Father Cain. I do feel that the author captured many of the archetypes of small towns everywhere. (I speak from my own upbringing in a small town in a different country some decades after this story is set). Where the author really excelled was in capturing the general pettiness that can happen inside a congregation. (Once again, I have borne witness to this in my own experiences).

As I reflect on what I've read, I believe I expected more mystery, and I am disappointed that there wasn't more investigation into the whys of some characters' actions. In addition, there was a lot of reference to "evil," and I had anticipated that this would be developed more strongly, so I would say that was misleading.

All in all, this was a pretty good read.

I received a free copy from Voracious Readers Only.

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### **Becky says**

I don't understand the glowing reviews some people have for this book. There were some interesting

characters and the plot seemed intriguing but, to me, it read like a mystery soap opera. Too much drama, in my opinion.

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### **Shawn Remfrey says**

Martha is an incredible heroin and I adore her! She's bright and sassy! She tries to hold strong to her morals and at the same time, she has compassion for others instead of judging them. She tries her best to protect everyone in her town, regardless of what the outcome might be. Some would say that her insatiable curiosity is a bad thing, but it wouldn't stop Martha from searching for answers! She's indomitable, unstoppable and darn sweet!

The last time that I fell in love with a town so deeply, it was when Jan Karon created Mitford. These characters will completely capture your heart. These are real characters with real struggles. Most of them just want to be the best they can be and help each other. Of course, we do have a few characters that just don't fit in. They have their own agenda. Every character is beautifully flawed. This book captures human essence better than any cozy mystery I've read.

The mystery part is a little tricky. The thing is, we have information that our sleuths do not. Instead of wishing that Martha and her cronies would catch up to where I was, though, I found myself too immersed in the story to really care how far along they were in solving it. Normally, a mystery of any kind for me is about the solving of the mystery, but here it was so much about just losing myself in the town and enjoying my stay.

There were a few real twists and turns here. Twice (twice!!) I was so astounded that I began flipping back through pages looking for any suggestion that the shocking twist was about to happen. Nothing! You're riding along and picking up honey and hanging out with your friends over coffee cake, and BOOM! What? Where did that come from? Now, it's not the type of shock that pulls you out of the story. It's the type of shock you get in real life. You're happily walking through an amusement park and your favorite singer walks by and says 'hi!'. Well, of course it throws you off, but you're still walking the same path you were and headed in the same direction. Not all of the twists are good in that manner, but you get the idea. I almost used an analogy of a blown tire, but that really does derail you. I was only momentarily stopped from reading because I wanted to go back and look for clues :) That's how I roll :)

Don't let the fact that this is a Christian murder mystery keep you from picking this book up. Though there are some valuable Biblical references and a few fascinating thoughts, there is no point in this book where it gets preachy. Thompson doesn't use his writing talent to force you to see things his way. Instead, the characters talk about their beloved God and you can either take what they're saying and think about it, or discard it. For those of you who are Christians, you might find some interesting insight. It's definitely more 'leading' than it is 'forcing' though.

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### **Laura Libricz says**

The Rector is a Christian murder mystery set in 1950's Mississippi. I really liked the characters and the setting. The plot is fast-paced and I found myself wanting to get back to reading it, which is a good sign. If you like 'Murder, She Wrote' or 'Midsommer Murders,' you'll love this. You don't need to be religious either!

There were lot of twists and turns and the reader needs to stay with the story in order to follow it, which is also a good thing.

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### **Rita Kroon says**

Michael Hicks Thompson's novel "The Rector" is a well-written, Christian murder mystery that takes place in the Mississippi Delta in the 1950's. It is the first book of a series followed by "The Actress." It is also an allegory of Christ's ministry on earth. It is written in first person - that of widowed Martha McRae, owner of the Gazette, the local, weekly newspaper in Solo, Mississippi. She also owns a boarding house.

The story opens with the sudden death of the Episcopal church's young rector. The coroner said his death was the result of a heart attack, but Martha instinctively knew it was murder. But why? Who? How? She had her suspicions, but if she pursued the suspect, her Bible study friend's terrible secret could be revealed. When the replacement rector arrives, Martha encounters a new problem to solve - a problem that eventually takes her into Parchman Penitentiary where she comes face to face with evil.

Thompson explores faith, hypocrisy, and the shameful, small-town secrets. He masterfully intertwines multi-dimensional characters in a fast-paced, compelling plot that grows deeper with unexpected twists and turns. The intrigue is well developed. The suspense from start to finish makes "The Rector" a real page turner leaving the reader with wanting more at the end.

One of the things I appreciated is that Thompson made a list of characters as they appear in the tale. It makes for easy reference to glance back to keep the characters straight - who they are and how they fit into the story.

I would highly recommend "The Rector" to all mystery/suspense and fiction-loving fans! I give Michael Hicks Thompson's novel at 5 star+ rating.

Review by: Rita Kroon, author of "Kiss Your Mommy Goodbye" and "Letters from the Past"

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### **Karen Ingalls says**

This is my first book to read by Mr. Thompson. I did enjoy it and appreciated the detail, flow, and plot. The characters were well described and quite believable. My only issue is that there were several stories within one. Right when I thought the story was over, then there was another murder to solve. The main character, Martha was one very clever and brave woman and at times I questioned how realistic her character was. All in all an enjoyable read.

I have The Actress to read next and looking forward to it.

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