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The Top Ten Religious Changes of the Past Millennium
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This past millennium has seen many changes in the religions of the world. Here are my choices for the Top Ten most important religious developments of the millennium

1) The first important development of this millennium was "no change," that Christ did NOT return to bring the New Heavens and the New Earth in 1000 AD. Many Christians had believed that God's reign in the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth had begun with Christ's first appearance on earth. That meant that the 1000-year reign should have ended at the end of the first millennium. It took over a century to rethink Christian theology to address this problem.

2) During its first millennium, the Christian Church officially considered itself to be a single organization. But in 1054, the Catholic Church of the western Mediterranean and the Orthodox Church of the Eastern Mediterranean excommunicated each other, thus creating the first division in the church.

3) Buddhism entered Tibet around the turn of the millennium and was willingly adopted over the next couple centuries. This led to a flowering of Buddhist thought, practice and commitment, which continued until the Chinese capture of Tibet this century. Despite this, Tibetan Buddhism continues in exile, led by the Dalai Lama and other lamas.

4) The European Crusades to free the Holy Land from the Moslems during the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries gave Christianity and Islam their first look at each other. Each was seen by the other as warlike and brutal—images which remain today. In contrast, each side adopted aspects of the other's culture, with the West learning from the Moslems medicine, the use of spices in cooking, and Greek philosophy.

5) The spread of Islam eastwards into India brought Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism into close contact for many centuries. The Islamic-led Delhi and Mughal kingdoms not only reshaped many aspects of Islam and Hinduism, but also led to the near extinction of Buddhism in India, the land of its origin. The kingdoms also enabled the movement of Islam into the South Pacific, where Indonesia is now the world's most populous Moslem nation.

6) The discovery of the Americas gave European Christians the sudden realization that two whole continents

existed that were not only unknown but not even hinted at in Scripture. North America provided fertile ground for Protestant beliefs and practices. Of course, the settlement of the Americas brought about the destruction of the religions of the Incas, the Aztecs, the Mayans, and many North American tribes.

7) Missionary activities have been part of many religions from their earliest beginnings. But the nineteenth century saw a major increase in Christian missions around the world. Since then, the Christian world has received missionaries from other religions, most prominently Buddhism and Islam. Because of this, Islam is actually the fastest-growing religion not only in the world, but also in the United States itself.

8) Having been banished by the Romans from Jerusalem in the first century, the Jews began to return in large numbers to Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century. They established an independent country, Israel, at the end of World War 2.

9) The so-called "New Age Religions" began to develop towards the end of this millennium. Their primary feature is the borrowing of elements from different religious traditions. These religions include organized ones such as the Unification Church ("the Moonies"), the Native American Church, Theosophy, as well as more personal and individual ones.

10) The Nazi Holocaust against the Jews in World War 2 was unfortunately only one of many attempts to wipe out a religion by killing its members. It was one of the most successful, however, killing more than 7 million Jews and eliminating Europe as an important center of Jewish religion and culture. This disaster became an important impetus for international debate about and emphasis on the importance of religious tolerance and the limits of religious exclusivity.