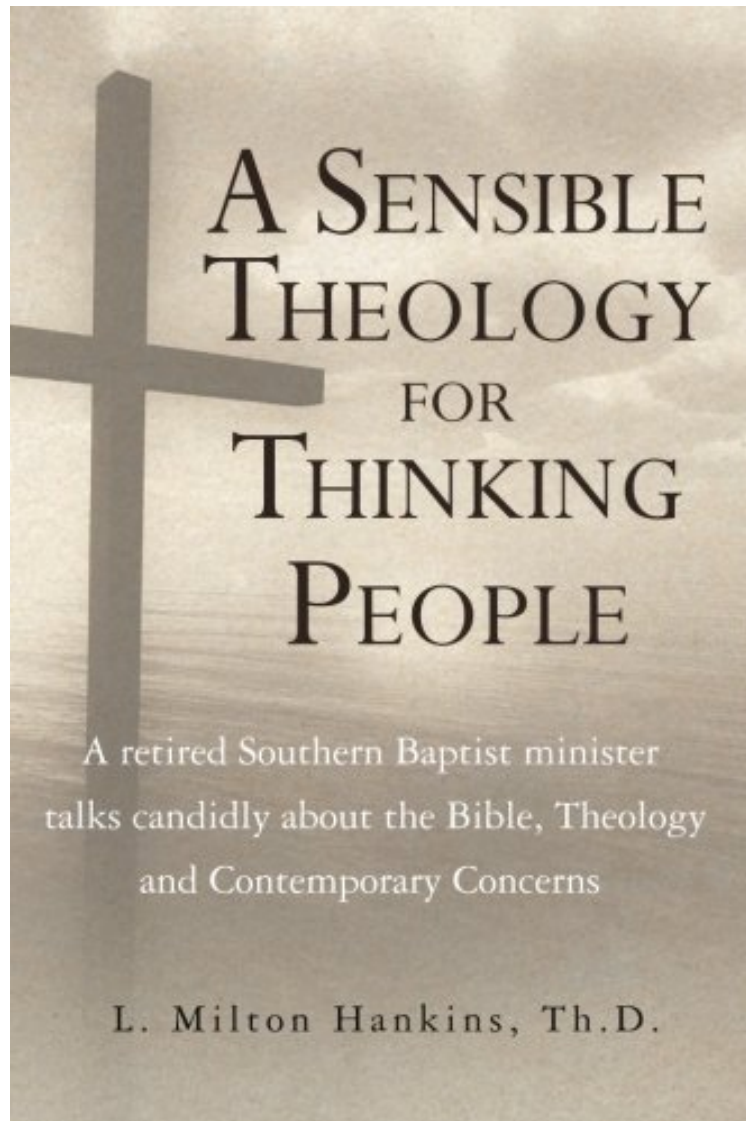


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*Th.D., L. Milton Hankins*

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[E-BOOK] A Sensible Theology for Thinking People: A retired Southern Baptist minister talks candidly about the Bible, Theology, and Contemporary Concerns

## **A Sensible Theology for Thinking People: A retired Southern Baptist minister talks candidly about the Bible, Theology, and Contemporary Concerns**

Th.D., L. Milton Hankins : A Sensible Theology for Thinking People: A retired Southern Baptist minister talks candidly about the Bible, Theology, and Contemporary Concerns before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Sensible Theology for Thinking People: A retired Southern Baptist

## minister talks candidly about the Bible, Theology, and Contemporary Concerns:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. This excellent work answers questions that you may have always had but were afraid to ask. By James E. Patrick Being raised by Christian parents, in a community dominated and blessed with wonderful Christian people, I grew up with many unanswered questions about the Bible. Not that I ever questioned the existence of God and the deity and life of Christ, but the question of "How could this be?" always found its way into my thoughts. Dr. Hankins skillfully moves many of the questions from the Question Column into the Answered Column. If you have ever asked yourself the "How could this be?" question, you should not rest until you have read this book. Dr. Hankins asks and answers questions that you would never dare to ask yourself much less anyone else.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A spoonful of theology for people who don't want God to intrude on their pursuit of happiness. By Charles E. Meadows I rated this book poorly not because I disrespect the author's viewpoint but because I think he presented it poorly. Dr. Hankins seeks to correct fundamentalist theology which sees the Bible as the word of God, intended to be read literally. He goes after the "hard questions" (why do we suffer, etc) and touches on biblical languages, philosophy, and ancient history - but not with enough detail to offer a significant treatment of any of the issues he raises.

