

What's your Facebook profile religious view? Why?

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We had an interesting discussion in my Faith and Leadership class this week. We're reading Diana Butler Bass's book [Christianity After Religion](#), and one of my students asked this as a response question for class discussion:

Chapter 2 discusses how people "deeply committed to Christianity" often dislike labeling themselves directly as "Christian." What does your **Facebook profile** say about your faith/religious views? Why did you choose the wording or label that you did?

I found the ensuing short conversation fascinating and, perhaps, revealing possibilities for future research areas.

First, of the students who shared, all had some sort of **careful reasoning behind why they did chose the Facebook religion label that they did**. This was not some off-the-cuff decision, but a thoughtful negotiation of Facebook as a platform to construct and manage identity. (This recalls some of Sherry Turkle's research presented in [Alone Together](#), though Turkle addresses bands' likes and photos rather than religious identity, if my memory serves me.)

Secondly, we talked a lot about *audience awareness*. Students mentioned how their Facebook religious view had something to do with **what people would think** about their religious view or lack thereof, how others would interpret it. Relatedly, Bass notes this is sort of a recurring theme in recent Christianity — folks searching for a label or a language to claim identity without being lumped in with all Christians. So, they say they're a "Jesus follower." Or, as one student appreciated, "an apprentice of Jesus."

Finally, it was interesting to hear that some students simply claimed their denominational affiliation, while for others it's exactly **denominational Christianity that they're hoping to move beyond**.

Why does this matter? Well, it makes me wonder about future research possibilities, for one. How might one go about cataloging what young adults hope to communicate by their Facebook religious views? How do their Facebook religious views connect to their religious views expressed elsewhere—such as on college admissions forms or surveys?

I bet interviews with young adults about why they chose the Facebook religion views they do would be revealing, but not in any simply “who believes what” sort of way. They’d show how young adults—or any group, for that matter—use new media to communicate complex religious matters with cultural sophistication.

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Religion:

Jesus

Description:

Jesus Christ
2,969 like this

Political Views:

Description:

Jesus is Lord
7,081 like this

Jesus Freak
5,782 like this

Jesus loves me
1,711 like this

Jesus Follower
1,218 like this

Jesus Rocks!
855 like this

Jesus is the Way
569 like this

Black Jesus
1,103 like this

Jesus is my savior not my religion
561 like this

Jesus Christ is my Savior
1,014 like this

Jesus

ways religion and new
; “Jesus” into my

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How do you claim a religious view on Facebook? What's in your mind as you do?

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