

Most people tend to view other religions in one of three incompatible ways:

Exclusivists regard their own faith tradition as the only completely true religion. Other religions might have elements of truth in them -- beliefs arrived at either by accident, or by observing nature, or by following their conscience. But they are largely false, and are often viewed as rivals to the one true religion.

Exclusivism is probably the most common belief among devout Christians in the U.S. One indication of this comes from a 1995 poll showed that only 21% of churchgoers regarded Islam as having a positive impact on society. Only 21% felt that Buddhism had a positive effect.

Inclusivists, like exclusivists regard their own faith tradition as the only completely true religion. They do not view other religions as wrong; they are seen to "reflect aspects of, or to constitute approaches to, that final truth." Other religions are thus viewed as incomplete or partially developed faiths.

Religious Pluralism: Religions are all legitimate, valid, and true -- when viewed from within their particular culture.

(This is a normative conception of pluralism, a statement of how religious diversity should be evaluated. The definitions of inclusivism and exclusivism above are also normative statements of the same sort, but they assert different evaluations of religious diversity)

“Just as scientists acknowledge that their theories may be incomplete or inaccurate, many religious pluralists claim that members of other faiths are searching for the same truths in different ways, and that all religious knowledge is limited by human fallibility. This level of pluralism does not preclude holding

one's own ideas or participating in the rituals or spiritual life of one particular religion or community; rather, such worshipers practice according to their own traditions, ideas, and community norms while recognizing the validity of a host of other practices or interpretations.”

“Adherents of religious pluralism, in this sense of the term, reject religious relativism. They do not believe that all religions are absolutely and equally true. The reason is that they recognize that different religions make certain claims that logically contradict each other.”

Source: <http://www.answers.com/topic/religious-pluralism>

Some consider religious pluralism and religious diversity to be synonyms; That is, pluralism is a simple recognition of the fact that there are many different faith groups.

This is a non-normative statement, implying no evaluation.

Source: <http://www.religioustolerance.org/>