My problems with the book:

1. He challenges fundamentalists on point after point but offers only his opinion of why the position is wrong. Consider the following example: "Post New Testament theology supports the idea that the kingdom of God cannot be restricted to a particular entity or group..." Volumes have been written (by Christians, Jews, nonbelievers) on what the "kingdom of God" means. But he goes no farther than to tweak the noses of those fundamentalists who wish to define it.
2. The book is written with an overall high-handed tone - implying that anyone who disagrees is neither sensible nor a thinking person. Consider the following passage: "I propose that we seek to develop new and relevant ways the Supreme Being is relating to...modern humanity. To think that God suddenly became silent or non-responsive sometimes in the first century AD is patently absurd." Why? Because Milt says so! Fundamentalists will hate this book. Those with serious interest in the topics presented will find it woefully insufficient. Those who want a God who will be a source of comfort in the sad times - but do NOT want that God to have any opinions that would prevent them from enjoying all the pleasures of life unfettered by "rules" will lap it up!

If you want a book, with a veneer of scholarship, that says that all religions are essentially the same and that the important thing is "being a good person" then this is the book for you. If you want actual treatments of the difficult questions, interacting with multiple viewpoints it is not.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Nonsensical Theology is another title for this book that has no index, footnotes, or bibliography. By Kendal Rice I agree with the 2nd reviewer about the high-handed tone of this author. I think the title of this book points to an arrogant attitude. Mr. Hankins thinks he is smarter than most everyone else, therefore, if you aren't as educated as he says he is then your opinion carries less weight than his own. This is not a serious book as indicated by its lack of scholarship. Theology without scholarship is a waste of time. I subscribe to the newspaper where this author writes a weekly column and much of what he writes for publication I noticed was repeated in the free portion of the book as discussed below. I think his weekly columns were written as to be part of this book which is a good strategy to use. So after reading his columns for years I know a great deal about his sensible theology. Hankins rejects the foundational doctrine of the Protestant Reformation which includes the authority of the Bible including the sovereignty of God. He rejects biblical inerrancy so he seeks to write his own version of a new Bible. He has written that if any portion of the Bible fails to resonate with you then you can safely ignore it. That is why he uses in the title the word sensible. He thinks much of the Bible is not sensible maybe even nonsense. I find that suggestion about resonance to be illogical and dangerous. Last year he wrote a column for publication saying that the Bible is not a holy book but God is holy. I can provide the link here but you'd have to subscribe to read it. He has written that the Bible is full of errors and its miracles never happened. If anyone wants to read it and avoid subscribing let me know in the comments. So don't be misled by the description of the book here at that says While believing in the possibility of miracles.... From what he has written in the newspaper and his book he rejects miracles. In the free portion of the book he rejects the miracle cited in Luke chapter 2 where angels announced the birth of the Savior as the heavens were opened. Since Hankins wasn't there he has no basis for criticism. Besides even if he was there it wouldn't matter because, in some cases, not everyone present was aware that a miracle was underway. (Saul being blinded and the Father speaking about the baptism of the Son) But if I believed biblical miracles were a myth then I certainly wouldn't take the Bible seriously. It would just be another book like this author believes. The only reason he seems to take it seriously is to be in the position to criticize its authority and authenticity and offer a new, improved version. I presume this book is his step in that 'sensible' direction. Also, since he rejects miracles then he needs to explain how he can be a Trinitarian. I have asked him many times but he won't answer me. I believe he is just another Unitarian or perhaps some type of Deist like Thomas Jefferson who edited his own version of the Bible (absent all miracles). But I'd like him to explain how he can call himself a Christian while also rejecting miracles. The birth of Christ was a miracle as was the resurrection. Absent these miracles then Christ is not divine and there goes the doctrine of the Trinity. So he owes his readers an explanation before expecting them to purchase his book. After reading his weekly columns for years, I won't waste my money to read more of the same in his book. I only read his

