

The challenge of religion in the '80s

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by [Jürgen Moltmann](#)

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* HISTORY doesn't depend on dates. Nor does it parcel itself out in decades, each with a neat label for easy identification. Talk about "the '60s," "the '70s" or "the '80s" doesn't even come close to an understanding of the actual experience of history. Nevertheless, people depend on dates — to order history and to organize events. And we stop at the end of a decade to take stock, to ask: How did we get here? Where do we go from here?

Our evaluation of the events of the past ten years is irrevocably influenced by which side of the fence we were on in the '60s. But no matter which side people were on, they describe that decade in ways that are remarkably similar. After the outbreak of hope, after the awakening of new life styles in almost every area of life in the years following 1960, after the decade of promise and possibility, we met in the

not — that the challenge of secularization to Christianity has disappeared. Christianity is now challenged by a revitalization of religion. Those critics of the church who had reckoned with a "death of religion" (Marx, Lenin) miscalculated. Those who had hoped for a "religionless Christianity" (Bonhoeffer) were disappointed. Those who proclaimed that "God is dead" now learn to fear the god of Ayatollah Khomeini.

The Search for Religious Experience

There is a strong tendency in the secular world view to demand the sacrifice of all other religious drives to its own belief in progress. But the more the secular belief in progress — be it capitalistic, socialistic or positivistic — thrives on the crises it creates for itself, the more strongly do religious passions surface

In April 1980, Jürgen Moltmann contributed to the *Christian Century's* How My Mind has Changed series. In celebration of his life and his many contributions, we present this article from the archives. [Click here](#) to read it.