

Bible Answer Man Renounces Evangelical Christian Faith

by Jill Martin Rische

King Solomon hit the nail on the head when he said, "There's nothing new under the sun." Humans come and go, and often make the same astounding choices as those who came before them.

Palm Sunday 2017 brought another one of these bombshell moments that sent waves of dismay, sadness, and a mega dose of righteous anger rippling through the Evangelical Christian world. The Protestant *Bible Answer Man* had converted to the Eastern Orthodox church, also known as the Greek Orthodox church.

This conversion required *renouncing* the absolute and final authority of the Bible (Sola Scriptura) and Salvation by Faith Alone (Sola Fide). And this is just the tip of the doctrinal iceberg. In essence, Hank Hanegraaff renounced the Reformation as *error* and walked away from Evangelical Christianity. He is now an Eastern Orthodox newbie teaching Orthodox theology on the Protestant *Bible Answer Man* program—with some Evangelical doctrine tossed in to distract the unwary.

It's a *Twilight Zone* experience to hear him peddle the theological mess he calls, "mere Christianity" to Protestant and Eastern Orthodox alike. And yet according to Hanegraaff, nothing has changed since he left the Protestant Faith. The Orthodox church directly contradicts almost everything he's taught for 30 years, but that doesn't matter. We are all one big happy family.

Unfortunately, this is not true and it is the Eastern Orthodox church itself that will tell you *everything* has changed. For those of you who don't spend your leisure hours reading Orthodox theology, the two faiths are about as compatible as a vat of holy oil and the full baptismal tank in your local church. In the centuries of theological war between Roman Catholicism and the Protestant church, Eastern Orthodoxy stands as twin sister to the Catholic faith, sometimes called the "second lung." There are key differences between the two but in the end, they are more alike than different.

Why is this important? Why must Hank Hanegraaff resign as the Protestant Bible Answer Man and President of the Evangelical Ministry, Christian Research Institute? Because as Hanegraaff so often puts it, "Truth matters."

How can there be a "Bible Answer Man" who denies the absolute authority of the Bible and Salvation by faith alone?

How can he uphold Christian Research Institute's *Protestant* Doctrinal Statement?

How can the Eastern Orthodox church allow a new convert to teach anyone? Hanegraaff recently described himself on the *Bible Answer Man* program as a "grasshopper" in Orthodoxy. Logic dictates that Orthodox listeners will hear his "grasshopper" doctrine, and follow him. This is already happening on Facebook with a new Eastern Orthodox fan page dedicated to him.

Maybe the final scenario will be, then, that the Eastern Orthodox church welcomes Hank Hanegraaff as the new face of Orthodoxy—a new tool of evangelism—and that is a possibility that should frighten everyone.

Eastern Orthodoxy vs Evangelical Christianity

Beliefs	Evangelical Christianity	Eastern Orthodoxy (EO)
Authority of The Bible: Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone)	The Bible is the absolute and final authority	The Bible is not the absolute and final authority; it is subject to the interpretation of EO church tradition that include councils, the writings of the saints, and other sources
Salvation by Faith Alone Sola Fide (Faith Alone)	Salvation by the grace of God as a gift, not by works and not as a daily progression	The progress of Salvation includes baptism, faith, good works, the Eucharist and other sacraments; it is a continual progression throughout life
The Eucharist	The Bread and the wine/grape juice do not become the body and blood of Jesus in any way—physical or mystical. Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me."	<p>"The 'Sacrament of all Sacraments' ...In the Eucharist, we pass continuously from death to life and obtain God Himself. By partaking of Holy Communion divine life flows into us and penetrates the fabric of our humanity." (1)</p> <p>"The Eucharist, as St. Ignatius of Antioch* said, is 'the medicine of immortality and the antidote against death, enabling us to live forever in Jesus Christ.' In Christ we become gods by grace." (1) The Eucharist becomes the body and blood of Jesus in a mystical way (not actual flesh and blood) and his power flows through the body. (*Many "letters" attributed to St. Ignatius by Catholic and Orthodox scholars are thought to be late additions, possibly hundreds of years after his original letters were written.)</p>
Patron Saints	None – The saints are with the Lord and cannot be contacted.	Chosen at chrismation (confirmation); Saints are part of the "living" church and can be "communed" with, prayed to, and asked to intercede with Jesus. God shares His power and glory with his saints, but they can do nothing apart from Him.
Confession	Confession is made directly to God.	Confession is made to a priest as God's earthly representative but only God can forgive sins; According to Orthodox teaching, "the penitent confesses to God and is forgiven by God. The priest is the sacramental witness who represents both Christ and His people." (1)
Mary	Chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus, Mary was not sinless in any way and not holy; she lived a normal earthly life as a wife to Joseph and mother to his children. She was not assumed bodily into	Known in the EO church as the "Theotokos" or <i>Mother of God</i> . "Mary is Ever-Virgin, All-Holy, Most-Pure...free from actual sin, but...she did fall under the curse of Original Sin as does all mankind." (2)

	heaven at her death, so she did not leave an empty tomb.	<p>"She was assumed body and soul into Heaven; and her tomb was found empty." (2)</p> <p>Mary and the saints with her intercede for us with Jesus and through His power miracles or messages may occur.</p> <p>There are no dead saints—all are alive and all the saints commune with each other as the one true church. (2)</p>
Icons	No Icons God does not share His power or glory; we cannot communicate with the saints and ask them to help us	Called "Windows to heaven" they are part of the "Divine Liturgy"— Parishioners "venerate" by making the sign of the cross, bowing and kissing icons to pass on respect to saints who still intercede for us.
Theosis or Deification	None	A mystical union with God. Each Christian is involved in a movement toward God which is known as theosis or deification. (1) The Orthodox church understands theosis as a [true] union with the energies of God and not with the essence of God. (2)
Original Sin	All men are born sinful--guilty of the same sin as Adam and Eve: rebellion against God. Human nature is corrupted by evil and the penalty for sin is death.	Mankind doesn't inherit the guilt of Adam's sin, we only inherit Adam's punishment—death. Sin violates the human conscience and the law of God; individuals are responsible for their own sins.
Chrismation	Confirmation (in some denominations).	Includes the renunciation of false teachings and teachers—any beliefs prior to choosing the EO church. The Holy Chrism is prepared from oil and other fragrant essences, which symbolize the variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit that the chrismated Christian receives.....Through the administration of the sacrament of Chrismation, the baptized receive gifts (charismata) that are transmitted to them by the Holy Spirit. (1)

1. Understanding the Sacraments
goarch.org

2. St. Nektarios.org