

The Gospel of Aquarius: The Religion of the Future - *Richard Smoley*

Handout A — lecture notes and summaries by noted astrologers on The Age of Aquarius

As we near the end of the age of Pisces, we may well be nearing the end of the era of major organized religions. Of course, importantly, astrologers differ, sometimes to a significant degree, by hundreds of years, on the exact dates of specific eras. Those presently involved in major religions prefer to say that we will be viewing a significant, healthy evolution in the nature of organized religion.

From Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Aquarius

Astrological meaning of the Age of Aquarius

Ages are believed by some astrologers to affect mankind while other astrologers believe the ages correlate to the rise and fall of mighty civilizations and cultural tendencies. Aquarius traditionally "rules" electricity, computers, flight, democracy, freedom, humanitarianism, idealists, modernization, rebels and rebellion, mental diseases, nervous disorders, and astrology. Other keywords and ideas believed associated with Aquarius are nonconformity, philanthropy, veracity, perseverance, mankind and irresolution. The appearance or elevation in status of many of these Aquarian developments over the last few centuries is considered by many astrologers to indicate the proximity of the Aquarian age. There is no uniform agreement about the relationship of these recent Aquarian developments and the Age of Aquarius. Some astrologers believe that the influence of a New Age is experienced before it arrives because of a cuspal effect or Orb of Influence. Other astrologers believe the appearance of Aquarian developments indicate the actual arrival of the Age of Aquarius. 2012 marks the beginning of a new age.

David Williams

David Williams claims that the Age of Aquarius arrived about 1844, with the harbinger of the Siyyid `Alí Muḥammad (1819–1850), also known as the Báb, founder of Bábism. Williams adopts a sub-period approach to the ages whereby each age is divided into three decans. The three age-decans of the Aquarian Age in chronological order are Libra, Gemini and Aquarius. Williams states that the world is currently in the Libran decan of the Age of Aquarius which is why the world has been so affected by wars (due to Libra) and revolutions (due to Aquarius). He relates ideologies such as Socialism, Communism and Fascism to the arrival of the Age of Aquarius. While Williams acknowledges the massive influx of technology associated with Aquarius, he bemoans the creation of a race of morons willing to sit down and be spoon-fed from their TVs. Finally, Williams debunks the notion that some new world leader, teacher, or Messiah will arrive and instantly fix all the ills of the world. Though he acknowledges great progress since the Aquarian Age arrived about 1844, the world will have to wait for the Aquarian decan of the Aquarian Age before the true fellowship of humankind is experienced in the world.

(According to Williams's calculations, the Aquarian decan of the Age of Aquarius will arrive in about 3284, lasting until about 4004).

Marcia Moore and Mark Douglas

Marcia Moore and Mark Douglas promoted the view that though no one knows when the Aquarian Age begins, the American Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the discovery of electricity are all attributable to the Aquarian Age. Moore and Douglas make a number of predictions about the trends that they believe will develop in the Aquarian Age. These include people becoming more impersonal (detached), yet more altruistic and humane. Developments involving flight and space travel will result in decentralization. Inner cities will shrink and burgeoning outer suburbs and industrial areas will reduce congestion.

Vera Reid

Vera Reid takes a common position expressed by many astrologers and New Agers about the Age of Aquarius. Reid sees the Age of Aquarius as that time when humankind takes control of the Earth and its own destiny as its rightful heritage. As such, humankind will become the "Son of God". Reid believed that the keyword for Aquarius is 'enlightenment'. The destiny of humankind in the Age of Aquarius is the revelation of truth and the expansion of consciousness. Reid also believed that the many crises the world is experiencing are attributable to the waning days of the Age of Pisces meeting the incoming tide of Aquarius, with the transition between ages lasting approximately 280 years. Reid also promoted the idea that some people will experience mental enlightenment in advance of others and therefore be recognized as new leaders in the world.

Robert Zoller

Robert Zoller is a proponent of medieval astrology. Zoller's bleak predictions for the Age of Aquarius suggest that the Pisces world where religion is the opiate of the masses will be replaced in the Aquarian Age by a world ruled by secretive power-hungry elites seeking absolute power over others. Families will dissolve completely, or family ties will be hidden. Zoller also believes that knowledge in the Aquarian Age will only be valued for its ability to win wars; scientists may even be able to precipitate earthquakes for military means, and the danger in the Aquarian Age is that knowledge and science will be abused, not industry and trade. Zoller sees the Aquarian Age as a Dark Age wherein religion will be seen as offensive.

