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**Theology Q2**

Why would the creator of a trillion galaxies become angry if you have sex with your boyfriend or eat bacon for breakfast?

**Recommended Readings**

**John Locke Works**

1. "The Reasonableness of Christianity" (1695)

Examines which religious doctrines are essential versus peripheral

Argues for distinguishing between fundamental beliefs and secondary practices

Explores the rational basis for religious requirements

2. "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1689)

In Book IV, Locke discusses the limits of human knowledge about God

Explores how we might understand divine attributes and intentions

Questions how we can know God's will with certainty

3. "A Letter Concerning Toleration" (1689)



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Distinguishes between matters essential to salvation and indifferent matters

Argues for limited religious authority over personal conduct

Discusses the proper scope of religious rules in civil society

**Other Historical Works**

1. "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion" by David Hume (1779)

Questions anthropomorphic conceptions of God

Examines the problem of inferring divine intentions from natural evidence

Critiques the coherence of traditional theistic attributes

2. "Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason" by Immanuel Kant (1793)

Distinguishes between moral religion and statutory religion

Questions which religious practices have genuine moral significance

Examines the rational foundations of religious prohibitions



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3. "The Guide for the Perplexed" by Maimonides (12th century)

Addresses the rationality behind Jewish dietary laws

Explores divine commandments as serving practical purposes

Reconciles divine transcendence with specific commandments

**Contemporary Resources**

1. "God: A Biography" by Jack Miles (1995)

Literary analysis of God as a character in scripture

Examines the development of divine concerns from cosmic to personal

Explores the paradox of divine attention to human minutiae

2. "The Evolution of God" by Robert Wright (2009)

Traces how conceptions of God evolved from tribal to universal

Examines how moral codes reflect historical social needs



**Theology** Category - Recommended Readings

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Explores the tension between universal deity and particular rules

3. "Why Religion?" by Elaine Pagels (2018)

Personal and scholarly examination of religious prohibitions

Explores how religious rules function in communities

Examines the gap between cosmic theology and everyday practice

4. "The Language God Talks" by Herman Wouk (2010)

Examines the relationship between scientific understanding and religious practice

Discusses how traditional observances can coexist with cosmic perspective

Written by an observant Jew who respected scientific cosmology

5. "God After Darwin" by John F. Haught (2000)

Explores how evolutionary understanding affects theological concepts

Examines how divine concern might operate across different scales



Proposes understanding God's relationship to creation in non-interventionist terms

6. "A Secular Age" by Charles Taylor (2007)

Traces the development of religious consciousness in modernity

Examines how cosmic scale affects religious sensibilities

Explores how behavioral codes function in modern spiritual frameworks

7. "Unclean" by Richard Beck (2011)

Psychological analysis of purity codes in religion

Examines why certain behaviors are tagged as morally significant

Explores disgust psychology behind dietary and sexual prohibitions

8. "The Varieties of Religious Experience" by William James (1902)

Distinguishes between institutional religion and personal experience



## John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown

### Theology Category - Recommended Readings



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Examines the psychological foundations of religious prohibitions

Explores the gap between cosmic religious experience and moral codes

