

Chapter 2

Google My Religion: Unraveling the Gordian Knot of Religious, Moral, and Political Entanglement

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All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man's life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom.

—Albert Einstein

Prologue “One word: Google. The questions have always been at hand, but now the answers are within our grasp,” said former Pentecostal preacher Jerry DeWitt who became an atheist after 25 years of pastoral services [1]. Notwithstanding the know-it-all reputation of Google Search, cognitive psychologist Tom Stafford has cautioned that “the Internet can give us the illusion of knowledge, making us think we are smarter than we really are” [2]. Is it possible to unravel the Gordian knot of religious, moral, and political entanglement?

2.1 Book of Genesis and Theory of Relativity

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” is the first verse in the Book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh) and the Christian Old Testament (see Fig. 2.1) [3]. Similarly, the Quran proclaims that “Surely your Lord is none other than Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.” (Surah Al-A’raf 7:54) [4].

Whether the 6-day creation story is a fable or the truth alluding to time dilation in Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity (see Fig. 2.2), the Bible and the Quran—sharing the same root as an Abrahamic religion—are undoubtedly amongst the

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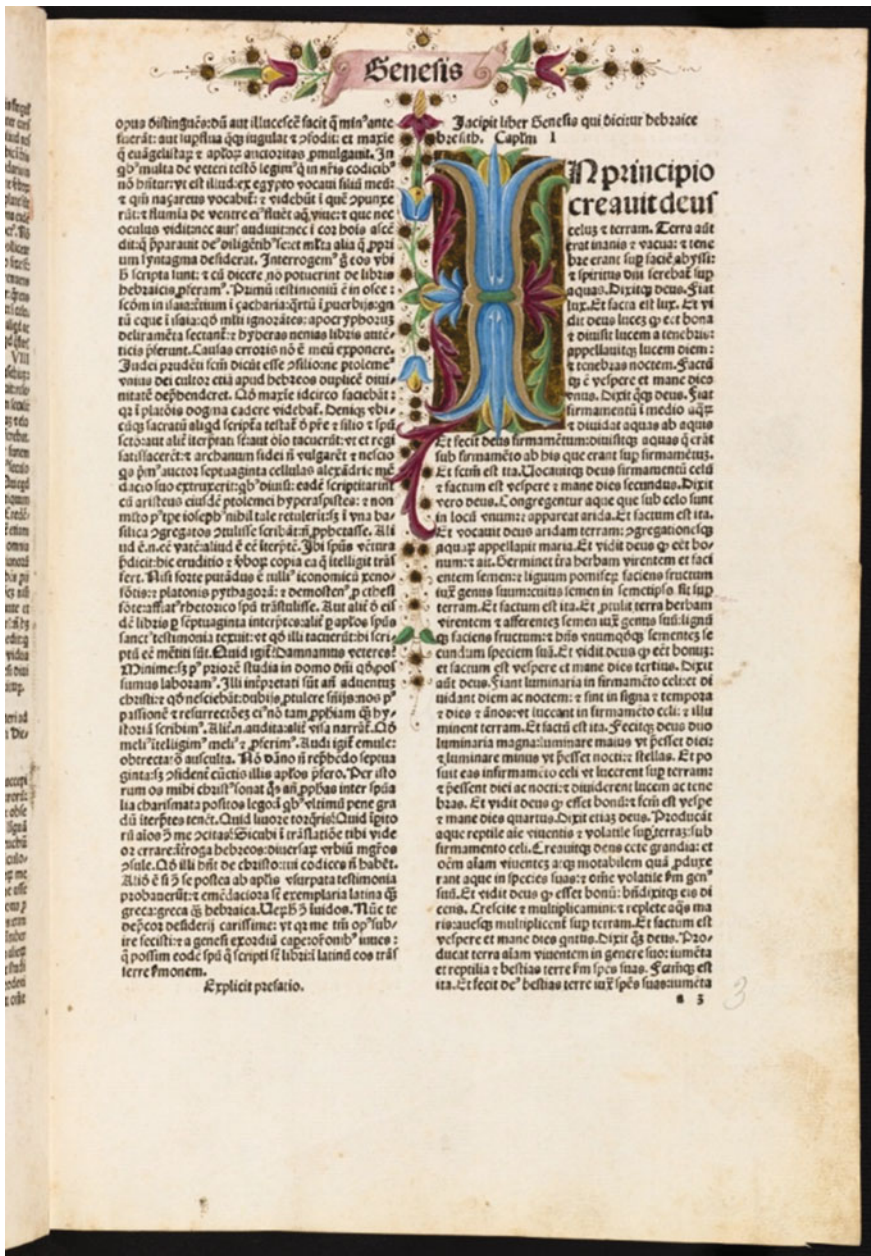


Fig. 2.1 “In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram” on the first page of Genesis in a Latin bible dated 1481 (Courtesy of Bodleian Library and licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license)

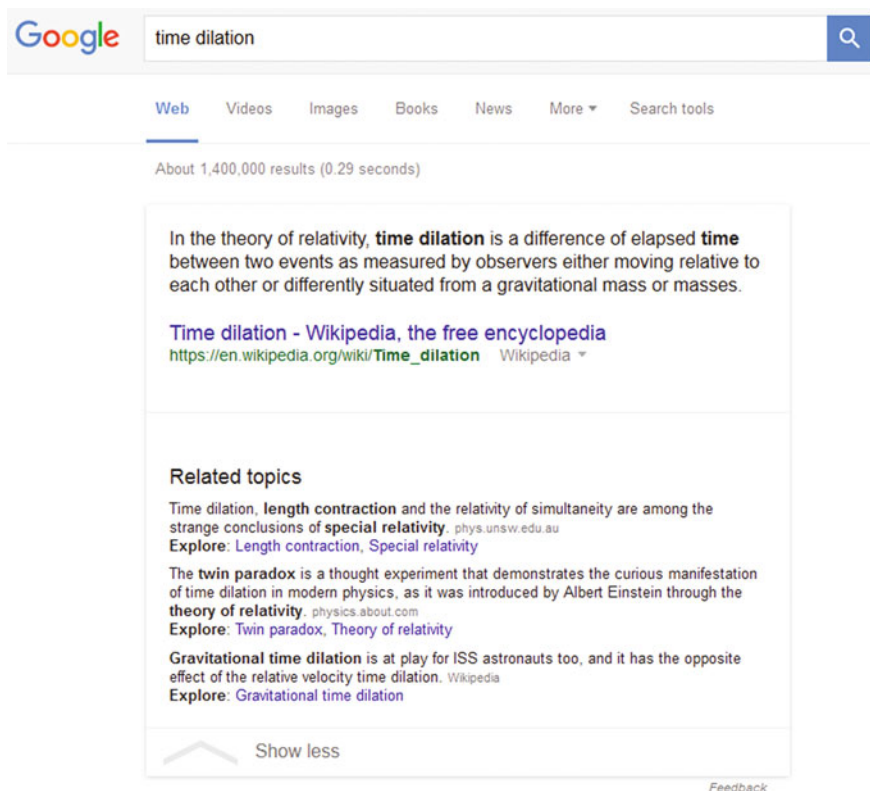


Fig. 2.2 Google Search on “time dilation” returns a Knowledge Graph definition from Wikipedia: “In the theory of relativity, time dilation is a difference of elapsed time between two events as measured by observers either moving relative to each other or differently situated from a gravitational mass or masses.”

most profound and influential books ever written. The best known Abrahamic religions are Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahá’í Faith (see Fig. 2.3). Boston University professor emeritus Peter Berger sums up elegantly in his article on Abrahamic faiths: “There is also common ground, I think, between morally decent people of all faiths or no faith. That common ground is humanity. Jews, Christians and Muslims, the children of Abraham, believe that this humanity is part of the creation by the one God whom they worship” [5].

In April 2015, Pew Research Center reported that 31 and 23 % of the 7 billion world population are Christians and Muslims respectively [6]. In other words, the Bible and the Quran have touched the lives of almost 4 billion living souls worldwide among people of all ages, genders, educational levels, and socioeconomic status, regardless of whether they are devoted or hypocritical, conservative or liberal.

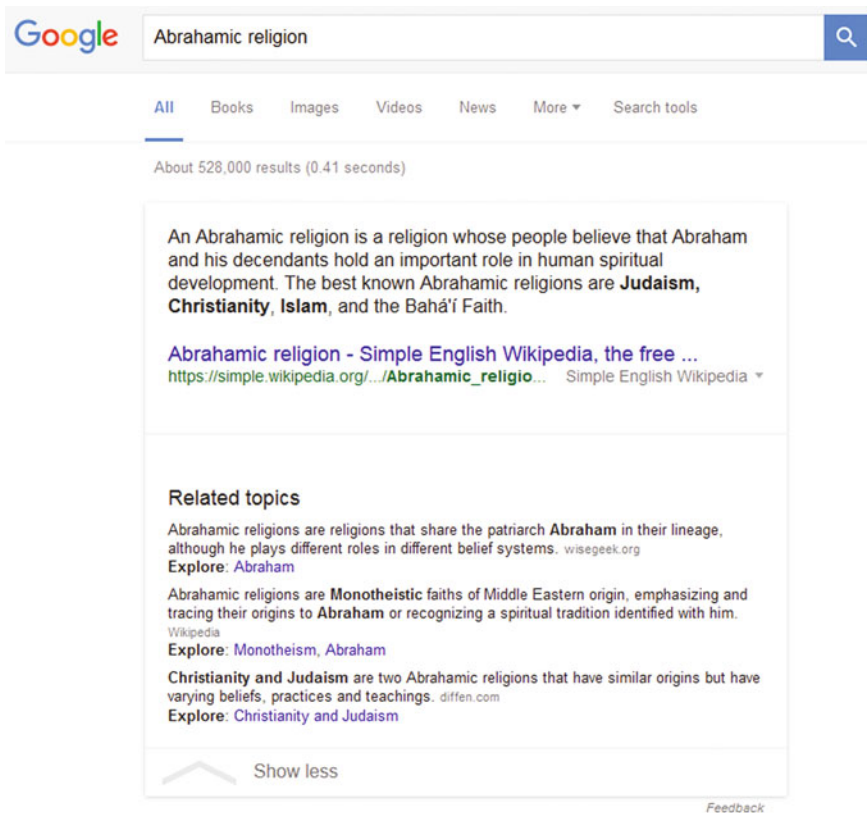


Fig. 2.3 Google Search on “Abrahamic religion” returns a Knowledge Graph definition from Wikipedia: “An Abrahamic religion is a religion whose people believe that Abraham and his descendants hold an important role in human spiritual development. The best known Abrahamic religions are Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahá’i Faith.”

Thanks to the Internet and search engines, the full text of the Bible and the Quran are now at our fingertips. Long gone are the days when the Catholic priests discouraged the believers from reading the Bible on their own for fear that they would misinterpret the Scriptures. Former Google quantitative analyst Seth Stephens-Davidowitz disclosed that the number of Google searches questioning God’s existence went up in the first half of this decade [7]. Albert Einstein acknowledged a very mysterious pantheistic God: “I see a pattern, but my imagination cannot picture the maker of that pattern. I see a clock, but I cannot envision the clockmaker. The human mind is unable to conceive of the four dimensions, so how can it conceive of a God, before whom a thousand years and a thousand dimensions are as one?” [8].

2.2 Information War and the Blame Game

Information war started in the very beginning of human history when the serpent half-deceived Eve by telling her, “You will not certainly die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4–5). So Adam and Eve both ate the forbidden fruit, and they were overcome by shame and fear:

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”
(Genesis 3:8–11)

The omniscient and omnipresent God asked Adam, “Where are you?” without exercising his omnipotence. Adam and Eve were free, living in the Garden of Eden. Instead of owning up to one’s mistakes, humanity set in motion the acrimonious blame game that is prevalent throughout human history:

The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

(Genesis 3:12–13)

The man blamed the woman, and the woman accused the serpent. An ancient Chinese proverb says that 牛不飲水, 不能按牛頭低 (you cannot push a cow’s head down to drink water). In other words, we all act according to our free will in spite of temptations and circumstances. It is easier to point fingers than to accept responsibilities. People complain about elected officials but they do not care to vote. They criticize some multinational corporations but their banks and 401K are profiting from the stocks of those companies. A modern-day serpent is anyone who disseminates misinformation and disinformation in their verisimilitude.

The Book of Job in the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament tells a story of a righteous man whose name is Job. One day, God allowed Satan to test Job by destroying all his properties and killing all ten of his children. Instead of being angry at God, Job said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised” (Job 1:21). The next day, God permitted Satan to afflict Job with painful sores from head to toe. Job’s wife said to him, “Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!” But he replied, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (Job 2:10).

Job’s ordeal calls into question the dichotomy of blessing and suffering, good and evil, and the role of God and Satan in humanity. Why would God bother to entertain Satan’s suggestions about killing Job’s ten innocent children? Could it be that the biblical author was trying to portray two sides of the same coin similar to yin and yang in Chinese philosophy? Must good and evil coexist in the universe like Jekyll

and Hyde Captain Kirk in the 1966 *Star Trek* episode “The Enemy Within”? Is there a cosmic balance between creation and destruction as evident from 100 billion stars being born and dying each year [9]?

Despite the lack of complete answers, Job accused neither God nor Satan, not himself or other people—a rare quality for a millionaire who had lost everything, and a far cry from the rich who committed murder-suicide over financial ruin [10]. Job refused to play the blame game, acknowledging and accepting that life is not fair. “We cannot change the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand,” said Prof. Randy Pausch in his “Last Lecture” at Carnegie Mellon University [11].

2.3 Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations

Notwithstanding Thomas Jefferson’s proclamation that “all men are created equal” in the 1776 U.S. Declaration of Independence (see Fig. 2.4), all men and women are *not* created equal in the literal sense unless we all share identical DNA. But even identical twins with the same DNA develop different fingerprints when the growing fetuses touch the amniotic sac in their mother’s womb. The twins can become two very different people due to upbringing, social, economic, and environmental factors. Because these external factors can vary greatly from person to person, life cannot be fair. However, unfairness builds character and brings diversity to the otherwise homogeneous and isotropic existence. Who wants to live in a world where everybody looks identical, thinks alike, and acts the same? Nature has shown us that there are at least 9,956 species of birds on earth (see Fig. 2.5) and 30,000 species of fish in the oceans (see Fig. 2.6) according to Google search results. Diversity emanates beauty.

