

GNOSTICISM. Gnosticism is a modern name for a variety of ancient religious ideas and systems; it deems the divine soul as trapped in the material world, i.e. in the human body. **F**or gnostics the supreme God was unapproachable and had no dealings with the world of matter. Matter was the creation of an inferior being, the *demiurge*. He kept mankind imprisoned within their material existence, and barred the path of individual souls trying to ascend to the spirit world after death. **O**nly those who possessed a divine spark could escape from their corporeal existence. And even those possessing such a spark did not have an automatic escape, for they needed to receive the enlightenment of *gnōsis* (esoteric, mystical knowledge) before becoming aware of their own spirituality. **T**his enlightenment is the work of a divine redeemer, who descends from the spiritual world in disguise and is often equated with the Christian Jesus. However, with gnosis one may be inspired or stimulated by external teachings and revelations ... but the essential knowledge comes from within. **T**he gnostics followed a dualistic metaphysic; beyond the cosmos was the transcendental spiritual-divine reality, with complex accounts of the various divine emanations.

GOING BROKE. A while ago, after banking a check, I sat down to pay some bills. Times were tough. I had no jobs. Christmas was coming, with the slowest months of the year. After I paid my bills I did my accounts - they did not look good. **A**s it was, I would not even have enough money to last me until the end of the year. I got depressed. I hardly slept that night, kept waking up in a sweat with a gut-wrenching pain and a headache. I was down to my last few dollars. **T**hat was a couple of months ago. I feel somewhat better now. I go for walks; enjoy simple things. My kid came back from school yesterday and gave me a dollar fifty change from his three dollars lunch money - 'cause we're so broke.' **M**y bank account is overdrawn - 'no more', says the bank. The credit card is to the max. I didn't pay rent for two months. The finance company threatens to re-possess my gear. Stacks of unpaid bills. I am not owed a cent. No work. **A**nd the sun is setting over the bay - its rays throw off little sparkles as they are reflected in the ripples on the water brought on by a gentle afternoon breeze. The wind catches in the leaves of the trees. Somewhere a bird sings.