



While Archie Was Sleeping

There has been a massive cultural shift while Archie was sleeping. Archie is stretching, yawning and rubbing his eyes in a world where religious extremism is running rampant...

Imagine Archie Bunker going to sleep while watching an episode of *Leave it to Beaver*, *Ozzie and Harriet* or *Gilligan's Island*. Archie is just now waking up, decades later, in January 2005. Dizzying disorientation does not even begin to describe his confusion as he attempts to make sense of 21st century America.

The house Archie went to sleep in is now worth 10 to 20 times as much as it was before he dozed off in his easy chair. When he finds out about the skyrocketing value of real estate Archie will be delighted, but when he finds out how much tickets cost for a Yankee, Knicks, Mets or Rangers game, he will blow a gasket. Wait till he finds out how much the Yankees are paying a kid named A-Rod who was born while Archie was sleeping!

Then there's the television he was watching when he started his decades-long snooze. The same television set is now showing graphic sex and violence that would never have made it past network censors when he went to sleep, and it now broadcasts language that Archie used to hear (and use) only *outside* of his home.

Religious Confusion and Change

Perhaps no change confronts Archie as great as the confusing world of religion. Back in Archie's day almost everybody was either a Catholic, Protestant or Jew. Sure, you heard about and occasionally met a Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witness or a Mormon, and you might have seen a Muslim or Buddhist when you were shopping, but they all seemed to be distinct minorities.

Archie will be shocked when he discovers New York City, 2005, is populated with people who dropped into the 21st century western world from impoverished and disadvantaged places. In Archie's *new* New York City, over 200 languages are spoken. Religions without any common foundation in the Judeo-Christian worldview are proliferating. There has been a massive cultural shift while

Archie was sleeping. Archie is stretching, yawning and rubbing his eyes in a world where religious extremism is running rampant, rising out of the fertile breeding ground of religious legalism.

In the United States, before Archie's big sleep, religion and war were thought of as separate. But Archie is waking up to learn about 9-11, terrorism, jihad, Iraq, Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. The new world Archie now lives in includes the United States as a target in a bitter religious war in which its adversary often ritualistically beheads Christian and Jewish hostages.

Religious warfare and hatred, like religious legalism, is all about intimidation and fear. It's all about command and control. The claims of either side notwithstanding, the war that officially started on 9-11 is a war against God, not about God. It's a religious war in which God's name is invoked in vain.

Some Things Never Change

While America has never, until now, faced religious warfare on our shores, there is much that has not changed in the world of religion (I define religion as any belief system or faith that promises God's blessings in return for human efforts and performance).

Religious legalism, as it has from the beginning of human history, continues to be a growth industry, thriving while it enslaves and imprisons people everywhere. *Bad News Religion* has an amazing power to adapt and change its form and appearance, willing to accommodate itself to changing human culture so that it may continue to deceive and ensnare. While Archie was sleeping that kind of religion has not changed—if anything, it has grown and become more virulent and toxic.

Religion, as opposed to authentic, biblically-based Christianity, convinces humans that if only they do, accomplish, perform and produce more and more, and try harder, then eventually God will be pleased and appeased.



Invite Greg to Speak

Would you like to have Greg Albrecht, host of *Plain Truth* radio and editor-in-chief of *Plain Truth* magazine, speak at your church or conference?

Greg's lively, down-to-earth presentations are Christ-centered and based solely upon God's amazing grace. He has a limited number of travel dates available so if you and your group are interested in having him visit, please let us know as soon as possible!

Your request needs to include:

- A description of the event.
- An explanation of how you would like Greg to participate, including specifics about topics you would like him to present and the time for presentation/sermon/study.
- The proposed date or dates (please note if your dates are flexible and give preferences).
- Information and background about your church/organization/study group.
- Contact information including the name, address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address of the responsible party organizing your event.
- The name of the closest airport(s) and the distance from that airport(s) to the event.
- How you propose helping to offset the costs of Greg's travel expenses.

Send your letter to:
Executive Director
Plain Truth Ministries
Pasadena, CA 91129
or use the form at
www.ptm.org/INVITE
and submit your request online.

Authentic Christianity proclaimed by the gospel of Jesus Christ is unique from all religions in that it rejects the notion that humans must save themselves by their production of good deeds.

Religious legalism often masquerades as Christianity, but is a counterfeit. *Bad News Religion* knows no limitations—it is a virus that infects humans everywhere. Its deadly impact is clearly seen in the actions of radical Muslims, particularly those who favor the intolerant Sunni sect of Wahabbi.

Extreme Religion

The virus of *Bad News Religion* knows no boundaries. Consider the Rolling Baba of India. Fifty-five-year-old Ludkan Baba (the Rolling Saint) performs penance as he attempts to liberate his soul from the endless cycle of reincarnation—birth, death and rebirth. In a world where North Americans speak of high risk athletic endeavors as extreme sports, this Holy Roller is an example of extreme religion.

The Rolling Baba is a Hindu ascetic (also called a sadhu) who turns himself over and over, tumbling down roads and paths for hours on end. In the last 19 years he has rolled thousands of miles. In his quest to be released from the prison of reincarnation, the sadhu believes he must abstain from and reject the comforts of life and subject himself to rigor, suffering and pain instead.

The Rolling Baba turns himself over and over again, twisting and gyrating through cow dung, mud, potholes and rotting garbage. Ironically, he believes that his works and deeds will eventually free him from the grip of reincarnation, but his legalistic solution is simply another religious trap that controls and enslaves him.

Somewhat like televangelists familiar to American audiences, the Rolling Baba attracts those who believe he can heal them. However, in lieu of contrivances such as holy laughter, barking, snake handling or being slain in the spirit, the

sadhu administers healing rites using a peacock-feather broom and holy ashes.

After finishing five hours of morning rolling, the Rolling Baba often takes a mid-day break, sitting in a chair under a shade tree to receive the sick and disabled who gather at his feet.

Not unlike some American televangelist healers, he often makes a swooshing sound after touching the bodies of the sick, as if to say that he is destroying the disease and blowing it away. The spectacle employs common elements with religious faith healing events in other cultures, including carnival showmanship and hoopla that appropriates the name of Jesus Christ.

Good News!

None of this is good news for the just revived Archie Bunker. More religion under any name or label means more pain, heartache, abuse and bondage. When Archie went to sleep, his world was filled with bigotry and hatred, with Archie being a humorous prime example. But now Archie awakens to even more judgmentalism, intolerance, bigotry and hatred, which in turn spawn suffering, warfare and death.

The bad news is that religion seeks to control and enslave. The good news is that Jesus Christ came to save us and set us free from any and all religion, even religion that uses his name. Freedom in Christ is a narrow road that comparatively few find, but it is a road that leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14).

You have a choice—religious wars or the peace of God. You can be free from the inordinate and never-ending demands of religion. In Christ you can be at peace, and you can find rest. This year is a good time to resolve to reject religion and all of its pills, potions and prescriptions. Come to the only One who can give you rest, and in whom you can find peace (Matthew 11:28-30). □

—Greg Albrecht