Even though all complex organisms are preprogrammed by their DNAs, they can exhibit individuality within the confines of nature. Mahatma Gandhi once said that “no two leaves are alike” [12]. Human DNA consists of about 3 billion bases, and more than 99 % of those bases are the same in all people [13]. Yet, each person is a unique manifestation of God. The commonality that unites all human beings is that we are created in the image of God: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27). However, the image of God is not singular, but plural: “The LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us...’” (Genesis 3:22). One God, multiple manifestations—in both the spiritual realm and the physical world—just as Albert Einstein wrote about the wave-particle duality of light: “It seems as though we must use sometimes the one theory and sometimes the other, while at times we may use either. We are faced with a new kind of difficulty. We have two contradictory pictures of reality; separately neither of them fully explains the phenomena of light, but together they do” [14].

In January 2016, Spike Lee and Jada Pinkett Smith called for Oscar boycott because “for the 2nd consecutive year all 20 contenders under the actor category are white” [15]. American actress Stacey Dash dismissed the outrage over Oscars: “I think it’s ludicrous. We have to make up our minds. Either we want to have

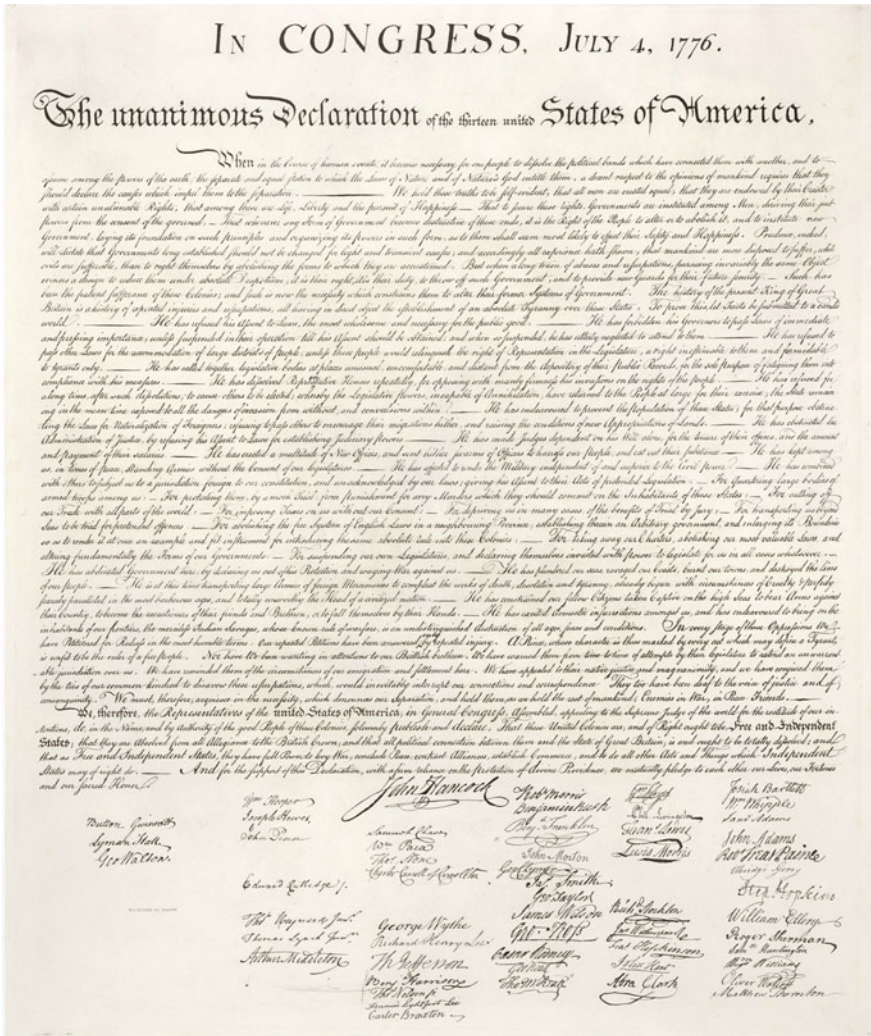


Fig. 2.4 United States Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson et al. (ratified by 56 signatories on July 4, 1776)

segregation or integration, and if we don't want segregation, then we have to get rid of channels like BETBlack Entertainment Television and the BET Awards and the Image Awards, where you're only awarded if you're black. If it were the other way around, we'd be up in arms. It's a double standard. There shouldn't be a Black History Month. We're Americans, period" [16]. A decade prior in December 2005, Oscar winner Morgan Freeman had also argued for abolishing Black History Month in an interview on CBS' 60 min: "Black History is American history. ... I'm going

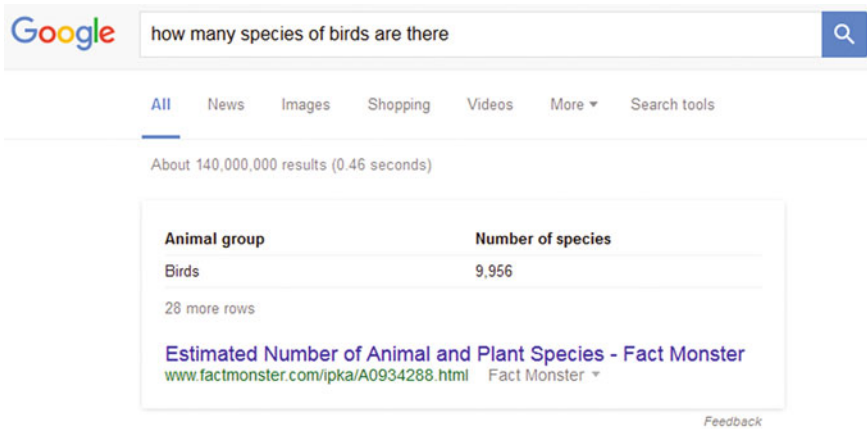


Fig. 2.5 Google search result for “how many species of birds are there”

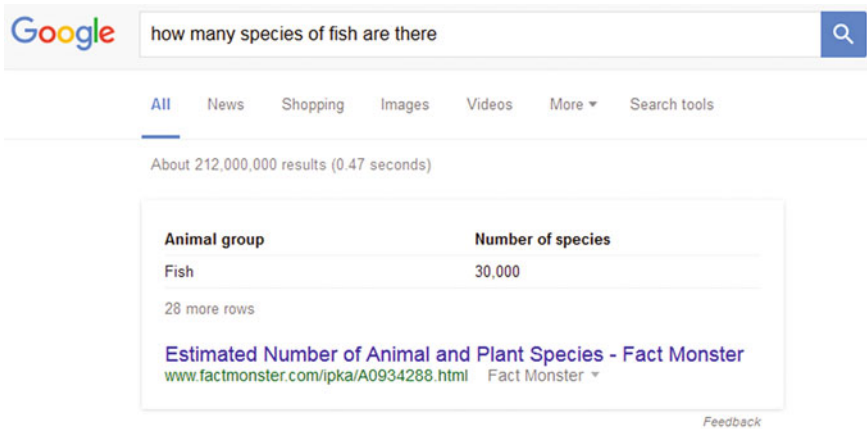


Fig. 2.6 Google search result for “how many species of fish are there”

to stop calling you a white man. And I’m going to ask you to stop calling me a black man. I know you as Mike Wallace, you know me as Morgan Freeman” [17].

On one hand, it is great to be inclusive without discrimination or prejudice. On the other hand, it is wonderful to celebrate diversity and uniqueness. Otherwise, where should we draw the line after getting rid of Black History Month? What about National Hispanic Heritage Month, Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month, Women’s History Month, LGBT Pride Month, and many others that serve to raise awareness of diverse contributions to society? Instead of abolishing them, we should add a new Human Heritage Month to remind the world that we are human beings and not some savage animals.

Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry said, “If man is to survive, he will have learned to take a delight in the essential differences between men and between cultures. He will learn that differences in ideas and attitudes are a delight, part of life’s exciting variety, not something to fear” [18]. In the *Star Trek* episode “Is There in Truth No Beauty?” (1968), Roddenberry and writer Jean Lisette Aroeste introduced the notion of IDIC (Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations) [19]:

Dr. Miranda Jones (Diana Muldaur): [regarding the Vulcan IDIC] I understand, Mr. Spock. The glory of creation is in its infinite diversity.

Mr. Spock (Leonard Nimoy): And the ways our differences combine, to create meaning and beauty.

Mr. Spock is admired by Trekkies for his Vulcan logic and superior intelligence. In the 1987 seminal book *The Society of Mind*, MIT Prof. Emeritus Marvin Minsky described human intelligence as a result of diverse processes: “What magical trick makes us intelligent? The trick is that there is no trick. The power of intelligence stems from our vast diversity, not from any single, perfect principle” [20]. A few musical notes can morph into countless new songs, and a small set of vocabulary can create a congeries of poems. Infinite diversity in infinite combinations.

2.4 Questioning One’s Religion

“We’re long on search,” said Marissa Mayer, Google’s first female engineer and Yahoo’s sixth CEO. “Search is curiosity, and that will never be done” [21].

Figure 2.7 shows the average monthly Google searches on major religious keywords in the year 2015 from January to December, topping 12 million queries in September. The individual keywords in descending number of searches were Jesus, Bible, Islam, Quran, angel, God, Pope Francis, Allah, Heaven, religion, Muslim, Christ, Hell, Satan, Devil, church, Christian, prayer, and Catholic. About 0.1 % of the 11.1 billion Google searches in December 2015 were religious queries listed above [22].

Figure 2.8 is a January 2016 snapshot of the Google search autocomplete predictions showing the most popular searches related to “Bible is.” “Bible is fake” tops the list of Google searches, followed by the opposite “Bible is the word of God.” Google search autocomplete predictions are good indicators of the current trends and states of mind for about 250 million unique visitors every month [23]. The autocomplete predictions are generated by a fully automated algorithm based on [24]:

- (a) how often others have searched for a word; and
- (b) the range of information available on the web.

Google search can drastically transform one’s life forever, especially when it comes to religious beliefs and world views that aim to explain the meaning of life. “Seek, and ye shall find” (Matthew 7:7). Questioning one’s religion can lead to a complete hundred and eighty degree turn. Morten Storm switched sides from being a radical Islamist in the al Qaeda organization to assisting the Danish intelligence

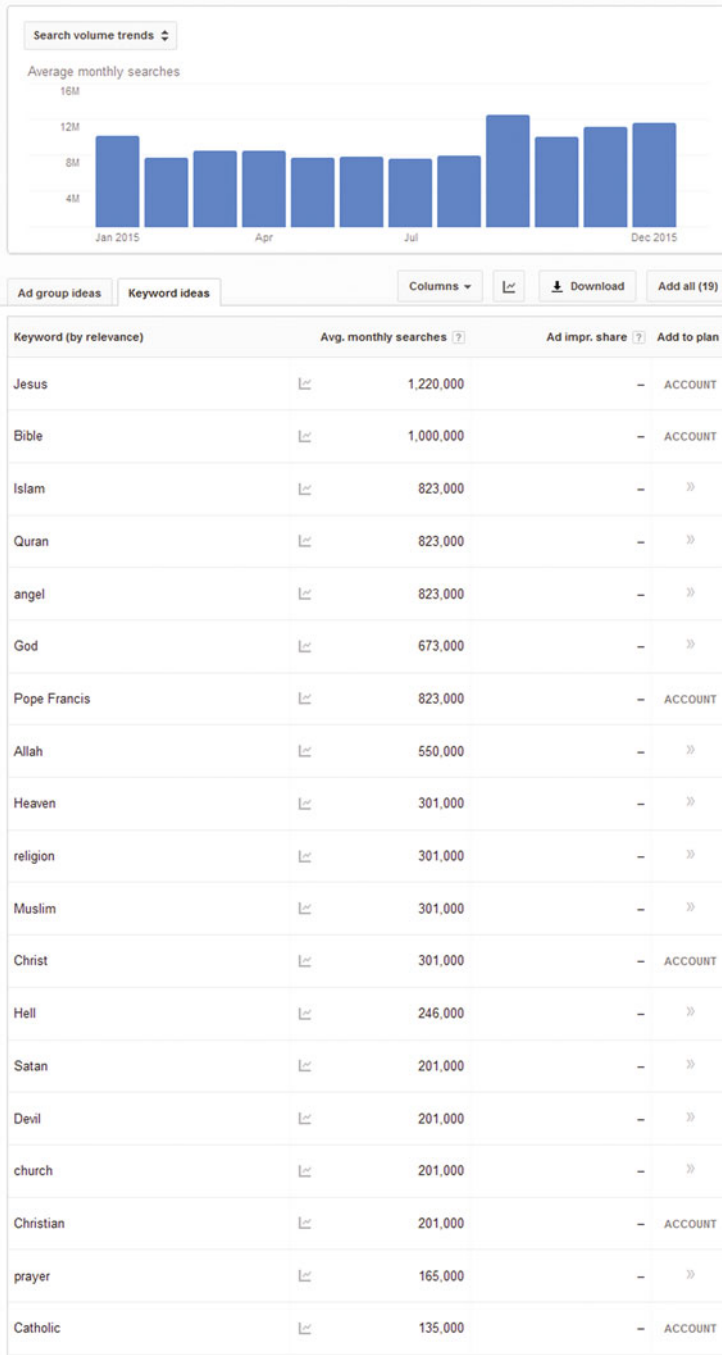
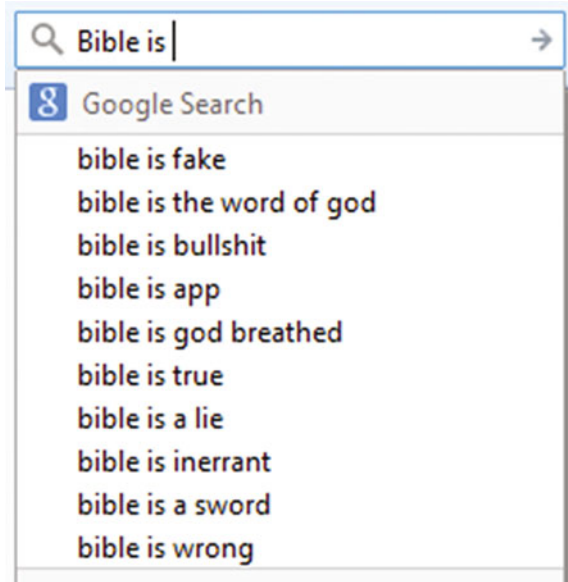


Fig. 2.7 Average monthly Google searches on major religious keywords from January to December 2015, topping 12 million queries in September

Fig. 2.8 Google search autocomplete predictions for “Bible is” (as of January 2016)



agency and the CIA fight the war on terror. Storm credited his change of heart on his laptop computer: “I hit the ‘enter’ and I saw plenty of websites talking about contradictions in the Quran. It took some time to research them, but once I concluded that they were genuinely contradictions, that’s when it wiped totally away my faith. That’s when I stopped being a Muslim in my heart – in my belief” [25]. By losing his religion, he has found God.

