You can manifest worldly goods by just using disciplined thought, but, more importantly, you can manifest just plain feeling good (or feeling even better), physically and emotionally, and your spiritual good, and even, as the Ashtavakra Gita (chap. 1, verse 11) teaches, enlightenment itself. The American New Thought religious movement is a disciplined “way” of reconnecting with God and your worldly good by using the principles of the law of attraction throughout the day and in all aspects of your life. Many New Thought books have been published since Warren Felt Evans’ The Mind Cure in 1869 (full text available on the Web), and here are some of the best. The first four would be considered representative of the New Thought movement.

- Florence Scovel Shinn, The Game of Life and How to Play It. Originally published in 1925 and now available in several paperback editions, and on our website. Don’t let its naïve style put you off, it’s full of solid principles on how to improve your life by replacing thoughts of what you don’t want with thoughts of what you truly desire.

- Neville, The Power of Awareness (DeVorss, 1992—be sure to get this edition, which has been expanded with Neville’s own notes on his copy of the original 1952 edition). Neville Goddard was a mystic and a life-long student of mental manifesting. He wrote ten books, all good ones, and this might be the best. There is a Neville Goddard website, with links to many other New Thought authors.

- Just two pages long, and a classic of the New Thought movement: The Golden Key, by Emmet Fox. Whenever negative thoughts keep troubling you, just “golden key” them.

- Less than one page! And summarizing the whole idea of how your thoughts create your reality: The Umpire. In a baseball game it doesn’t matter whether the pitch is over the plate or not, it matters what the umpire calls it. In the game of life, you’re the umpire.

- Barry Zito, currently a pitcher for the San Francisco Giants and one of the all-time greatest pitchers in baseball, used the New Thought principles, especially as taught by Ernest Holmes, to perfect his game. Read about it here.

- Lynne McTaggert, The Intention Experiment: Using Your Thoughts to Change Your Life and the
World. Summarizes scientific studies of “mind over matter” and spiritual healing and invites the reader into a large-scale experiment she and others are currently conducting. This is also a good introduction to some implications of quantum physics. See ref. to her book *The Field*, below.

- **This article of mine** shows how the idea of mental manifesting originated in ancient times, and describes and contrasts the basic New Thought and Christian Science methods. Note the quotation from William James, who knew that New Thought actually worked.

- **The DVD movie *You Can Heal Your Life* (2007)** is an outstanding introduction to practicing the New Thought or Law of Attraction principles. Be sure to get the expanded version, which has ten extended interviews that are very helpful.

Meditation and reconnecting with reality.

- When you clear your mind of all thoughts and just rest in alert stillness, you are manifesting, then and there, enlightenment.


- Article on what meditation is and how to do it, on our Web site.

Introductions to philosophy.


- A classic by the famous British philosopher of the mid-twentieth century, Bertrand Russell, is *The History of Western Philosophy* (Simon and Schuster, 1945). Some parts are especially beautifully written and insightful (e.g., the first two pages, on what philosophy is, and the section on Plotinus).

- *Doubt, A History*, by Jennifer Michael Hecht (HarperOne, 2004), is an excellent history of various philosophers, scientists, and other writers, Eastern and Western, religious and secular, on this important topic.

- One of the best teachers on philosophy and religion, and especially eastern religious philosophy, is the late Alan Watts (1915-73). There are several good books by him in print, and there are several recordings of talks or lectures he gave. Take a look at alanwatts.com.

- There are excellent philosophy resources on the Web, and this one, at Oxford, links many of them together.

Quantum physics and its implications for religion and philosophy.

- All these books are remarkably well written, especially considering the often difficult concepts they have to deal with. Some are getting a bit old, but I have not seen better.

  - On the history, development and basic concepts of quantum physics.

  - On the basic concepts of quantum physics and how they relate to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese thought.
    - Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics, An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Shambhala, 1975, 1999). A classic, very readable. I used to use it as a textbook in my Introduction to Philosophy classes, and students loved it.