Albert Amao

Amao states that the transition period between any two ages is based on two degrees' leeway at the point of intersection of two adjoining zodiacal constellations. Based on this transitional structure, Amao has the Age of Aquarius commencing in 1948 with the transitional period from the Pisces age to Aquarian age covering the period 1876 to 2020. Amao follows the causative approach to the ages and believes that the energy from the arriving constellation of Aquarius is actually creating the changes on Earth that many astrologers associate with the Age of Aquarius. The key characteristics of the Aquarian age according to Amao are: science will explain the mysteries of religion; knowledge and

reason; freedom and equality, equality of the sexes and of religion; space exploration, supremacy of the United States over the former Pisces supremacy of Europe; and finally revelation of the Mystery.

Amao also states that the Mayan Long Count calendar, that has an end-date of December 21, 2012, is associated with precession of the equinoxes and therefore can provide an important demarcation for the Age of Aquarius. Another technique used by Amao is the longterm conjunction cycle of the planets Saturn and Jupiter that will have a conjunction of these two planets at the very beginning of the sign Aquarius in 2020. Combined with the closing transition date of 2020 derived from the one degree cusp method, Amao is convinced that we lie at the threshold of the Aquarian age.

Neil Spencer

Neil Spencer provides another sobering overview of the Age of Aquarius stating that the rise of scientific rationalism combined with the fall of religious influence is possibly an indication of the Age of Aquarius. The growth in demands of human rights since the 1780s, though remaining unfulfilled, is another indication of Aquarius. Spencer points to the exponential growth of technology, especially of computers and the Internet, plus the growth in flight and space travel as examples of the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. Spencer also questions the New Age utopian view of the Age of Aquarius with the modern astrological perspective that each sign is different but equal. Possible negative examples of Aquarius include dumbed-down media and consumerism and rapacious international corporations. Finally, Spencer states that nuclear power must be a manifestation of the Aquarian Age and comments on the parallel between the 25,000 years it takes for uranium to decay with the 26,000 cycle of the astrological ages. No isotopes of uranium have a half-life of 25,000 years though, naturally occurring forms have half-lives of 4.46 billion years (U-238), 700 million years (U-235), and 245,000 years (U-234).

Louis MacNeice

Louis MacNeice reports that Rupert Gleadow saw the Age of Aquarius ruled by the planet Uranus and thus in the Age of Aquarius the attributes of Uranus such as inventions, machines, worldwide organizations, international collaboration, and the fellowship of humankind would spread. MacNeice also states that Ingrid Lind believes the Age of Aquarius has already arrived and the recent appearance of modern ideas and inventions supports this assertion. MacNeice also reports that Gleadow believed that the recent conflicts in the world (presumably the 20th century) correlate to the conflict between Saturn, ancient ruler of Aquarius and Uranus, modern ruler of Aquarius. Gleadow states that Saturn represents control, restrictions, and slavery, while Uranus represents culture, civilization, and intelligence. Though Gleadow viewed Uranus as a good planet, the famous astrologer Raphael believed Uranus to be evil and truly malefic.

Ray Grasse

Ray Grasse provides a guide to the Aquarian Age analogous to a travel guide for someone entering a foreign land. Grasse suggests that if you want help navigating through the Aquarian Age, you should leave room for silence in your life; create a center in your life (preferably involving a connection to the Absolute); and resist the deadening

of your world, so instead of filling up your life with manufactured goods or artificiality, bring living organic things into your life. Furthermore, you need to maintain a compassionate heart; be involved in a network or group; become more self-reliant; avoid being hypnotized by the "group trance"; and take control of your everyday attitudes (i.e., do not depend upon external events for your inner fulfillment). This last point is relevant, as Grasse states, "How do we know if the Age of Aquarius will be 'a utopia or an Orwellian nightmare?'"

Excerpts from *The Astrologer's Handbook* by Frances Sakoian & Louis S. Acker

Keywords for Aquarius: humanitarianism, independence, originality

"Friendship and companionship are extremely important to Aquarians." (p. 49)

"There is no affection or snobbery in the Aquarian personality but a dislike of spurious imitation and hypocrisy in any form." (p. 49)

"Their sympathy is impersonal and their response, intellectual...." (p. 50)

Aquarian Themes:

Eccentric, individualistic, technological interest, global universal sense (though not that warm and personal), true to oneself

Probable Aquarian themes that will manifest on large scale:

Co-creation, machines—technology prominent in culture, a spirituality which is more free-wheeling than religion, globalization, post-modernity, unity, global warming, environmentalism

From <http://home.earthlink.net/~gnosisla/February5.html>:

Joining hearts and hands across the electronic Gnostic world

The Aquarian Age: The New Age?