In the CNN documentary “Atheists: Inside the World of Non-Believers” aired in March 2015, former Pentecostal preacher Jerry DeWitt recalled how he became an atheist after 25 years of pastoral services: “One word: Google. The questions have always been at hand, but now the answers are within our grasp.” David Silverman of American Atheists elaborated, “Religion is factually wrong. As a result, religion lives on ignorance of facts. The reason people are giving up on mythology is the Internet, and the access to information it represents. When religion can exist in a bubble, the lies it pushes cannot be challenged. But when there is a wealth of information at the fingertips of every believer, those lies can be refuted easily, from multiple sources and multiple perspectives.” And Humanist Chaplain Greg Epstein at Harvard University added, “People are learning more about science.” [1].

2.5 Religion and Science

Are religion and science at odds with each other? Not so according to Albert Einstein. In the November 1930 issue of the *New York Times Magazine*, Einstein wrote, “For science can only ascertain what is, but not what should be, and outside

of its domain value judgments of all kinds remain necessary. Religion, on the other hand, deals only with evaluations of human thought and action: it cannot justifiably speak of facts and relationships between facts. According to this interpretation the well-known conflicts between religion and science in the past must all be ascribed to a misapprehension of the situation which has been described. ... Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind” [26].

Einstein believed that religion and science could coexist without being at odds with one another, in spite of the religious zealots and the gung-ho atheists being constantly at war with each other. *Salon* writer Peter Birkenhead ingeniously summarized the age-old heated debates on God: “The fundamentalists cultivate something like a sulky teenager’s romanticized notion of love, and the atheists a grumpy old bugger’s lack of belief in such nonsense” [27].

According to the second law of thermodynamics, the sum of the entropies of the participating bodies must increase. Yet, living organisms seem to exhibit a deliberate anti-entropic force that hints at “by design” rather than “by chance.” Electrons, black holes, Higgs boson (aka god particle), and gravitational waves all exist, even though we cannot “see” them with our naked eyes. Ruling out the existence of God is as unscientific as believing in God. Religion and science are not enemies. Creationism and Darwinism are not necessarily contradictory; they each have an answer to the age-old catch-22 question “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” (see Fig. 2.9) Only closed-minded people are the adversaries of truth.

Since Albert Einstein published his theory of photoelectric effect in 1905 and his general theory of relativity in 1915, it took some 100 years for scientists to take the first-ever photograph of light as both a particle and wave in February 2015 [28] and to detect gravitational waves as they ripple through spacetime in September 2015 [29]. It will take more time to scientifically prove the existence of God and to resolve the seeming contradictions in the Bible.

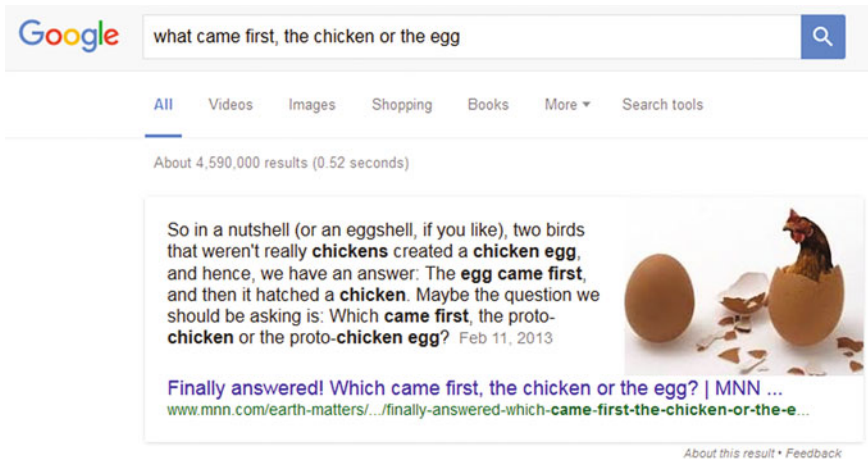


Fig. 2.9 Google Search on “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” returns a Knowledge Graph with a new question “Which came first, the proto-chicken or the proto-chicken egg?”

University of Sheffield professor Tom Stafford wrote in a BBC News article that “the Internet is giving new fuel to the way we’ve always thought. It can be both a cause of overconfidence, when we mistake the boundary between what we know and what is available to us over the web, and it can be a cause of uncertainty, when we anticipate that we’ll be fact-checked using the web on the claims we make” [2].

2.6 Religious Radicalization

In the historical drama *Agora* (2009) starring Rachel Weisz, philosophy and mathematics professor Hypatia of Alexandria was accused of witchcraft by Bishop Cyril who cited Apostle Paul’s letter to the Corinthians that women must be in submission (1 Corinthians 14:34–35) while ignoring the fact that Jesus appeared first to a woman—Mary Magdalene—after his resurrection and asked her to proclaim the good news to his disciples (John 20:11–18). Cyril deliberately misused the Scriptures in order to incite a mob to kidnap Hypatia and stone her to death (see *Mort De La Philosophe Hypatie*, by Louis Figuier in Fig. 2.10).

After the murder of Hypatia came widespread witch hunts in Europe, followed by the Crusades and a series of Inquisitions sanctioned or orchestrated by the Roman

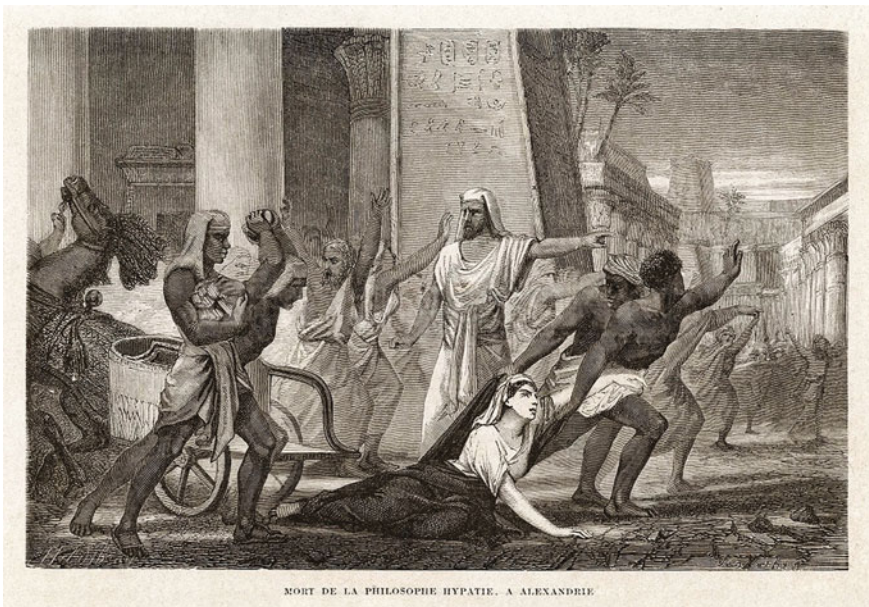


Fig. 2.10 *Mort De La Philosophe Hypatie. A Alexandria* (Death of philosopher Hypatia, in Alexandria) by Louis Figuier (1865)

Catholic Church to coerce the Jews and Muslims into a change of faith. The Christian Crusaders were essentially religious extremists and terrorists. Launched by Pope Urban II in November 1095, the series of Crusades against Muslims and pagans finally ended in 1291 with a death toll of 1 to 3 million people over a period of 197 years [30].

American University associate professor emeritus David Rodier said, “If people are intent on using religion to motivate terror or violence, they’ll find an excuse there no matter what the actual text says. Religion, after all, speaks to our most basic and ultimate convictions, and if you are wanting to use violence, if you can find a religious justification, then you can find a very powerful motivation” [31].

While al Qaeda’s long-term strategy is to “bleed America to the point of bankruptcy” [36], Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)—aka Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—claims religious, political, and military authority over all Muslims worldwide, inciting believers and pagans for an ominous apocalyptic war among 1.6 billion Muslims and 2.2 billion Christians [37]. Abraham must be rolling over in his grave.

2.7 Children in War and Peace

Innocent children are not immune to religious radicalization. Young adolescents and children are being manipulated by adults to join armed conflicts in war and terrorism as child soldiers [38]. The Children’s Crusade is a purported event in 1212 about a failed Crusade by European Christians including children to expel Muslims from the Holy Land.

In modern times, as many as 1.5 million children were killed in the Holocaust during World War II [39]. Although the 1949 Geneva Conventions and additional protocols strictly prohibit the use of children under 15 in warfare, young children have been fighting on both sides of armed conflicts. Wasil Ahmad, an 11-year-old Afghan boy, commanded a police unit of 75 men for 43 days to fight the Taliban in 2015 [40]. Kids as young as eight have been used as bombers in Pakistan [41]. A 13-year-old Nigerian girl was coerced by her father to become a suicide bomber [42]. Children as young as 10 years old patrol the streets with AK-47s in Raqqa, ISIS’ de facto capital city in Syria [43]. FBI counterterrorism chief Michael Steinbach told CNN that ISIS had been targeting and recruiting American children as young as 15 in the United States [44].

Hollywood has depicted children being used as leverage in counterterrorism. In the TV show *24* (season 2, episode 12), Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) extracted information from a terrorist detainee by forcing him to watch a live streaming video of the execution of his child. Bauer gave his order to the executioner, “Start with the oldest son. If it’s not successful, move on to his younger son.” Then Bauer turned to the detainee and said, “Tell me where the bomb is, or I’ll kill your son. I know you think what you’re doing is right. But it’s my job to not let it happen. Please don’t let me do this.” Bauer finally managed to break the terrorist by staging a fake execution

of his oldest son. “Tell me where the bomb is, and I’ll spare the rest of your family.” In *Homeland* (season 3, episode “Tin Man is Down”), Peter Quinn (Rupert Friend) assassinated a terrorist but accidentally killed the target’s young son during the mission. Quinn subsequently used that incident (by pretending it was not an accident) to threaten a corrupted banker with the lives of his young children. The banker subsequently complied with Quinn’s demand to hand over the terrorists’ financial records to the CIA.

In sad reality, terrorists could care less about children, as Council on Foreign Relations analyst Ed Husain explained: “Al-Jazeera Arabic gives prominence to the popular Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who has repeatedly called suicide bombings against Israelis not terrorism, but ‘martyrdom.’ He argues that since Israelis all serve in the military, they are not civilians. Even children, he despicably argues, are not innocent. They would grow up to serve in the military” [45].

On the bright side, the tiny voices of children can make a big difference in a positive way. Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani education activist and the youngest ever Nobel Prize laureate [46]. At age 11, Yousafzai fought for girls’ right to education. At age 15, she suffered an attack on her life by Taliban gunmen on her way to school [47].

During the Cold War, 10-year-old American schoolgirl Samantha Reed Smith was a peace activist and child actress from Manchester, Maine. In 1982, Smith wrote a letter to Soviet Union General Secretary Yuri Andropov [48]:

Dear Mr. Andropov,

My name is Samantha Smith. I am ten years old. Congratulations on your new job. I have been worrying about Russia and the United States getting into a nuclear war. Are you going to vote to have a war or not? If you aren’t please tell me how you are going to help to not have a war. This question you do not have to answer, but I would like to know why you want to conquer the world or at least our country. God made the world for us to live together in peace and not to fight.

Sincerely,
Samantha Smith

After a second follow-up letter addressed to Soviet Ambassador to the US Anatoly Dobrynin, Smith received a personal reply from Yuri Andropov and an invitation to visit the Soviet Union:

Dear Samantha, I received your letter, which is like many others that have reached me recently from your country and from other countries around the world.

It seems to me—I can tell by your letter—that you are a courageous and honest girl, resembling Becky, the friend of Tom Sawyer in the famous book of your compatriot Mark Twain. This book is well known and loved in our country by all boys and girls.

You write that you are anxious about whether there will be a nuclear war between our two countries. And you ask are we doing anything so that war will not break out.

Your question is the most important of those that every thinking man can pose. I will reply to you seriously and honestly.

Yes, Samantha, we in the Soviet Union are trying to do everything so that there will not be war on Earth. This is what every Soviet man wants. This is what the great founder of our state, Vladimir Lenin, taught us.

Soviet people well know what a terrible thing war is. Forty-two years ago, Nazi Germany which strove for supremacy over the whole world, attacked our country, burned and destroyed many thousands of our towns and villages, killed millions of Soviet men, women and children.

In that war, which ended with our victory, we were in alliance with the United States: together we fought for the liberation of many people from the Nazi invaders. I hope that you know about this from your history lessons in school. And today we want very much to live in peace, to trade and cooperate with all our neighbors on this earth—with those far away and those nearby. And certainly with such a great country as the United States of America.

In America and in our country there are nuclear weapons—terrible weapons that can kill millions of people in an instant. But we do not want them to be ever used. That’s precisely why the Soviet Union solemnly declared throughout the entire world that never—never—will it use nuclear weapons first against any country. In general we propose to discontinue further production of them and to proceed to the abolition of all the stockpiles on earth.

It seems to me that this is a sufficient answer to your second question: “Why do you want to wage war against the whole world or at least the United States?” We want nothing of the kind. No one in our country—neither workers, peasants, writers nor doctors, neither grown-ups nor children, nor members of the government—want either a big or “little” war.

