an external force such as hostile foreign power. Also, cultural transition; where religion provides support and a sense of community for ethnic groups such as migrants to a different country and culture. Herberg describes this in his study of religion and immigration to the USA. Also, Berger has changed his views and now argues that diversity and choice actually stimulate the interest and participation in religion. For example, the growth of evangelicalism in Latin America and the New Christian Right in the USA point to the continuing vitality of religion, not its decline. Also, although Beckford acknowledges that religious diversity will lead some to question or abandon their religious beliefs, this is not inevitable. Opposing views can strengthen a religious group’s commitment to its existing beliefs rather than undermining them. Therefore, it could be argued that secularisation is not happening, and religion is remaining stable, or even growing.

On the other hand, other sociologists do not believe that secularisation is occurring, but rather than religion is just changing. The boom in New Religious Movements in all their forms has led to a large number of people adopting lifestyles advocated in many New Age Philosophies. Luckmann argued that people can now ‘shop around’ for a religious form of expression, and therefore religion is still popular, it is just simply changing with diversity. Also, some sociologists argue that a ‘spiritual revolution’ is taking place today, in which traditional Christianity is giving way to New Age beliefs and practices that emphasises personal development. Increased interest in spirituality can be seen in the growth of a ‘spiritual market’ with an explosion in the number of books about self-help and spirituality, and the many practitioners who offer courses and therapies, ranging from meditation to crystal healing. In their study of Kendal in Cumbria, Heelas and Woodhead investigated whether traditional religion has declined, and if so, how far the growth of spirituality is compensating for this. They found that in 2000, 7.9% of the population attended church and 1.6% took part in activities of the holistic milieu. However, the traditional churches were losing support. Although fewer were involved in the holistic milieu, it was growing. They offer an explanation for these trends. New Age spirituality has grown because of a massive subjective turn in today’s culture. This involves a shift away from the idea of doing your duty to exploring your inner self. As a result traditional religions, which demand duty and obedience, are declining. Evangelical churches are more successful than traditional churches. They both demand discipline and duty, but this emphasises the importance of spiritual healing and personal growth. However, this view is faulty. Heelas and Woodhead argue that a spiritual revolution has not taken place. Although the holistic milieu has grown in popularity since the 1970s, its growth has not compensated for the decline of traditional religion. They therefore conclude that secularisation is occurring in Britain, because the subjective turn has undermined the basis of traditional religion.

Overall, it is clear that religion has changed dramatically from the mid-19th century, and that religion is declining in importance, popularity and influence on society. The greatest cause of this decline is modernism and the increase in rational thinking.