The topic of "The Age of Aquarius" usually brings forth in one's mind many images and questions of what this Age really is. Following several decades of popularization, the term "Aquarian Age" has often been used as a cliché in popular culture. Presently, almost any topic related to esotericism or mysticism is coined as "New Age" (referring to the New Age of Aquarius). In society today we have "New Age groups," "New Age book stores," "New Age music," etc. In lieu of all the stereotypes associated with this term,

however, it is important to know the historical facts associated with the Age of Aquarius and to understand its inner meaning.

Even though the Age of Aquarius has been highly popularized, few actually know much about it. Some assume that it began many years ago, while others believe that it has yet to begin. Samael Aun Weor, the founder of the Gnostic movement, tells us that the Age of Aquarius began on February 4, 1962. On that day there occurred a very interesting astronomical (and astrological) event. The planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, along with the sun, the earth, and the moon, were all found in the constellation of Aquarius. In addition, a solar and lunar eclipse occurred which was visible in some parts of the Old World. The cosmic event that transpired on that day is extremely rare. Such a congregation of planets occurs only once every 2160 years, moving from one constellation to the next. Each time it happens it marks the beginning of a new era, or New Age, for humanity. February 4, 1962 marked the end of the Age of Pisces and the beginning of the Age of Aquarius. Due to the great significance of the new era, the 4th of February bears a special meaning for Gnostic students. This date is recognized as the official Gnostic New Year, and is celebrated at Gnostic centers throughout the world. February 4, 1998 will mark the beginning of the 37th year of the Age of Aquarius.

To properly understand what a certain zodiacal constellation represents, we must look at its esoteric symbolism. If we look at the sign of Pisces, we see two fish. These two fish represent duality, the struggle of the opposites. The Age of Pisces was the age of conflict between opposing ideologies: dogmatic Christianity struggling against atheistic materialism, the Church against the state, science battling religion, spirituality vs. materiality, etc. The fish that lives in the water is instinctive, brutal, and always gets carried by the currents; the same was true with the men and women of the Age of Pisces.

Aquarius, however, is an eminently revolutionary sign, and its occult significance is knowledge. The constellation of Aquarius is governed by the planet Uranus, which is a completely revolutionary planet. The sign of Aquarius shows a man with two pitchers of water who is wisely combing these waters. The doctrine of the Age of Aquarius is thus termed the "Doctrine of the Synthesis", the synthesis of all authentic religions and systems of self-realization. In the Aquarian Age dogmatic types of Christianity will cease

to be taught, and all dogmatic forms will disappear. In this age science will become religious, and religion will become scientific. Disagreements between science and religion will come to an end, and people will begin to comprehend that both spirit and matter are derived from the same source, and are only modifications of the One Universal Energy. In the Age of Aquarius humanity will have marvelous breakthroughs in many scientific disciplines, including physics, chemistry, astronomy, medicine, aviation, etc.

Throughout the world many people have personal views about the Aquarian Age, and, although many of these beliefs are beautiful, they are also extremely erroneous. Many have termed the Aquarian Age as the "Golden Age" of humanity, and others have predicted that this Golden Age will commence at the beginning of the new millennium (the year 2000). They say that, at that time, mankind will go through a radical transformation, filled with great splendor and magnificence. Such Utopian concepts, however, are unfounded. Every man, woman, and nation bears enormous karmic debts that need to be paid before a Golden Age can become a reality. And as long as the psychological ego, that multitude of negative psychological elements, exists within us, then how can a true Golden Age be created? Within our psyche exist all those factors that create wars, hatred, violence, envy, disharmony, etc. In order to create an environment of love, peace, and fraternity between every human being, we must first permanently eliminate the elements within us that create the exact opposite environment. V. M. Samael Aun Weor states that "in order to create, it is necessary to destroy." For a Golden Age to occur, every person must struggle and make conscious efforts to eliminate his or her psychological defects.

To bring about true social change we must first begin by changing ourselves. By practicing the Three Factors for the Revolution of Consciousness we can dissolve the negative elements found within our psyche and also create the inner virtues that are necessary to live in harmony with nature and the rest of humanity. We must consciously work towards this goal, even if others choose not to do so. In this way, regardless of whether a Golden Age exists externally, we are consciously working towards creating a "Golden Age" within ourselves.