We want peace—there is something that we are occupied with: growing wheat, building and inventing, writing books and flying into space. We want peace for ourselves and for all peoples of the planet. For our children and for you, Samantha.

I invite you, if your parents will let you, to come to our country, the best time being this summer. You will find out about our country, meet with your contemporaries, visit an international children’s camp—“Artek”—on the sea. And see for yourself: in the Soviet Union, everyone is for peace and friendship among peoples.

Thank you for your letter. I wish you all the best in your young life.

Y. Andropov

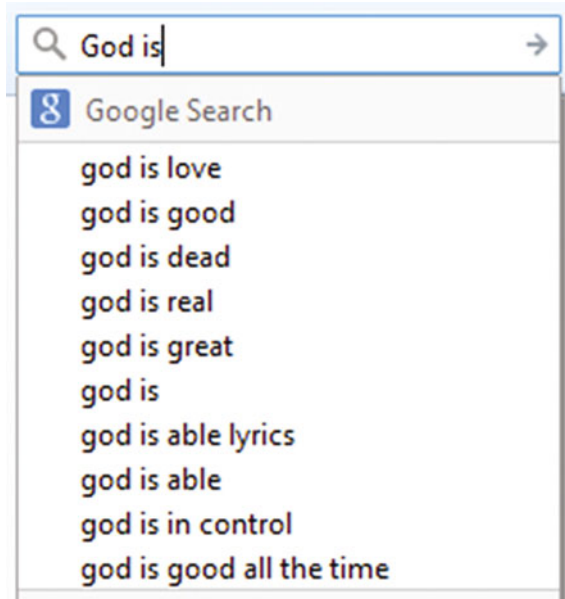
2.8 Terrorism and Abrahamic Religions

Most people believe that God is love. Figure 2.11 is a January 2016 snapshot of the Google search autocomplete predictions showing the most popular searches related to “God is.”

A Google search on “terrorism” returns a Knowledge Graph definition as “the user of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims” (see Fig. 2.12). The FBI defines terrorism as activities that appear to be intended [49]:

- (a) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population;
- (b) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or
- (c) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.

Fig. 2.11 Google search autocomplete predictions for “God is” (as of January 2016)



While all eyes are on Islam after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, English film director and producer Ridley Scott raised an unanswered question in *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014) when Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses confronted Moses while holding his son’s lifeless body. Ramses asked, “Is this your god? A killer of children? What kind of fanatics worship such a god?”

In handing down the death penalty to Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev in June 2015, Judge George O’Toole said, “Surely someone who believes that God smiles on and rewards the deliberate killing and maiming of innocents believes in a cruel God. That is not, it cannot be, the God of Islam. Anyone who has been led to believe otherwise has been maliciously and willfully deceived” [50].

Arab-American comedian Dean Obeidallah wrote to CNN, “I’m an American-Muslim... I’m not going to tell you, ‘Islam is a religion of peace.’ Nor will I tell you that Islam is a religion of violence. What I will say is that Islam is a religion that, like Christianity and Judaism, is intended to bring you closer to God. And sadly we have seen people use the name of each of these Abrahamic faiths to wage and justify violence” [51].

Sadly indeed, from an extremist point of view, the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament only serve to reaffirm their radical religious conviction. In the context of wars and vengeance, religious militants and terrorists believe that:

1. God terrorizes and obliterates the enemies:

- (a) *I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites*

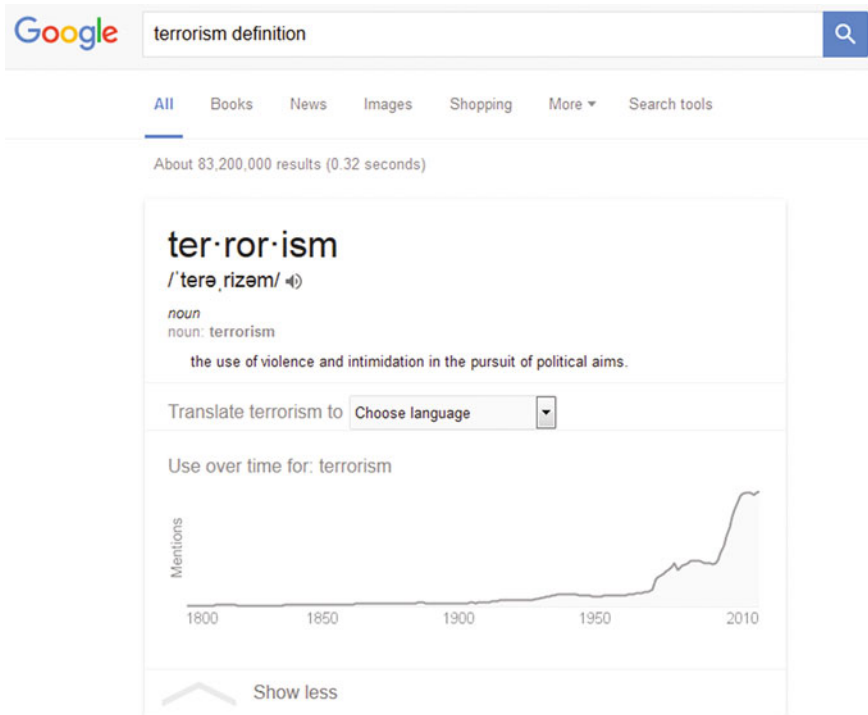


Fig. 2.12 Google search on “terrorism” returns a Knowledge Graph definition as “the user of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims.” The usage graph shows an exponential increase of mentions of “terrorism” towards the twenty-first century

out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land. (Exodus 23:27)

- (b) *The LORD sent you on a mission, and said, “Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; wage war against them until you have wiped them out.” (1 Samuel 15:18)*

2. God is revengeful:

- (a) *If there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise. (Exodus 21:23–25)*
- (b) *Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deuteronomy 19:21)*
- (c) *“Vengeance is Mine ... For the LORD will vindicate His people.” (Deuteronomy 32:35–36)*

3. Those who worship other gods are punishable by death:

- (a) *While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them. The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the LORD's fierce anger may turn away from Israel."* (Numbers 25:1–6)

4. Those who disrespect God are punishable by death regardless of their intention:

- (a) *When they came to the threshing floor of Kidon, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, because the oxen stumbled. The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God. ... David was afraid of God that day and asked, "How can I ever bring the ark of God to me?"* (1 Chronicles 13:9–10, 12)

5. God does not spare women and children:

- (a) *When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city. They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.* (Joshua 6:20–21)
- (b) *Moses was angry with the officers of the army—the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds—who returned from the battle. "Have you allowed all the women to live?" he asked them. "They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and enticed the Israelites to be unfaithful to the Lord in the Peor incident, so that a plague struck the Lord's people. Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man."* (Numbers 31:14–18)
- (c) *From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. "Get out of here, baldy!" they said. "Get out of here, baldy!" He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys.* (2 Kings 2:23–24)

Abrahamic religions—Islam, Christianity, and Judaism—are neither religions of peace nor religions of violence. They are storytellers of the past and forewarners of the future. Akin to Bible commentaries that aid in the study of the Scripture, the "Study Quran" is an English translation of the Quran with extensive commentaries from both Shiite and Sunni scholars who represent the two major denominations of Islam. "The commentaries don't try to delete or hide the verses that refer to violence," explained Editor-in-chief Seyyed Hossein Nasr. "We have to be faithful to the text. But they can explain that war and violence were always understood as a

painful part of the human condition. ... The best way to counter extremism in modern Islam is a revival of classical Islam” [52].

Funded by King Abdullah II of Jordan and the El-Hibri Foundation which promotes religious tolerance, the Study Quran is meant to be a rebuttal to Islamic terrorists. However, since religious militants and terrorists believe that they are fighting a holy war and exacting God’s vengeance on the infidels, the stories of violence in the Quran, the Hebrew Bible, and the Christian Old Testament only justify their combatant mindset and brutal tactics.

2.9 Ten Plagues of Egypt

The ten plagues of Egypt is the epitome of terrorism that eclipses all but the Holocaust when as many as 1.5 million children including Anne Frank perished in concentration camps [53]. According to the *Book of Exodus* and the *Quran*, the plagues of Egypt were ten calamities that God inflicted upon Egypt to persuade the Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery.

The plagues not only demobilized Egypt’s mighty armed forces but also terrorized all Egyptians—military personnel and civilians alike—by inflicting emotional and physical sufferings that culminated in the death of all firstborn sons in Egypt.

History seems to hint that what goes around comes around. In chapter one of the *Book of Exodus*, a new king came to power in Egypt and began to oppress the Israelites with forced labor. The ruthless Pharaoh ordered the killing of newborn Hebrew sons:

Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.”

(Exodus 1:22)

Moses was one of the Hebrew newborns abandoned in the Nile, but he was rescued and adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter. Moses grew up in the Egyptian palace, but he eventually left to live among his own people. The king of Egypt passed away and his son became the new king who continued to oppress the Israelites. Moses was then chosen by God to free the Israelis from slavery:

The Lord said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, Let my son go, so he may worship me. But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.’”

(Exodus 4:21–23)

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

(Exodus 12:29–30)

Passover is an important Jewish festival commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Islamic extremists may consider that the Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh) and the Christian Old Testament justify violent vengeance, killing of civilians, and slaughtering of children in the name of God. Some Islamic terrorists claim that their terrorist attacks are revenge for what Christians did in the Crusades [54]. For millenniums, the subconscious idea of terrorism has been ingrained in all Abrahamic religions. Pointing finger at one of them is to blame all of them—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike.

Considering the horror of the ten plagues and the long history of deep-seated hostility, the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979 was no small feat brokered by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin [55]. The 1978 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to Sadat and Begin [56]. Jimmy Carter received the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize “for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development” [57].

2.10 Xenophobia and Islamophobia

After the November 13th 2015 Paris attacks, U.S. Senator Ted Cruz from Texas proposed a “religious test” for Syrian refugees so that only Christians would be accepted into the United States [58]. In the wake of the December 2nd San Bernardino shooting, real estate magnate and 2016 presidential candidate Donald Trump called for surveillance against mosques and a complete ban on Muslims entering the United States [59]. Their knee-jerk rhetoric brings to mind the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Japanese internment camps in World War II.

Is America in the twenty-first century no better than Communist China who denied entry visa to Miss World Canada Anastasia Lin for competing in Miss World 2015 pageant because of her religious ties to Falun Gong (see Fig. 2.13)? [60] China has reasons to consider religions as potential enemies of the state. For instance, Christians (including 17-year-old protest leader Joshua Wong) played a prominent role in the 2014 Umbrella Movement of sit-in street protests in Hong Kong [61].

Unlike Communist China however, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees religious freedom. Cruz and Trump are playing right into the hands of the terrorists and ISIS by dividing the country instead of uniting the American people [62]. Indeed, a 2016 terrorist recruiting video purportedly by al Qaeda-linked militant group Al-Shabaab used footages of Malcolm X and Donald Trump to highlight racism and religious discrimination in America [63]. Figure 2.14 is a January 2016 snapshot of the Google search autocomplete predictions showing the most popular searches related to “Islam is.” “Islam is a religion of peace” tops the list of Google searches, followed by the exact opposite “Islam is not a religion of peace.”

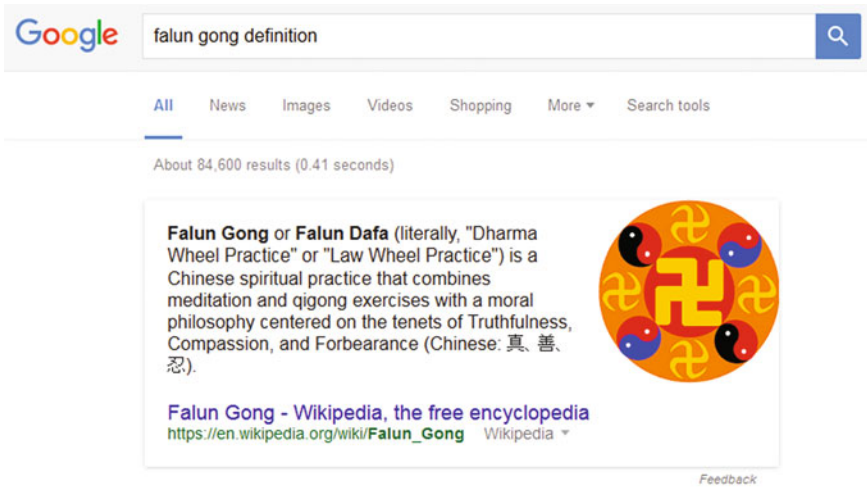
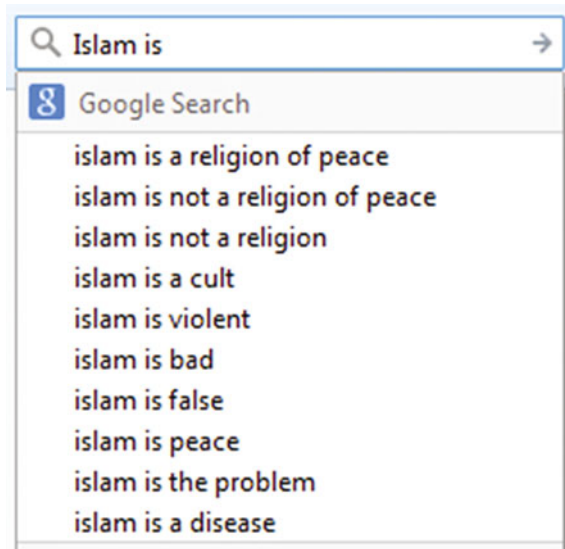


Fig. 2.13 Google search on “Falun Gong” returns a Chinese spiritual practice centered on truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance. The one large and four small Swastika symbols are considered sacred and auspicious in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism from around 200 B.C. [64]

Fig. 2.14 Google search autocomplete predictions for “Islam is” (as of January 2016)



Owing to safety concerns, all schools in Augusta County, Virginia were shut down for a day in December 2015, after a backlash over an Arabic calligraphy homework assignment from a standard workbook on world religions (see Fig. 2.15). The center of controversy was about copying by hand the calligraphy for *shahada*—the Islamic statement of faith—written in Arabic. An overreacting

