



Written by [James Heiser](#) on January 19, 2010

Google's Glitch for "Islam is..."

For all that has been said about the advances in the capacity of Internet search engines to aid in research, a recently discovered anomaly in Google is raising new questions about the objectivity of the searches it provides.

For some time now, it has appeared that Google has a hard time handling searches for religious material without a researcher falling afoul of the political correctness police. For example, St. Paul's famous words from Galatians 3 concerning the promise of salvation: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Search for the entire verse, and you won't trigger a warning. But if you search for the first portion — "There is neither Jew nor Greek" — a link ("[Offensive Search Results](#)") appears, along with your search results, containing the following message:



If you recently used Google to search for the word "Jew," you may have seen results that were very disturbing. We assure you that the views expressed by the sites in your results are not in any way endorsed by Google. We'd like to explain why you're seeing these results when you conduct this search. A site's ranking in Google's search results relies heavily on computer algorithms using thousands of factors to calculate a page's relevance to a given query. Sometimes subtleties of language cause anomalies to appear that cannot be predicted. A search for "Jew" brings up one such unexpected result.

If you use Google to search for "Judaism," "Jewish" or "Jewish people," the results are informative and relevant. So why is a search for "Jew" different? One reason is that the word "Jew" is often used in an anti-Semitic context.

It had appeared as if such handwringing at Google over one particular search term was unique for "Jew." (After all, the address, google.com/explanation, certainly implies that this is the only search which needs an explanation.) But now it appears that search for information about Islam also yields interesting results.

The issue arises with a Google feature which offers search "suggestions." As is observed in [an article at FoxNews.com](#):

Type a few words into the search field on Google's home page and the engine automatically returns a helpful list of popular, similar searches for the words you've typed in so far — a convenient way to find the right information.



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Enter "Christianity is" and you'll find results that, while offensive, at least indicate common discussions on the Internet. Likewise, type "Judaism is" and Google suggests other, potentially offensive searches such as "Judaism is false" and "Judaism is not a race."

But type "Islam is" into the search engine and Google's auto-results pane mysteriously vanishes, leading some to conclude that Google, whose mantra is "don't be evil," is censoring its search results.

As FoxNews noted, you can experiment with a whole range of religious searches — "Christianity is...", "Hinduism is...", "Mormonism is...", even "Judaism is..." —and find that the feature of Google which offers to finish defining your search parameters yields many suggestions which adherents of those religious would certainly consider insulting, even defamatory.

But type in "Islam is..." and the autocomplete feature suddenly falls mute.

Is this merely "[cowardice](#)," as some are suggesting? Perhaps. But it is also most certainly a warning to users: Whether such "anomalies" are merely glitches or intentional, not all searches are equal. And in a medium which thrives on a sense of bland neutrality, the intellectual laziness which is content to rely on search engine results, and not real research, may be served a very valuable warning by such "anomalies."

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