  - On quantum physics and religious and philosophical monism.
    - Amit Goswami, *The Visionary Window, A Quantum Physicist’s Guide to Enlightenment* (Quest, 2000). Goswami is a theoretical nuclear physicist and member of The University of Oregon Institute for Theoretical Physics, and he knows Hindu Advaita Vedanta well.

- Very good on describing the nature of reality as described by quantum physics, especially the notion that reality blinks on and off.
- A very good short piece from Caltech on the Internet describing “zero point energy and the zero point field.” I recommend the introduction, the rest gets pretty technical.

On belief and religion in general.

- *Why Bad Beliefs Don’t Die*. Good short piece on the nature of belief.

Understanding the Bible in general.

- Hector Avalos, *The End of Biblical Studies* (Prometheus Books, 2007). Clearly describes the almost total irrelevance of the Bible for humanity today and how Bible studies of all kinds are supported for their own sakes—i.e., to keep biblical scholars and publishers employed. Avalos is one of those leading biblical scholars. He also points out that absolutely all bible translations have a religionist agenda and that, consequently, none can be relied on for what the bible actually says in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; and that biblical archeology has come up empty-handed (see the article by Dee, below), indicating that the major events of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament are fictions.

Understanding Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible) and Judaism.

- Marc Zvi Brettler, *How to Read the Bible* (Jewish Publication Society, 2005), is excellent.
  - You can get an idea of what Brettler and his book are about in this audio.
- James Dee, “The Devout Face a Dilemma.” An op-ed piece from the Austin American-Statesman describing how biblical archeology has shown that there is almost no historical and archeological evidence forputative historical events in the bible.

Understanding the Christian New Testament and the question of the historical Jesus.

- An excellent place to start is Earl Doherty’s “The Jesus Puzzle”. There are plenty of articles there. Browse around the Website first.
- An excellent introduction to how scholars investigate the gospels, especially when looking for evidence of an historical Jesus, is Robert M. Price, *The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man, How Reliable is the Gospel Tradition?* (Prometheus Books, 2003).
  - Price was born into and became a minister of the Baptist religion, and is now an Episcopalian priest, but he is an independent thinker, with no theological axe to grind. And he writes well and is funny.
  - Watch out when going to books on Christianity, and especially on the gospels and the questions of the historicity of Jesus: most authors do have a theological axe to grind and will twist the evidence to make it support some traditional Christian orthodoxy. The mendacity of orthodox “scholars” is a scandal (but there is a lesson here: the religions can’t stand unfettered scholarship, i.e., free enquiry—they know their traditions are based on lies and will be exposed). On this see the book by Avalos, recommended above.
  - One great benefit of this book is that it starts out by showing what principles rationalistic biblical scholars use. That is quite interesting in itself.
- Earl Doherty, *The Jesus Puzzle* (go to his Web site where you can order an autographed copy—he fills orders quickly—or order it from amazon.com).
There are many good short studies on how early Christianity developed by Doherty on his website “The Jesus Puzzle: Was there no Historical Jesus?”

I recommend you read the Price book first. And, if you’re really keen on the historical Jesus issue, go on to Price’s Deconstructing Jesus (Prometheus Books, 2000).

I also recommend you read these books several times, they are so full of information it’s too much to comprehend in one reading.

You should be familiar also with the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas.

There are many editions of Thomas, which is probably the earliest collection of Jesus-sayings. I recommend the version in Gary Renard’s Your Immortal Reality (Hay House, 2006), pages 162-171, which purports to be the original author’s own, shorter version.

Early Christianity.

The first third of the movie Zeitgeist (on the Web) is excellent on the importance of zodiacal themes in Christianity. Be sure to notice the interactive notes.

Another outstanding book by Robert M. Price is The DaVinci Fraud, Why the Truth is Stranger than Fiction (Prometheus Books, 2005). It is much more than just a critique of Dan Brown’s silly novel (The Da Vinci Code), it is a complete introduction to early Christianity, and well written, as everything by Price is. The chapter on Gnosticism is especially excellent.


Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, The Jesus Mysteries: Was the “Original Jesus” a Pagan God? (Random House, 1999). Argues that there is no evidence for an historical Jesus, and that the Jesus story is a rewriting of Pagan myths. Their Jesus and the Lost Goddess: The Secret Teachings of the Original Christians (Harmony, 2001) argues that the Jesus story encodes a Gnostic wisdom teaching.

Gnosticism (both Christian and non-Christian).

Tobias Churton, The Gnostics (Barnes and Noble, 1997 [1987]), is an outstanding treatment of three forms of gnosticism.

The Christian gnosticism revealed especially in the Nag Hammadhi documents.

The gnosticism of the Hermes Trismegistos tradition.

And Renaissance gnosticism centering in 15th century Florence, especially around the figures of Marcilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. This book is no longer in print but is easily available from the online used book sources noted above.

An outstanding short piece on Christian gnosticism is in Price’s The DaVinci Fraud, noted above.

Introduction to Eastern philosophy and religion.


See reference to Alan Watts, earlier.


Indian religion/philosophy (especially Brahmanism and Buddhism).

Huston Smith’s chapters on Hinduism and Buddhism in our textbook, The World’s Religions, plus the required readings, Ashtavakra Gita and the Buddhist Heart Sutra, are an excellent beginning for understanding Indian religion and philosophy. Check Smith’s “Suggestions for further reading” at the end of the chapters on Hinduism and Buddhism. I can also recommend the following.

Eknath Easwaran’s three volume set that includes the Buddhist Dhammapada, the Hindu Bhagavad Gita, and a good selection from the Hindu Upanishads, all with excellent explanatory commentaries.

Perhaps better for the first-time reader are the Sky Light Illuminations (SkyLight Paths Publishing) versions of Dhammapada and Bhagavad Gita.

Barbara Stoller Miller’s Bhagavad Gita is also a good translation.
• Shankara’s Crest Jewel of Discrimination or Crest Jewel of Wisdom. The very good translation of John Rich- 
dards is [here](#) and also [on our Website](#) (prints out to 40 pages).
  • Along with the Ashtavakra Gita the Crest Jewel is the clearest statement of the view that freedom
    (enlightenment) comes only from the realization of the oneness of Being and the developed ability
    to discriminate between what is real and what is illusory.
  • Prabhavananda and Isherwood’s translation, with commentary, is also very good.
• The Ashtavakra Gita is the best document of Hindu Vedanta—and of religious metaphysics from any tradi-
tion. Read this if nothing else. As one student said, “It’s all downhill from here.”
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• The Ashtavakra Gita is the best document of Hindu Vedanta—and of religious metaphysics from any tradi-
tion. Read this if nothing else. As one student said, “It’s all downhill from here.”
• An anthology of hymns from The Rig Veda, collected, translated, and annotated by Wendy Doniger
  O’Flaherty of the U. of Chicago.
• Heinrich Zimmer, Philosophies of India, is a scholarly but readable classic covering all the Indian philoso-
phies, not just Brahmanism and Buddhism.

### The argument that popular religion as such is evil.
• Christopher Hitchens, God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything (Twelve, 2007).
• Sam Harris, Letter to a Christian Nation (Vintage, 2008). Ten recommended readings at the end.
• Gregory Paul study (published by a Roman Catholic University) of statistical evidence of the relation be-
tween popular religion and social dysfunction in 18 developed nations. Paul advances minimal interpreta-
tion in this article, as the statistics speak for themselves, showing that wherever religious observance is
strong (i.e., in the USA and, in the USA, in the Bible Belt), in contrast to more secular societies (e.g., Euro-
pean countries and northeastern America), rates of social dysfunction (such as homicides, abortions, drug
use, etc.) are correspondingly high, suggesting that popular religion as such should be considered a social
dysfunction.
• This November 2008 Slate.com article by Paul Bloom (author of Descartes’ Baby) is helpful on whether re-
ligion is good for society or not.