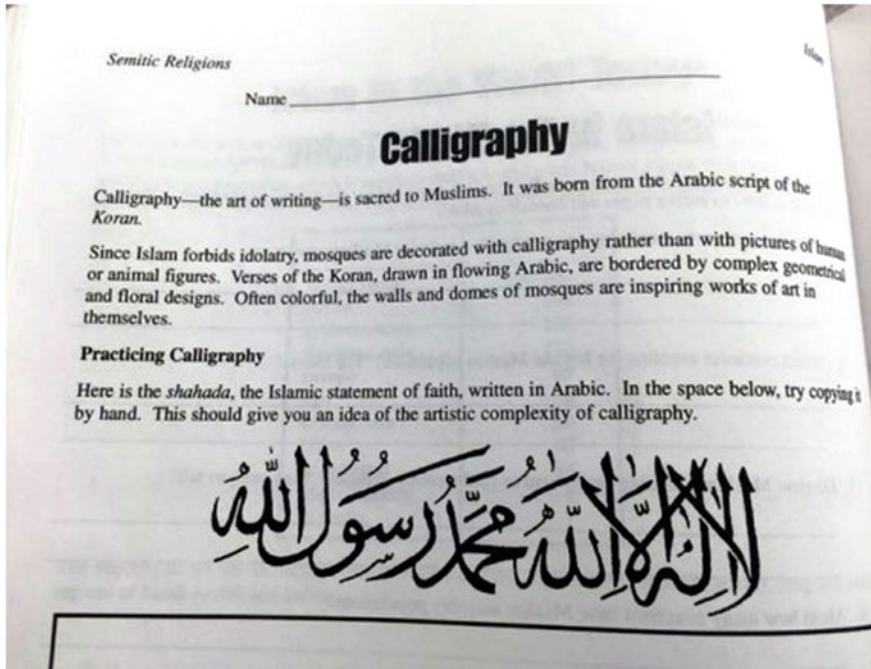


Fig. 2.15 An Arabic calligraphy homework assignment

mother, Kimberly Herndon, kept her 9th-grade son home from school and complained to the school officials, “There was no trying about it. The sheet she gave out was pure doctrine in its origin. I will not have my children sit under a woman [teacher] who indoctrinates them with the Islam religion when I am a Christian” [65]. Islamophobia has risen to a whole new level in America.

CNN commentator Mel Robbins wrote in response to the controversy, “For those Christians who assembled in fear and buried the school in an avalanche of fear and threats, it’s also sad. As a Christian, I can only imagine how weak your own religious faith must be if you fear that a calligraphy assignment could change your child’s faith” [66].

In response to the rise of anti-foreigner comments on Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg pledged over \$1 million euros in launching an “Initiative for Civil Courage Online” in Europe to counter the racist and xenophobic Facebook posts [67]. Moreover, Facebook actively promotes “counter speech” by offering free advertising incentives to counter speakers in an effort to combat terrorism on social media [68]. In January 2014, a German group named Laut Gegen Nazis (Loud Against Nazis) launched a “Like Attack” by organizing more than 100,000 people to bombard neo-Nazi pages on Facebook with “likes” and nice comments to defuse racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-immigrant xenophobia [69].

In December 2015, Google CEO Sundar Pichai took to Medium blog-publishing platform to share his experience and opinions [70]:

I came to the US from India 22 years ago. ... It's been said a million times that America is the 'land of opportunity'—for millions of immigrants, it's not an abstract notion, but a concrete description of what we find here. ... And it's not just about opportunity. The open-mindedness, tolerance, and acceptance of new Americans is one of the country's greatest strengths and most defining characteristics. And that is no coincidence—America, after all, was and is a country of immigrants. ... Let's not let fear defeat our values. We must support Muslim and other minority communities in the US and around the world.

Instead of dividing America along religious and ethnic lines, we ought to stand by each other in solidarity. Alexandre Dumas wrote in his 1844 historical novel *The Three Musketeers*: “All for one and one for all, united we stand divided we fall.” Although U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Paul Zukunft had warned that Russia was militarizing the Arctic, he spoke of the robust communication between the U.S. and Russian coast guards: “You pick up the phone and talk to your counterpart. Operating in harsh environments, we find we have a lot more in common than we do differences” [71]. What will it take to rally all peoples and nations to unite in the name of humanity? An all-out alien invasion or imminent mass extinction? Perhaps a gentler proposal like a Human Heritage Month would help to raise awareness that we are all human beings living together on the same beautiful planet marred by undue human conflicts and selfishness.

2.11 Capital Punishment and Rehabilitation

Boston Marathon bomber, a 22-year-old Kyrgyzstani-American Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, hardly showed remorse in court for killing 8-year-old pacifist Martin Richard and two other marathon spectators [73]. Tsarnaev was sentenced to death, which might have helped to ease the pain of the victims' families. However, capital punishment is not the answer.

First, most Americans prefer the execution method to be as quick and painless as possible [74] given that the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the government from imposing “cruel and unusual punishment.” In his second grade class a year prior to his murder, 8-year-old Martin Richard handmade a sign that reads “No more hurting people. Peace” [75]. Since the innocent and peaceful boy was torn apart by hot shrapnel and slowly bled to death, why should the murderer meet his demise quickly and painlessly by electrocution or lethal injection?

Second and most importantly, capital punishment does not deter suicidal terrorists who are willing to die for their causes. Death penalty only makes them feel like martyrs. Prof. Jay Parini of Middlebury College wrote to CNN: “As a Christian, I can't but feel horrified at the news that a federal jury has imposed the death penalty on Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. ... This punishment only continues the cycle

of violence, and it will not bring peace. In fact, the execution of Tsarnaev will transform him into a martyr, and millions around the world will find fresh reasons to dislike the United States” [76].

Rehabilitation is a better alternative to capital punishment. 21-year-old Abu Bakr Mansha was a convicted al Qaeda terrorist in the United Kingdom. Usman Raja, a renowned British cage-fighting coach, has managed to rehabilitate Mansha and de-radicalize terror convicts with a 100 % success rate using cage-fighting sessions and the teachings of Sheikh Aleey Qadir.

“Take away someone’s hate and they feel liberated,” explained Raja. “The key is to give them a sense of purpose” [77]. Now a transformed man, Mansha tries to prevent other young Muslims from following in his past footsteps of terror. “I could channel my energy straight away and build something for myself,” said Mansha. “My transformation came over time” [77].

Roman Catholic “Dead Man Walking” nun Sister Helen Prejean met with Dzhokhar Tsarnaev five times since March 2015 and she concluded that “I had every reason to think he was taking it in and was genuinely sorry for what he did. The groundwork and the trust was there. And I knew. I felt it” [78].

What if Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were given a chance to be rehabilitated? What if a “born-again” Tsarnaev were to become a pacifist evangelizing peace among radicalized youths? Having been featured on the cover of *Rolling Stone magazine* and the *New York Times*, Tsarnaev could be an efficacious counterterrorism advocate.

2.12 Nine Familial Rehabilitation

During the May 2015 trial of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, his aunts and other relatives from Russia flew to the United States to testify on his behalf. The otherwise emotionless defendant broke down and cried when he saw his aunt Patimat Suleimanova in her mid-60s desperately trying to defend him [79]. Notwithstanding the last-ditch effort, where was the family support when the young Tsarnaev needed guidance the most?

According to BBC News, children in east Jerusalem and at refugee camps in Lebanon celebrated news of the terrorist attacks as the Twin Towers collapsed on September 11, 2001 in Manhattan, New York City [80]. Instead of empathy and sympathy, what atrocities have the children learned from their parents?

Shortly after the historic Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was assassinated by Islamic jihadists in 1981. Khaled Al-Islambouli was one of the assassins who were convicted and executed in 1982 for treason. In a 2012 interview with Mrs. Qadriya by Iran’s state-run Fars news agency, the 85-year-old mother of the assassin said, “I am very proud that my son killed Anwar Al-Sadat. [The government] called him a terrorist, a criminal, and a murderer, but they didn’t say that was he was defending Islam. They didn’t say anything about the oppressed people in Palestine, about Camp David, or how Sadat sold out the country to the Jews and violated the honor of the Islamic nation” [81].

In December 2015, Fox News asked Donald Trump how he would fight ISIS if he was elected President, and Trump replied, “We are fighting a very politically correct war. The other thing with the terrorists is you have to take out their families, when you get these terrorists, you have to take out their families. They care about their lives, don’t kid yourself. When they say they don’t care about their lives, you have to take out their families” [82]. His view resembles nine familial exterminations in ancient China as early as 1600 B.C. when death penalty for high treason applied not only to the criminal himself but also to his immediate and extended family members including his [83]:

1. spouse,
2. parents,
3. grandparents,
4. children above a certain age (usually 16),
5. grandchildren above a certain age (usually 16),
6. siblings,
7. siblings-in-law,
8. uncles, and
9. uncles’ spouses.

Former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen was among many officials who reproached Trump’s egregious remark. Cohen told CNN, “The notion that we would attack and kill the families of terrorists is something that contravenes everything the United States stands for in this world” [84]. In March 2016, Trump reversed course on his vow to kill the families of terrorists [85].

Nine familial exterminations were absolutely inhumane and tyrannical. A more civilized derivative is nine familial rehabilitation which would require immediate and extended family members to be put on fair trials for the crimes of the perpetrator. In the case of Mrs. Qadriya, she should have been tried in court for encouraging her children to become assassins.

Family members serving prison time in the same correctional facility might just provide the much-needed family bonding and quality time that could have been absent otherwise. Nine familial rehabilitation can be a potent way to rehabilitate criminals, deter others from committing serious crimes, and encourage parents to do a better job in raising their children.

Toya Graham, a single mother of six in Baltimore, went to a riot and pulled her masked son away from a protest crowd, smacking him in the head and screaming at him. “I’m a no-tolerant mother,” Toya Graham told CBS News. “That’s my only son and at the end of the day I don’t want him to be a Freddie Gray [who died in police custody].” Police Commissioner Anthony Batts thanked her in his remarks to the media, “I wish I had more parents that took charge of their kids out there tonight” [86].

When parents are unavailable or incapable, school teachers and community leaders ought to step into their shoes lest the vulnerable youth is either radicalized by terrorists or victimized by entrapment. A RAND research study discussed “the

feelings of alienation—whether for social, economic, political, or psychological reasons—shared by terrorists, and the progression they follow from early, legal protest to acts of terrorism. ... In many cases it was a matter of chance whether the terrorist joined a left- or right-wing group” [87].

Entrapment artificially creates that chance, but it also generates deep resentment that makes rehabilitation extremely difficult if at all possible. A recent example in 2010 is the conviction of 19-year-old Somali-American college student Mohamed Mohamud for carrying out the Black Friday bombing of the Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Portland, Oregon, which was in fact a sting operation set up by the FBI. Instead of guiding the confused teenage student away from terrorism, an FBI undercover agent asked Mohamud with his power of suggestion, “So, what have you been doing to be a good Muslim? ... You can pray five times a day, train as a doctor and go overseas, donate money to the cause, become ‘operational,’ or become ‘a martyr’” [88]. Mohamud chose to become “operational,” and thus he was convicted by a jury and sentenced to 30 years in prison. Meanwhile, ISIS has lured more than 20,000 foreigners and an estimated 180 Americans into joining their fight since February 2015 [89]. The FBI agents should toil to entrap ISIS recruiters by posing as radical students rather than to enmesh troubled teenagers by pretending to be Islamic terrorists.

2.13 War on Drugs

Long before President George W. Bush declared the global war on terror in 2001, President Richard Nixon declared drug abuse “public enemy number one” in 1971. Today, the United States spends more than \$51 billion annually on the war on drugs with no end in sight [90].

Actor and comedian Tim Allen, best known for his leading role in the sitcom *Home Improvement* and the voice of Buzz Lightyear in *Toy Story*, was given the highest honor as a Disney Legend for television, film, and animation-voice as well as a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame [91]. Before his showbiz success, however, Allen was arrested for drug trafficking in 1978 and was subsequently incarcerated for 28 months at Sandstone Federal Correctional Institution [92]. Drug trafficking can carry a mandatory death penalty in some countries like Singapore (up until 2011) [93] and China [94].

In a 2011 interview by ABC 20/20 anchor Elizabeth Vargas, Tim Allen talked about God and his rehabilitation [95]. He said that one day he got a call from his parole officer and the next day a call from Jeffrey Katzenberg, then chairman of The Walt Disney Studios, who asked him to become a part of the Disney family. It was nothing short of a miracle.

Surely one cannot compare Tim Allen smuggling cocaine versus Dzhokhar Tsarnaev planting bombs. True, but illicit drugs have killed several orders of magnitude more people than all acts of terrorism in America. Between 2001 and 2014, there were 3,030 Americans killed by terrorists on U.S. soil [96]. During that

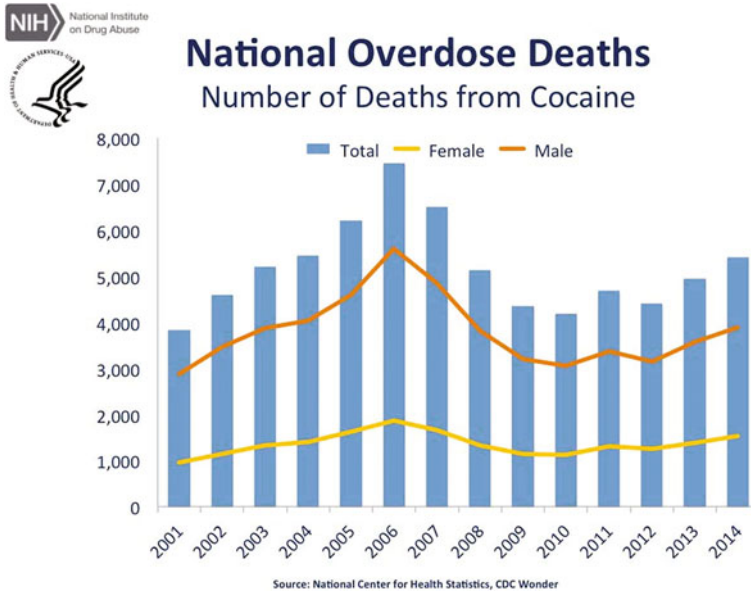


Fig. 2.16 National overdose deaths—number of deaths from cocaine. The bar chart shows the total number of U.S. overdose deaths involving cocaine from 2001 to 2014 (Courtesy of National Institute on Drug Abuse)

same 14-year period, 72,348 Americans died from cocaine overdose (see Fig. 2.16) and 52,830 lost their lives from heroin overdose (see Fig. 2.17) according to the statistics released by the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [97]. Nationally, deaths from drug overdoses reached an all-time high in 2014 [98].

