McLoughlin has observed that amidst the "decadence" of some of America’s churches and some of her religious beliefs a "third-force," consisting of the so-called "fundamentalist" churches whose membership has increased 500 to 700 percent over the past twenty years, is bringing new religious vitality to the scene (while the more "traditional" churches have increased only 75 to 90 percent). He adds, "... I think it could be said that the third-force is no longer solidly Protestant, but a pluralistic combination of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, all of whom are now part of the pietistic American culture system."

Berger has declared that the churches may become captive institutions submerged in a culture religion identified with the "American Way of Life," the public schools being the agency in which this politically established "culture religion" is taught. Langdon Gilkey argues that contemporary Protestant theology, if it is not dominated by "civil religion," has many secular roots, and that Protestantism is evolving toward secularism.

Because education tends to debunk the myths on which religion feeds, as O'Dea appears to see it, "Genuine religious experience issuing in authentic faith and wholeness of spirit and combining with contemporary relevance has become increasingly rare and difficult. Consequently, this age lacks relevant religious exemplars." He adds, "In a world that cries out for authentic transcendence and genuine community, the trumpets of conventional religiosity give forth sounds of uncertainty," and, "Some men avoid the contemporary religious crisis by relying upon an enlightened and sophisticated common sense . . . , they leave questioning to those whom they consider esoteric and impractical . . . . Other men stay within the safe confines of academic disciplines and professional pursuits."

Marty expresses similar concern for man’s too often futile search for spiritual meaning in pluralistic and secular America. Novak joins the chorus:

... Alasdair MacIntyre opened his review of Honest to God with one memorable sentence, "What is striking about Dr. Robinson’s book is first and foremost that he is an atheist," and closed it with another,

15 Ibid., p. 51.
19 Ibid., pp. 131-132.