From the World Network of Religious Futurists website (FAQ section)
<http://www.wnrf.org/cms/index.shtml>

How do you "study the future" of religion?

Look at the story of your own religion, your own denomination, and ask how you can improve its story -- by God's grace. It's a story, a history, which includes you who is studying it. You are not here to make it worse; and you cannot leave it alone. You can make it better. You can make a better future religion. Who do you admire; whom would you imitate in your faith's story? A Pope, a Saint, a peace activist, a healer, a reformer? "Go thou and do likewise!"

Put it another way: You "study the future" of religion by extrapolating trends, and by caring about the future, especially the future of religion. And by praying and studying sacred texts and histories of one's own faith tradition -- to be inspired by it. What inspires you in the past -- what would inspire you in the future? Is it making peace or writing sacred song, building a garden of healing, being a missionary or a bishop or a scholar? Who were/are your heroines and heroes of faith? Your admiration for them is a current of energy for you to build a nobler future for your faith tradition.

Religious futures scholarship focuses on predictable occurrences in the future of religion, based on present observable trends, and past trends in religion, compounded by expectations of wild cards or quantum leaps, in the context of society's future as a whole, ranging from science to technology. What kind of science and technology excites you, what kind worries you? Get involved in bringing religious values to the future of these sciences and technologies!

Added to that, futures study of religion thinks in terms of what we want to see as well as what we expect to see. Professional futurists distinguish between descriptive and prescriptive futures, or between possible and probable versus the preferable and ideal on the other. By reflecting on the past, present and likely emerging events in religion and religions, we clarify our values, and ask ourselves if these are the events we would like to see.

For example, look at your church building. Do you like it? Is it perfect? Do the walls and windows inspire you to act for God's glory? Are the pews sources of healing and connectedness? If we look at the conventions of ecclesiastical architecture, and try to imagine various future changes in these conventions, we can ask ourselves "Where are these likely to go? Do these changes represent the best change we could think of?" Do you like the organization or worship of your local congregation, mosque, synagogue, or temple? If not, make a better future for it. You can influence the future of your religion.

Prescriptive future studies in field of religion have a rather uniquely privileged position among general futures studies; the essence of *prescriptive* future studies is to move through the study of the desirable to the discovery of the ideal. What is your ideal church, the form and structure and worship you would yearn to see?

The *Ideal* in philosophical theology is one of the attributes of the Supreme Being of God, sometimes called the Absolute. The question of the relationship of absolute and Supreme Being of God, is a matter for theology, rather than future studies. One point is clear, though; the pursuit of the Ideal is the pursuit of the Spirit, as God is spirit as well as truth.

The study of the future of religion is therefore the pursuit of the ideal, the search for highest and best truth, and by God's grace, the power to improve all things, including religion itself. *What dream of a better religion has God placed in your heart?*

Does religion really change or improve itself?

Yes. Scholars, theologians and historians of religion, such as John Hick, Houston Smith, Ninian Smart, Jeffrey Parrinder, Ziauddin Sardar or Hans Kung help us understand that religion and our interpretation of religion is a tradition of change.

Some people would resist this idea that a religion is a tradition of change. They might say things may have changed until the coming of the Bible, Koran, Torah, or other sacred revelation. But then, final revelation was reached and that is the end of the matter.

But once we understand that religion is a tradition of change, then we can see that there is no particular reason to think that change has stopped. The Protestant reformers were fond of saying the church is ever reforming. The interpretation of the Bible on slavery is one example. In the US Civil War slave-owners and emancipators both cited the Bible to prove their side of things.

Since further change is likely, we can step in the stream of that change and ask ourselves what changes we wish to bring about. [A simple starting point would be to ask: Is my local church all I believe God wants it to be?] It is part of our human nature, *Imago Dei*, made in the image of God, that God has given us the will to set our objectives for the improvement of our religious institutions.

The etymology of "religion" as a word comes from the Latin verb, meaning, "to bind, to bring together." The word *Yoga* -- at the forefront of Hindu thinking, also means something similar, to yoke, yoking the human and divine. So when we speak of religion, we are talking about the life of the church, congregation, a mosque, a synagogue, or temple. We are talking about the fellowship of people pursuing holy living.

So our conversation about the future of the religion can be translated into a question about the nature and dynamics of congregational life and its change. What does the congregation think about finance? About social justice? About technology? Should churches allow their steeples used for informational transfer of cellular phones? Should congregations allow their facilities to be used to feed the poor?