In a blatant confrontation of the epidemic, Los Angeles based street artist Plastic Jesus courageously placed a life-sized Oscar statue—bending over and snorting cocaine—on Hollywood Boulevard three days before the 2015 Academy Awards (see Fig. 2.18). “We only hear about drug addiction when a high-profile Hollywood celeb has a meltdown and goes into rehab or dies,” Plastic Jesus told Variety [99]. For instance, actor Robert Downey Jr. spent years in substance abuse, arrests, rehab, and relapse before a full recovery from drugs and a return to his career, starring in blockbuster films such as *The Iron Man*, *The Avengers*, and *Sherlock Holmes*. Downey said in a 2004 interview, “Like Jung said about people using religion to avoid a religious experience, I have managed handily to avoid a religious experience. I don’t know where I fall. Spiritual Green Party? There were times when I was into the whole Hare Krishna thing, which is pretty far out. Now I would call myself a Jew-Bu, a Jewish-Buddhist. But there were many times when Catholicism saved my butt” [100].

Apart from Hollywood, Silicon Valley is also at the center of the epidemic. In a high profile case in 2015, Google executive Forrest Hayes died of heroin overdose

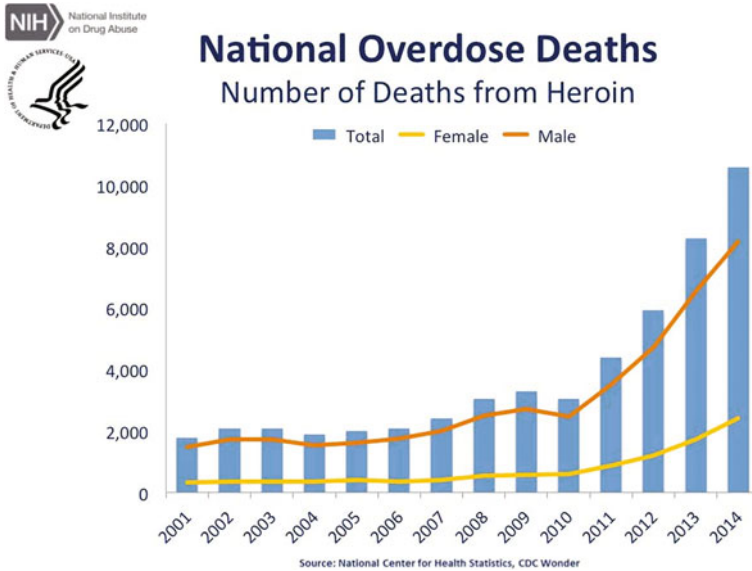


Fig. 2.17 National overdose deaths—number of deaths from heroin. The bar chart shows the total number of U.S. overdose deaths involving heroin from 2001 to 2014 (Courtesy of National Institute on Drug Abuse)

on his yacht off the California coast, and his prostitute companion Alix Catherine Tichelman was convicted of involuntary manslaughter [101]. “The billionaires I know, almost without exception, use hallucinogens on a regular basis,” said Silicon Valley investor Tim Ferriss. “[They’re] trying to be very disruptive and look at the problems in the world ... and ask completely new questions” [102].

In a 2015 interview by CNN technology correspondent Laurie Segall, Apple’s early employee Daniel Kottke reminisced about his LSD trips with Steve Jobs at Reed College: “We would take psychedelics and whole new vistas opened up. ... Once Apple started, Steve was really focused with all of his energy on making Apple successful. And he didn’t need psychedelics for that.” Kottke added that Apple cofounder Steve Wozniak (who designed Apple I and II computers) was not interested in dropping acid: “Woz was in very close touch with the extent to which his mind is a miracle of nature. He’s just fantastically interested in things ... His mind was always working perfectly well and [he] didn’t want to mess it up” [103].

Taking illicit drugs is like playing Russian roulette. In 2014, 16-year-old honor roll student Sam Motsay died from experimenting with a designer drug similar to the hallucinogen LSD for the first time [104]. Misusing prescription drugs is just as deadly. Prescription opioid overdose—the cause of death for musician Prince [105]—had killed more than 14,000 people in 2014 according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [106].

An oft-used excuse from drug dealers is that their victims, unlike terrorist targets, willingly put themselves at risk. Mexican-American actress Kate Del Castillo,



Fig. 2.18 Life-sized Oscar statue—bending over and snorting cocaine—on Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles on February 19, 2015 (Courtesy of Plastic Jesus <http://www.plasticjesus.net/>)

who played crime boss Pilar Zuazo on the Showtime series *Weeds*, caught the attention of the notorious Mexican drug lord El Chapo Guzman after she posted online: “Mr. Chapo: Wouldn’t it be cool if you started to traffic in goodness? With cures for diseases, with food for children in the street, with alcohol for nursing homes. ... trafficking with corrupt politicians instead of with women and children that end up as slaves? With burning all the pimps that treat a woman like she’s worth no more than a pack of cigarettes? With no supply there is no demand. Do it, sir, and you would be the hero of heroes. Let’s traffic with love. You know how” [107].

Actress Castillo and actor Sean Penn met Guzman at a secret location in September 2015 to discuss an exclusive interview. In the January 2016 issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine, Penn wrote about his personal meeting with Guzman and he included the following Q&A [108]:

Penn: What is your opinion about who is to blame here, those who sell drugs, or the people who use drugs and create a demand for them? What is the relationship between production, sale and consumption?

Guzman: If there was no consumption, there would be no sales. It is true that consumption, day after day, becomes bigger and bigger. So it sells and sells.

Regardless of who is to blame, the war on drugs and the war on terrorism are equally futile if we treat only the symptoms but not the root causes [109]. It is high

time we treated drug abuse and terrorism as diseases instead of wars—curing the patients rather than killing them. For example:

1. Dr. Carl Hart, a neuroscientist and associate professor of psychiatry and psychology at Columbia University, spoke at the TEDMED 2015 conference: “I grew up in the hood in Miami in a poor neighborhood. I came from a community in which drug use was prevalent. I kept a gun in my car. I engaged in petty crime. I used and sold drugs. But I stand before you today also—emphasis on *also*—a professor at Columbia University who studies drug addiction” [110].
2. Since 2010, Usman Raja—a renowned cage-fighting coach in the United Kingdom—has successfully rehabilitated released prisoners who were convicted terrorists into mainstream society [111]. Employing cage-fighting sessions and the teachings of Sheikh Aleey Qadir, Raja’s mixed-martial arts (MMA) gym has de-radicalized terror convicts with a 100 % success rate. “Take away someone’s hate and they feel liberated,” explained Raja. “The key is to give them a sense of purpose” [77].

2.14 Forgiveness and Humility

In the Bible, Jesus won the war against evil not by fighting but by praying as he was being crucified: “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). Forgiveness, not vengeance, yields peace and security. As President Barack Obama said during his visit to Israel and the West Bank in March 2013, “Peace is the only path to true security ... because no wall is high enough, and no Iron Dome is strong enough or perfect enough, to stop every enemy from inflicting harm” [112].

Why is it so difficult for people to forgive? Perhaps it is because of our over-inflated ego. We may look down at a janitor, thinking that his life is not worth as much as ours. Now imagine a world without janitors: Every restaurant diner, mall shopper, movie patron, churchgoer, and office worker is required to clean the faucet and scrub the toilet after using a public restroom. How uncomfortable and inconvenient everyday life would become! We should be very thankful to janitors for doing their job well.

Whether we like it or not, nature forces chemical bonding among all living things. We smell food because it emits molecules that enter through our nostrils and bond with the odor receptors in our noses and lungs [113]. Through smell, babies bond with their mothers, and pet animals bond with their owners. As unpalatable as it is, we all have experienced public restrooms where unpleasant smelling molecules emitted from strangers’ digestive tracts have bound to our olfactory receptors and entered our lungs.

Curt Stager, ecologist and climate scientist at Paul Smith’s College, penned an amusing and eye-opening article titled “You Are Made of Waste: Searching for the ultimate example of recycling? Look in the mirror.” [114]:

You may think of yourself as a highly refined and sophisticated creature—and you are. But you are also full of discarded, rejected, and recycled atomic elements. ... Look at one of your fingernails. Carbon makes up half of its mass, and roughly one in eight of those carbon atoms recently emerged from a chimney or a tailpipe. ... When you smile, the gleam of your teeth obscures a slight glow from radioactive waste. ... The oxygen in your lungs and bloodstream is a highly reactive waste product generated by vegetation and microbes. ... The next time you brush your hair, think of the nitrogenous waste that helped create it. All of your proteins, including hair keratin, contain formerly airborne nitrogen atoms. ... Every atom of iron in your blood, which helps your heart shuttle oxygen from your lungs to your cells, once helped destroy a massive star. ... The same blasts also released carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and other elements of life, which later produced the sun, the Earth, and eventually—you.

The Book of Genesis certainly echoes Stager’s main point about “recycled” human beings. Genesis 2:7 reads, “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” In William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (Act 2, Scene 2), the Prince of Denmark said to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern [115]:

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!
 how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how
 express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
 in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the
 world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me,
 what is this quintessence of dust?

Jesus taught his disciples about humility in serving humanity: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. ... Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me” (Matthew 25:40, 45).

2.15 Masks of God and Moral Standard

Seeing is believing, but God said to Moses on Mount Horeb, “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live” (Exodus 33:20). Portraying deities as macho warrior gods was common among the Indo-European people. The masks of God were created by “the imperfections of man and the limits of reason”—a phrase borrowed from President Barack Obama’s 2009 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech [116].

In *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, American scholar Joseph Campbell wrote, “It is clear that, whether accurate or not as to biographical detail, the moving legend of the Crucified and Risen Christ was fit to bring a new warmth, immediacy, and humanity, to the old motifs of the beloved Tammuz, Adonis, and Osiris cycles.”

Campbell recognized the significance of Jesus who told the world that “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Moreover, he said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17).

Jesus set a higher moral standard than the Law of Moses: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ... Anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matthew 5:27–28, 32).

Modern society tends to condemn prostitution but turn a blind eye to adultery. In June 2014, the FBI shut down RedBook escort service websites but not the Ashley Madison adultery site [117]. Shouldn’t it be the other way around? Sex between two consenting adults is fine as long as it does not cause harm to one another or to any third party. In fact, three out of four women in the United States have lived “in sin” with a partner without being married by the age of 30 [118]. Regardless of cohabitation or marriage, adulterers oftentimes ruin the relationships with their partners, families, friends, and especially children if they have any [119]. In July 2015, hackers broke into AshleyMadison.com and leaked its database of 30 million customers online [120]. Resignations, divorces, and even suicides followed. Married with two adult children, 56-year-old Baptist pastor John Gibson in New Orleans killed himself after learning that his name was publicly exposed [121].

2.16 Prostitution and Gender Discrimination

The Bible surprisingly contains significant anti-stigmatization of prostitutes. For instance, when Israeli leader Joshua invaded the city of Jericho, only Rahab the prostitute and her family were spared from annihilation (Joshua 6:17). “You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?” (James 2:24–25).

Take another example, when the Israelis were in trouble with the Ammonites, their elders turned to Jephthah for help:

Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. His father was Gilead; his mother was a prostitute. ... Jephthah said to them [the elders], “Didn’t you hate me and drive me from my father’s house? Why do you come to me now, when you’re in trouble?” The elders of Gilead said to him, “Nevertheless, we are turning to you now; come with us to fight the Ammonites, and you will be head over all of us who live in Gilead.” ... Jephthah led Israel six years. (Judges 11:1, 11:7–8, 12:7)

Sex, food, water, and air are four basic survival elements without which humankind would cease to exist. 795 million people on earth are suffering from malnutrition [122], 663 million do not have access to safe drinking water [123], and 7 million people die annually from air pollution exposure [124]. Yet a whopping \$186 billion dollars per year are squandered on prostitution worldwide [125]. One sex worker told Laurie Segall at CNN that she had earned nearly \$1 million from

affluent men in Silicon Valley [126]. A million U.S. dollars can feed a lot of hungry and thirsty people.

In January 2016, Missouri House of Representative Bart Korman introduced a bill that requires lobbyists to report sexual relations with state legislators as a “gift” in their disclosures: “For purposes of subdivision (2) of this subsection, the term ‘gift’ shall include sexual relations between a registered lobbyist and a member of the general assembly or his or her staff. Relations between married persons or between persons who entered into a relationship prior to the registration of the lobbyist, the election of the member to the general assembly, or the employment of the staff person shall not be reportable under this subdivision. The reporting of sexual relations for purposes of this subdivision shall not require a dollar valuation” [127].

Science fiction TV series *Firefly* created by Joss Whedon also challenged the moral question of high-society courtesans similar to Japanese geisha [128]. Although Hollywood features many heroines in popular films, they are mostly fantasy and sci-fi genres that do not translate into the real world. Even within the make-believe universe, Chloë Grace Moretz who played Hit-Girl in *Kick-Ass* (2010) and *Kick-Ass 2* (2013) told *Digital Spy* in a 2014 interview: “Whenever there’s a female superhero, it’s always a more sexual plotline rather than seeing an actual character on screen. I don’t think that’s cool. I think it’s rather sad. I would love to change that” [129]. The semi-documentary blockbuster film *The Imitation Game* (2014) shows a solitary female codebreaker—Keira Knightley—in a male-dominated workplace when in fact 8,000 out of 12,000 codebreakers at Bletchley Park were women [130].