columns so I can present the traditional view in the comments section on Facebook where discussion occurs. And he refuses to respond to my comments and questions about miracles. That makes me wonder about his motives. So this is why I rate the book so low. I just don't consider him to be a Christian since I don't think he is a Trinitarian. I think everyone should know this before deciding to read this book. And to reject the holiness of the Bible, while admitting that God is holy, is ludicrous. Following the logic of his arguments, he implies that a holy God has spoken unholiness in the Bible. Or perhaps the author doesn't realize the implication of his position. He doesn't really follow long chains of reasoning like that. Jesus believed differently about the Word as Matthew 4:4 indicates, "It is written, 'One must not live on bread alone, but on every word coming out of the mouth of God.'" Mr. Hankins should consider debating others in public if he wants to spread his new theology. But I don't think he has the courage of his convictions to do so because he won't debate me. He is just another theologian of the historical school who worships politics more than God. He also wants all churches to pay tribute to the State which defies the 1st Amendment's freedom of religion clause. (Regarding the historical school of theology, also called higher criticism, I recommend reading the book titled *The Hoax of Higher Criticism* online here at [. Its a short book and its author offers devastating criticism of that school of thought](#)) That would amount to Christ bowing to Caesar and eventually churches would be absorbed into the State. That I think is Hankins' end game utopian dream. He has written that all the world's religions are equal. This is another reason to suspect he is really a Unitarian. Jesus begs to differ with this theology in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. So its clear the author has no problem ignoring or setting aside the clear statements of Christ. At best he is a cafeteria Christian who picks and chooses what parts to believe and what not to believe. But I believe the Bible is a package deal so to speak. You can interpret it as you wish but you cannot ignore crystal clear statements like John 14:6. The author reminds me of the strategy used by the very first theologian in the world. In Genesis chapter 3:1 we see that strategy unfold, "Did God actually say, 'You are not to eat from any tree of the garden'?" So in that one verse, Genesis 3:1, we have the foundation for the theology of the author. Since the author doesn't believe the Bible is holy, he must continue to ask did God actually say (fill in the blank). Everything the author has written in our local newspaper about theology returns to that theme. Hankins wants to tell us that God didn't actually say what the Bible clearly says. He thinks one must understand in order to believe but the Bible teaches one must believe before one can understand. Its much like seeing is not believing because in order to see you must believe. That belief is the gift of faith given freely to all who answer the call. Jesus told us in John 17:17 that the Bible is the truth. But the author wants to parse that simple statement so that he can be the one to tell us precisely what is true, or good, and what is evil. In other words Hankins wants to be as God as I return one final time to Genesis chapter 3 and in verse 5, Even God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you'll become like God, knowing good and evil." "become like God" is my emphasis and point to make here. Now that the author determines good and evil for himself, he can sit on the fence about abortion on demand. For example, he has written that, while personally opposed to it, he believes its an appropriate public policy. There you have his sensible theology in a nutshell. So this is the crux of the matter: who gets to decide what is good and what is not. Those who deny the sovereignty of God will side with the author because, demanding their own autonomy, they reject the Word of God as the primary authority in their lives. They replace, or become like, God as the one who says what is good and what isn't.

It really is that simple even for all those thinking people referred to in the title of this book.

A retired minister and teacher, Dr. Hankins explores issues of common interest, writing candidly about the Bible, Theology and Contemporary Concerns. The idea for the book originated from a column, *Theological Twisters*, which Dr. Hankins wrote for a southside Virginia newspaper. Presently, he writes a weekly column about religion, politics, and general subjects of interest for the *Huntington, WV Herald-Dispatch*. *A Sensible Theology for Thinking People* helps the reader to deal with various anomalies in both the Old and the New Testaments. It discusses a wide range of subjects, including "The Nature of God," "'Holy' Books," "The Historical Jesus," "Sin, Shame, and Salvation," "Evil," "The Relationship Between God and Humanity," "The Institutional Church," "Death and Dying," "The Spiritual Realm," "The Kingdom of God," and "God's Will." Dr. Hankins ends the book with a chapter titled "Summation and Personal Conclusions" which summarizes his deepest, innermost thoughts and feelings about the current and future state of religion and the church. The author affirms his Christian faith while pointing out that the church has altered the nature of Christianity over the centuries. Thus, much that passes for orthodoxy in the twenty-first century was "unheard of" among early believers. Dr. Hankins does not presume to tell anyone how to think, but he consistently offers new insights which allow the reader to re-think his or her faith and religious experiences. At the same time, the author points out the folly of believing without question many of the generally-accepted stores. He explains the difference between myths, fables, and parables. While believing in the possibility of miracles, he raises interesting questions about how and why they are realized. Dr. Hankins began his faith journey when he was twelve years old by undergoing baptism and joining his local church. From early childhood he questioned much that he was taught. This book is the culmination of many years of study, reflection and meditation, experimentation, and, with honest consideration of the sacred texts, arriving at a "sensible" faith which works for him. He believes that many more people would, and will, come to a viable, reasonable faith if they understand the priesthood of the believer-- that is,

that all human beings have the privilege of examining religious belief, and deciding for themselves what works for them. This is a book which discusses how one can arrive at "A Sensible Theology for Thinking People."

About the Author Dr. L. Milton Hankins served churches in West Virginia, Ohio, and Virginia before retiring in 1997. He holds degrees from the University of Charleston and Trinity Theological Seminary. His articles, short stories, and theological writings have appeared in numerous national journals and periodicals, including *Biblical Illustrator* and *Pulpit Digest*. In 1992-93 he was elected to *Who's Who in Religion*. More recently, he published a book of Appalachian short stories, *Ashes on the Snow*, and continues to write a weekly column for the *Huntington, WV Herald-Dispatch*. He has been interviewed on radio and television. Currently, he and his wife Deborah Going Hankins operate a Bed and Breakfast in Catlettsburg, KY, and he continues to pursue his work as a speaker and freelance writer.