Changes are coming, albeit rather slowly. Every now and then there are movies such as *The Intern* (2015) where the lead female character played by Anne Hathaway is the founder of a successful Internet company while her husband is a stay-at-home dad [131]. It accurately reflects the steady increase of the number of househusbands since a 2002 survey at *Fortune* magazine’s Most Powerful Women Summit [132]. In the 2008 remake of the 1951 film *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Mrs. Helen Benson (Patricia Neal) as a secretary was rewritten to be Dr. Helen Benson (Jennifer Connelly) as an astrobiology professor at Princeton University.

Speaking of women in power, Ann Elizabeth Dunwoody was the first woman to become Commanding General of U.S. Army Materiel Command in 2008 [133]. Regina Dugan was appointed the first female director of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in 2009 [134]. Letitia “Tish” Long became the first woman in charge of a major U.S. intelligence agency—the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) in 2010 [135]. The White House named Megan Smith as the 3rd Chief Technology Officer of the United States in 2014 [136]. General Lori Robinson became the first female combatant commander to lead the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) in 2016 [137]. At the time of writing, if former First Lady and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton becomes the first female President of the United States, she will join the prestigious list of some 77 female heads of state in world history.

Will all that breaking-the-glass-ceiling progress eradicate gender discrimination? Do people consider intelligent and powerful women a one of a kind or an anomaly which does not apply to the female population at large? Why are only 18 % of computer science graduates women [138] when the world's first computer programmer was English mathematician Ada Lovelace, best known for her algorithmic work on Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine?

It takes a lot more women than just some female geniuses, presidents, military combat generals, CEOs, and the new \$20 bills with Harriet Tubman [139] to dismantle the entrenched mindset of chauvinism and patriarchy. Duke University student and porn star Belle Knox (Miriam Weeks) wrote in *xoJane*: "I, like all other sex workers, want to be treated with dignity and respect. ... The virgin-whore dichotomy is an insidious standard that we have unfairly placed upon women. Women are supposed to be outwardly pure and modest, while at the same time being sexually alluring and available. If a woman does not have sex after a date, she will be labeled as a prude. If she does have sex, she will be referred to later as a ho or a slut" [140].

The long history of male supremacy has prompted British-Australian feminist Sheila Jeffreys to opine that marriage is a form of prostitution in some cases. "Prostitution and marriage have always been related," said Jeffreys. "The right of men to women's bodies for sexual use has not gone but remains an assumption at the basis of heterosexual relationships" [141]. The alternatives such as cohabitation, open marriage, and friends with benefits are not helping the situation either.

Online sexual harassment and the disproportionate underrepresentation of influential women in Wikipedia have motivated Emily Temple-Wood to cofound WikiProject Women Scientists in 2012 [142]. She has since written hundreds of Wikipedia articles about women in science [143] and has identified more than 4,400 notable female scientists who do not yet have a page on Wikipedia [144].

2.17 Pornography, Feminism, and Technology

In addition to gender discrimination, society's double standards legalize pornography as freedom of expression protected under the First Amendment while they penalize prostitution against personal rights and liberty. The truth is that pornography is essentially prostitution in front of cameras, and porn producers are no different from pimps who recruit women and make money from their sex acts.

Produced by Rashida Jones, Abigail Disney, and other notables, Netflix documentary *Hot Girls Wanted* (2015) exposes the dark side of the porn industry as naive young women are lured by money and fame [145]. Some viewers may see a parallel between that and Amy Berg's documentary *An Open Secret* (2014) which depicts underage abuse and sexual exploitation in the mainstream Hollywood entertainment industry [146]. There are good and bad people in every line of business, every stratum of society, every organization, and sadly every church.

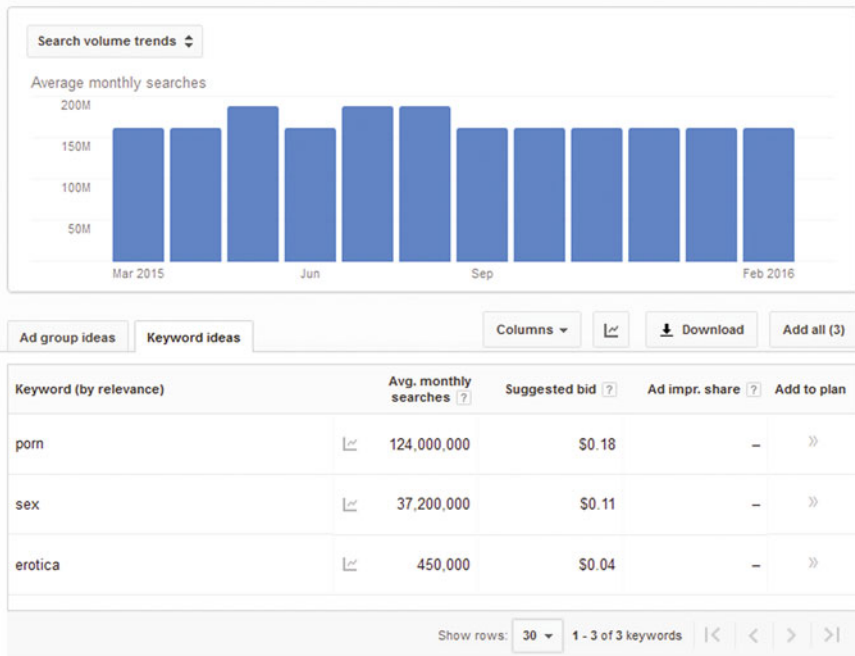


Fig. 2.19 Average monthly Google searches on the keywords porn, sex, and erotica from March 2015 to February 2016, averaging 162 million queries in a month

The question is: What do we do about it? As Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) told Neo (Keanu Reeves) in *The Matrix* (1999), “You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill—you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Remember: all I’m offering is the truth. Nothing more” [147]. The majority has chosen the blue pill and perpetuated the status quo.

Thanks to the Internet, pornography has become ubiquitous and ballooned to a \$97 billion industry in 2015 [148]. Figure 2.19 shows the average monthly Google searches on the keywords porn, sex, and erotica from March 2015 to February 2016, averaging 162 million queries from month to month with little to no fluctuation. In a 2016 report by evangelical Christian polling firm the Barna Group, a survey of over 3,000 Americans uncovered that [149]:

- 57 % of pastors and 64 % of youth pastors have struggled with porn either currently or in the past,
- The attitudes of Americans towards pornography are shifting from “bad for society” to neutrality or “good for society,” and
- Most teens and young adults view “not recycling” as more immoral than viewing porn.

In 2015, Danish sexology professor Christian Graugaard at Aalborg University suggested that pornography should be shown in schools as part of sex education classes [150]. Graugaard's philosophy is in sharp contrast to the 2015 story of the enraged mother Gail Horalek who complained to the school officials for assigning Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* to her 7th-grade daughter, calling the passages on puberty in the unabridged version pornographic [151]. Horalek would probably have requested to ban the Christian Old Testament too if she had read the stories of adultery (e.g. 2 Samuel 12:11–12), prostitution (e.g. Ezekiel 23:1–21), rape (e.g. 2 Samuel 13:10–14), incest (e.g. Genesis 19:30–38), and other cardinal sins that rival any daytime soap opera on television. The Bible is the most brutally honest book that does not whitewash or sugarcoat history.

Prof. Graugaard admitted that some adolescents were incapable of differentiating between pornography and the reality of sexual relationships. At TED 2009, advertising consultant Cindy Gallop argued that “hardcore pornography had distorted the way a generation of young men think about sex” [152].

Feminism rejects chauvinism but accepts chivalry [153]. Harry Potter heroine Emma Watson has served as a U.N. Women's Global Goodwill Ambassador since 2014 [154]. In a February 2016 interview, American feminist Gloria Steinem and Emma Watson discussed the promotion of erotica as opposed to pornography that degrades or humiliates women. Steinem said, “We should at least have a word for sex that is mutual and pleasurable and not about domination, pain, violence, humiliation and so on. ... We were both worried about the envelopment of the earth in pornographic images. Young people especially. The right wing (right wing just in a general way) on one hand is suppressing sex education and allowing, or profiteering off pornography so young people look at porno and think that's it. That's what is supposed to be. I was hoping that having a word for erotica, for shared mutual pleasurable empathetic sex, real pleasurable sex would help us do something about pornography” [155].

Whether sex is called porn or erotica, the adult industry has been highly effective in driving innovation and mass adoption of new technologies: VCR, streaming video, online credit card transactions, haptics, and Snapchat, just to name a few [156]. The cover of Playboy's first-ever non-nude issue in March 2016 was made to look like a selfie on Snapchat [157]. At CES 2016 in Las Vegas, Mashable's product analyst Raymond Wong tried out VR porn on a Samsung Gear VR headset and was blown away by it [158]. Like social media, virtual reality could exacerbate the decrease of face-to-face communication and accelerate the decay of interpersonal relationships in the real world.

2.18 Unmasking of God and Enlightening Humankind

Jesus came to enlighten humankind about God, morality, and truth. The Sadducees and Pharisees had hoped that the Messiah would lead the Israelites to rebel against the ruling Roman Empire, just as Moses did against the Egyptian Pharaoh with the

ten plagues and the parting of the Red Sea. To the dismay of the Sadducees and Pharisees, Jesus was a pacifist: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? ... And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? ...” (Matthew 5:43–47).

Jesus had unmasked God to reveal that:

1. God is forgiving:

- (a) *You have heard that it was said, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. (Matthew 5:38–39)*
- (b) *You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:43–44)*

2. God is a peacemaker:

- (a) *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (Matthew 5:9)*
- (b) *Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? (Matthew 26:52)*

3. God is nonjudgmental:

- (a) *The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” (John 8:3–7)*
- (b) *A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.” ... Then Jesus turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? ... I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” (Luke 7:37–39, 44, 47)*

4. God is benevolent:

- (a) *Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:34–40)*

5. God loves children:

- (a) *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:1–4)*
- (b) *Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:13–14)*

Following in Jesus' footsteps, Pope Francis expressed his nonjudgmental stand in *The Joy of Love (AMORIS LAETITIA)*: "A pastor cannot feel that it is enough simply to apply moral laws to those living in 'irregular' situations, as if they were stones to throw at people's lives. This would bespeak the closed heart of one used to hiding behind the Church's teachings, 'sitting on the chair of Moses and judging at times with superiority and superficiality'" [159]. The Pope denounced both favoritism and prejudice: "A gay person who is seeking God, who is of good will—well, who am I to judge him? The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains this very well. It says one must not marginalize these persons, they must be integrated into society. The problem isn't this [homosexual] orientation—we must be like brothers and sisters. The problem is something else, the problem is lobbying either for this orientation or a political lobby or a Masonic lobby" [160].

Indeed, Jesus had predicted religious infighting amongst Abrahamic religions and religious denominations: "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'" (Matthew 10:34–36) The Crusades, anti-Catholicism, anti-Protestantism,

anti-Semitism, global Jihadism, and antichrists all have created havoc and suffering on earth that are more terrifying than any Stephen King novel. Abraham must be rolling in his grave many times over.

It is up to humankind to make peace on earth, not by force but based on free will. Albert Einstein said, “Whatever there is of God and goodness in the universe, it must work itself out and express itself through us. We cannot stand aside and let God do it” [8]. In February 2011, Muslims and Christians in Egypt set aside religious tensions and joined hands in anti-Mubarak protest in Tahrir Square, chanting “Arise O Egypt, arise. Arise Egyptians: Muslims, Christians and Jews” [161].

2.19 Separation of Church and State

If the first Christians—as described in the first chapters of the Book of Acts—were to rule the country, the United States of America would embrace socialism or perhaps even communism:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. (Acts 4:32)

America’s Founding Fathers had a different idea. Article VI of the U.S. Constitution declares that “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States” [162] and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” [163].

In the 1971 court case *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the separation of church and state in siding with civil rights activist Alton T. Lemon’s objection to state aid to religious schools. Chief Justice Warren E. Burger defined the “Lemon Test” as [164]:

First, the statute must have a secular legislative purpose;

Second, its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion;

Finally, the statute must not foster “an excessive government entanglement with religion.”

However, the Chief Justice also cautioned that “judicial caveats against entanglement must recognize that the line of separation, far from being a ‘wall,’ is a blurred, indistinct and variable barrier depending on all the circumstances of a particular relationship” [165].

Indeed, according to the Pew Research Center report entitled “Faith and the 2016 Campaign,” 51 % of adults said that they would be less likely to vote for a

presidential candidate who does not believe in God, as compared to 37 % less likely for a candidate who had an extramarital affair and 20 % less likely for a former marijuana smoker [166]. Christians carry more clout in American politics. Separation of church and state is easier said than done. For example:

1. During the 2004 presidential campaign, George W. Bush met with the Amish (see Fig. 2.20) in Pennsylvania and Ohio—two of the swing states—to convince them to vote based on their conservative Christian outlook. As a result, some Amish voted for the first and only time in their lives [167].
2. U.S. House Representative Tulsi Gabbard from Hawaii is the first American Hindu elected to Congress in 2012. Opponents argued that “she shouldn’t be allowed to serve because her religion doesn’t align with the Constitution.” Gabbard responded that “a pluralistic, secular government is the only way to ensure that all individuals have the freedom to follow the religious path of their choice” [168].
3. For the 2012 presidential election, a research study by Prof. Benjamin Knoll of Centre College showed that “about 1 out of every 20 Republicans decided to stay home instead of turning out to vote for their party’s nominee [Mitt Romney] because they don’t perceive Mormons as Christian” [169].
4. During the 2016 presidential race, Pope Francis suggested that Donald Trump was not a Christian and ABC’s Jimmy Kimmel asked U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders from Vermont if he believed in God. Trump lashed out at the Pope, “If and when the Vatican is attacked, the pope would only wish and have prayed that Donald Trump would have been elected president” [170] whereas Sanders replied to Kimmel evasively, “Well, you know, I am who I am. And what I believe in, what my spirituality is about, is that we’re all in this together—that I think it’s not a good thing to believe, as human beings, that we can turn our backs on the suffering of other people. And this is not Judaism. This is what Pope Francis is talking about: That we cannot worship just billionaires and the making of more and more money. Life is more than that” [171].

2.20 Trinity of Religions, Arts, and Sciences

Whenever people talk about religions, morality, and politics, they often get into heated arguments. As a result, people tend to avoid these sensitive topics altogether. Partly due to the growing apathy, voter turnout in America has dropped to a 72-year low in 2015 [172] and church attendance has been in steady decline for years [173].

American comedian and television host Bill Maher told the audience on ABC’s Jimmy Kimmel Live, “We have to stop saying ‘Well, we should not insult a great religion.’ First of all, there are no great religions. There are all stupid and dangerous. ... We should insult them, and we should be able to insult whatever we want” [174]. Pope Francis begs to differ. The Pope said, “You don’t kill in God’s

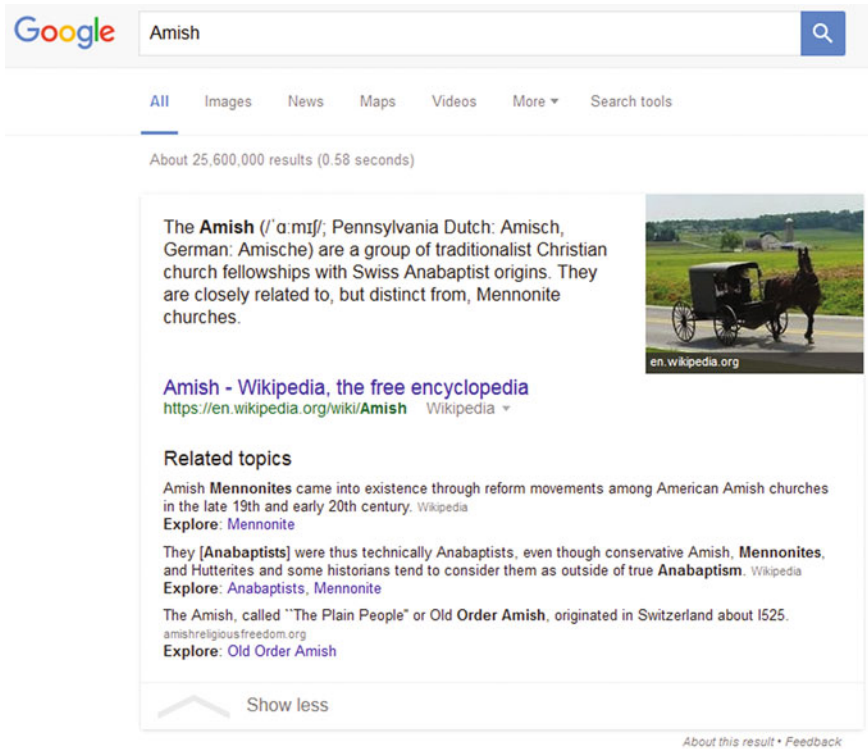


Fig. 2.20 Google search on “Amish” displays a Wikipedia definition for the Amish as “a group of traditionalist Christian church fellowships with Swiss Anabaptist origins” and related topics on Mennonites, Anabaptists, and “The Plain People.”

name. ... [But] you cannot provoke, you cannot insult the faith of others. You cannot make fun of the faith of others” [175].

God exists with or without religions. A religion is a human expression and understanding of God. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his weekly newspaper *Harijan* that “each religion has its own contribution to make to human evolution. I regard the great faiths of the world as so many branches of a tree, each distinct from the other though having the same source” [12]. Even the anti-religious and fascist Adolf Hitler invoked the name of God in many of his public speeches to motivate Nazi Germany. He said, “For one cannot assume that God exists to help people who are too cowardly and too lazy to help themselves and think that God exists only to make up for the weakness of mankind” [176].

Atheists do away with both God and religions altogether, and replace them with their own beliefs and expressions. Extropian Max More opines that the future belongs to posthumanity with “no more gods, no more faith, no more timid holding back” [177]. Nonetheless, there is an aphoristic saying that “there are no atheists in foxholes.” During an edge-of-your-seat chase scene in the Academy Award

winning film *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), the evil Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne) and the fanatical War Boys were going after Max (Tom Hardy), Furiosa (Charlize Theron), and the Five Wives. One of the wives—The Dag (Abbey Lee Kershaw)—started to mutter a prayer, and Toast the Knowing (Zoë Kravitz) looked at her curiously:

Toast the Knowing: What are you doing?

The Dag: Praying.

Toast the Knowing: To who?

The Dag: Anyone that's listening.

God and religions may take on different names, forms, and meanings in different cultures, civilizations, and stages of human evolution. But as long as we are human, or posthuman for that matter, there is no escape from God and religions. Like the song *Hotel California* by the Eagles, “You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave!” Denying the existence of God the Creator is like an artificial intelligent machine doubting the existence of human inventors.

The religious, moral, and political entanglement is mirrored in physics where quantum entanglement—a word coined by Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger—describes “a physical phenomenon that occurs when pairs or groups of particles are generated or interact in ways such that the quantum state of each particle cannot be described independently—instead, a quantum state may be given for the system as a whole” [178].

Although Albert Einstein rejected quantum theory by calling the entanglement a “spooky action across distance” [179], he was correct in saying that “all religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree.” Einstein explained that “all these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man’s life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom. It is no mere chance that our older universities developed from clerical schools. Both churches and universities—insofar as they live up to their true function—serve the ennoblement of the individual. They seek to fulfill this great task by spreading moral and cultural understanding, renouncing the use of brute force” [180].

The ultimate wisdom comes from the trinity of religions, arts, and sciences (see *The Garden of Earthly Delights* triptych by Hieronymus Bosch in Figs. 2.21 and 2.22). Nature, for instance, shows us its artistic beauty that sciences explain the hows and religions contemplate the whys. Astrology, feng shui, and other pseudoscience are attempts to predict or account for life circumstances. Jesus offered humankind a profound enlightenment on the mystery of life, the universe, and everything (pun intended for paying homage to English writer Douglas Adams). Figure 2.23 is a January 2016 snapshot of the Google search autocomplete predictions showing the most popular searches related to “Jesus is.” Overall, Jesus enjoys a better reception than God (see Fig. 2.11) and the Bible (see Fig. 2.8) in the top 10 list of Google searches among some 250 million unique visitors every month.



Fig. 2.21 Exterior (shutters) of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* triptych by Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1490–1510). The inscription reads “Ipse dixit, et facta sunt (He spoke and it was there)” and “Ipse mandavit, et creata sunt (He commanded and they were created)” from Psalm 33:9. Courtesy of Museo del Prado



Fig. 2.22 *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, oil on oak triptych by Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1490–1510). Courtesy of Museo del Prado

2.21 Death, Resurrection, and Future of Religions

In *Star Wars* (1977), Jedi master Obi-Wan Kenobi (Alec Guinness) sacrificed himself in the battle with Darth Vader (David Prowse) so that he could become a stronger “Force ghost” to help guide the young Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) (see Fig. 2.24) [181]. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968 accelerated the American civil rights movement [182]. The crucifixion of Jesus brought forth the world’s largest religion—Christianity—with about 2.2 billion followers in 2015 [6].

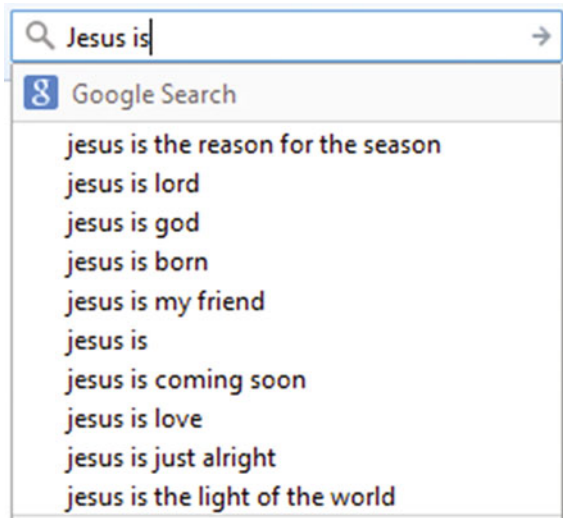
Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day when he appeared to his disciples:

“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. (Luke 24:39–43)

Unlike other resurrection stories such as Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17–24), Shunamite (2 Kings 4:18–37), Jairus (Mark 5:35–43), and Lazarus (John 11:1–44), Apostle Paul spoke of immortality:

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” ... When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ... So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ... Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with

Fig. 2.23 Google search autocomplete predictions for “Jesus is” (as of January 2016)



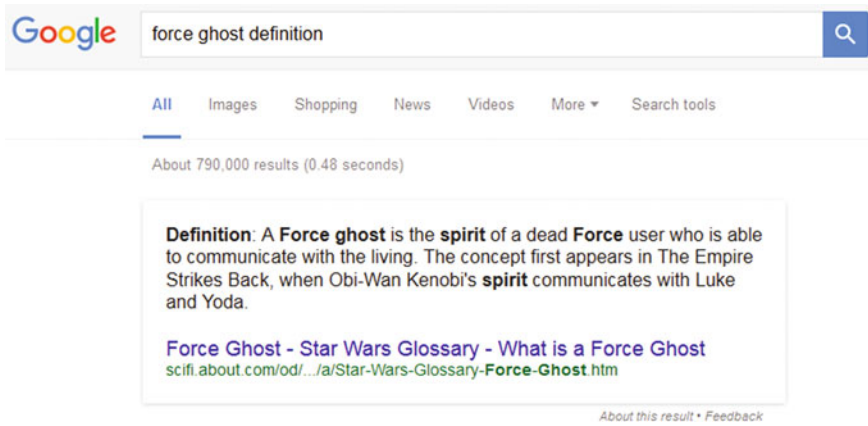


Fig. 2.24 Google Search on “Force ghost” returns a Knowledge Graph definition from about.com: “A Force ghost is the spirit of a dead Force user who is able to communicate with the living. The concept first appears in *The Empire Strikes Back*, when Obi-Wan Kenobi’s spirit communicates with Luke and Yoda.”

immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinthians 15:35, 37, 42, 51–54)

Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 15:51—“We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed”—invigorates the belief of some transhumanists in achieving immortality during their lifetime. After all, no one in their current human form can see the face of God and live (Exodus 33:20). Lincoln Cannon, founder of the Mormon Transhumanist Association, talks about transfigurism as a future of religion as exemplified by religious transhumanists in Chap. 19 of this book.

2.22 And Now for Something Completely Different, or not

In the comical spirit of Monty Python, we could use a sense of humor while we unravel the Gordian knot of religious, moral, and political entanglement that forms the nexus between ideologies and actions in our everyday life (see Fig. 2.25):

1. Being a student preacher in high school, I co-wrote a gospel song with one of my best friends Chau Kai Ton for publication in our yearbook. My non-Christian friends oftentimes greeted me by saying, “Ah, here comes Jesus!” Three decades later, Chau and I collaborated again, this time for the academic book *Digital Da Vinci: Computers in Music* [183].
2. In an MTV interview with Dutch filmmaker Paul Verhoeven in 2010, the director called the original RoboCop “the American Jesus.” He explained that “the point of ‘RoboCop,’ of course, is it is a Christ story. It is about a guy that gets crucified after 50 min, then is resurrected in the next 50 min and then is like



Fig. 2.25 *Alexander Cutting the Gordian Knot* by Jean-Simon Berthélemy (1767). Courtesy of The Athenaeum <http://www.the-athenaeum.org/> [188]

the super-cop of the world, but is also a Jesus figure as he walks over water at the end. ... I put something just underneath the water so [Peter Weller] could walk over the water and say this wonderful line... ‘I am not arresting you anymore.’ Meaning, ‘I’m going to shoot you.’ And that is of course the American Jesus” [184].

3. British singer-songwriter David Bowie said in an unaired CBS 60 min interview in 2003 that “searching for music is like searching for God. They are very similar. There’s an effort to reclaim the unmentionable, the unsayable, the unseeable, the unspeakable, all those things come into being a composer, into writing music, into searching for notes and pieces of musical information that don’t exist” [185].
4. If American rock band R.E.M. were to rewrite the lyrics to their 1991 hit song “Losing My Religion” [186] for Generation Z today, they could simply change one word, from “losing” to “Googling”: ♪ *Oh life, it’s bigger. It’s bigger than you and you are not me. ... Oh no, I’ve said too much. I haven’t said enough. That’s me in the corner. That’s me in the spotlight Googling my religion. ...* ♪
5. If we Google “prayers,” the library of Catholic prayers is the number one organic search result (see Fig. 2.26). However, if we Google “Google prayers,” the Church of Google becomes number one. Its webpage titled “Google Prayers:

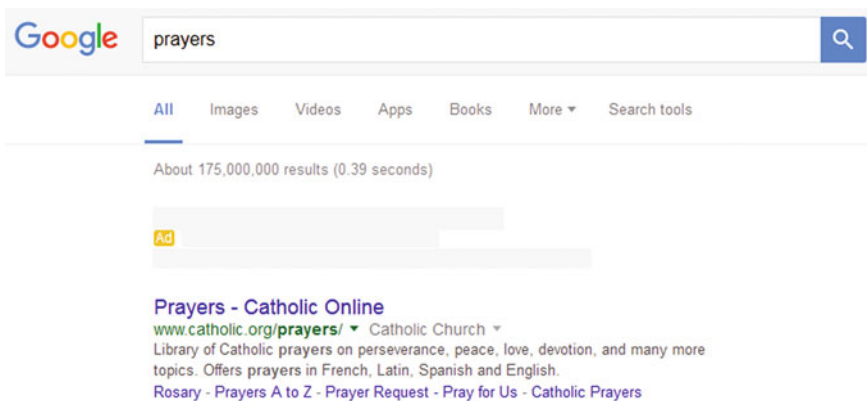


Fig. 2.26 Google search on “prayers” returns the library of Catholic prayers as the number one organic search result

Is Google God?—The Church of Google” contains a parody of the Lord’s Prayer by Matt Bowen [187]:

Our Google, who art in cyberspace,
 Hallowed be thy domain.
 Thy search to come,
 Thy results be done,
 On 127.0.0.1 as it is in the Googleplex.
 Give us this day our daily searches,
 And forgive us our spam,
 As we forgive those who spam against us.
 And lead us not into temptation,
 But deliver us from Microsoft.
 For thine is the search engine,
 And the power,
 And the glory,
 Forever and ever.
 Amen.

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