



Are there any among the idols of
the nations who give rain?
Or can the heavens grant showers?
Is it not You, O Lord our God?
Therefore we hope in You,
For You are the one who has done
all these things.

Jeremiah 14:22

THE INAUGURATION OF A U. S. PRESIDENT is a unique phenomenon. Even among other democratic nations (and, of course, the United States is not a pure democracy, but a *representative republic*) nowhere else does there occur a transfer of power so peaceful, so agreeable, so public, administered with such pomp and ceremony. Every four or eight years this country elects a new president, and no matter the venomous rhetoric of the interminable campaign trail, or even the personal animosity that may exist between the outgoing and the incoming executives, good will is the rule.

This pattern of a peaceful transfer of power was set from the earliest days of our republic—not, as some might think, with the inauguration of George Washington,

our first president, but with the inauguration of the second. After its constitution, the strong foundation of a democratic republic is not in the election of its first leader, but in the peaceful transfer of power to its second. The critical moment is not the president's inauguration, but his *departure from office*. Even though some would have made our first president a king, it was Washington's departure, the peaceful transition from George Washington to John Adams, that set the precedent for those that would follow.

Even when the outgoing president is a conservative Republican and the incoming president is a liberal Democrat, even when almost half the country voted for the candidate who *lost* the election, the day of transfer is one of bright promise, geniality, and grace. It is a moment of high patriotism and

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by the Pond

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Barack Obama is our collective representation of our purest hopes, our highest visions and our deepest knowings of who we are as a people, and as a country... He's listened to the unspoken, heard the unvoiced, and has responded to the yearning of our youth, our boomers, and the disenfranchised. He's our product out of the all-knowing quantum field of intelligence...

(Eve Konstantine, *Huffington Post* February 5, 2005)

I listened to that endorsement and Barack's speech afterwards and Obama, to me, must be not just an ordinary human being but indeed an Advanced Soul, come to lead America out of this mess...

(Commenter at *Chicago Sun Times*)

Barack's appeal is actually messianic, it's something about his aura, his spirit, his soul, that exudes enlightenment in the making. Oh, he's not fully enlightened, being that enlightenment is a process, not an event. But for reasons I can't fully articulate, he is one of those individuals who communicates God-like energy (metaphorically speaking), in whom you can "feel" God.

Now, I'm using the term "God" to mean the loving, honest, just, and inspiring part of the force behind it all. You may not believe something's behind it all, but I do. And I look for God constantly—that which exudes love, integrity, humility, depth, kindness, generosity—and more... supposedly.

So I'm taking a special look at Barack Obama because he's a lot closer to a Jesus-type than the other candidates, by quite a bit. What if God decided to incarnate as men preaching "hope and change." And what if we didn't recognize them, because we are so dull, and let them slip away, not availing ourselves of the opportunity to be led by God!

(Steve Davis, in a letter to the *Journal Gazette and Times-Courier*)

national pride. It is a moment when divisions fade, when individual party labels become less important than the one label that applies to us all: American.

The day on which a new president takes office can also be one of misdirected hope. I still remember the exhilarating sense of optimism I had that day in January 1977, when I watched our thirty-ninth president, Jimmy Carter, walk down Pennsylvania Avenue during his inaugural parade. After the darker years of Nixon and Ford, I was eager to place my hope in a peanut farmer from Georgia. As it turned out, however, that hope was ill-spent. Carter turned out to be demonstrably one of the weakest and most imprudent presidents this nation has ever elected—and arguably one of the worst *ex-presidents* of all time.

No matter the person, no matter the exalted office, we are not to set our hope and faith in men, for they all have feet of clay.

I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait,
And in His word do I hope.
My soul waits for the Lord
More than the watchmen for the morning;
Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.

Psalms 130:5-6

The beauty of the American system is its freedom and liberty. This is why we are a nation of immigrants; they still flock to our shores. And this is why we have now inaugurated an American of African descent as our forty-fourth president.

But temporal liberty is fleeting. Horizontal liberty is fragile, and can be summarily revoked. It is subject to the whims of imperfect men and the vagaries of fashion. For this reason *American* liberty is not bequeathed by man, but by God.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

The Declaration of Independence (July 2, 1776)

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 NKJV

Just as we are given our liberty from God, so too do we find our hope in Him. Blessedness—substantial, unbounded, supernatural joy—comes only from above, not under the auspices of government, or a national leader, for that hope always comes at a heavy price. One must always give up something to obtain it. Nor are we to find our hope in the benevolent programs of religion, or the glowing oratory of a charismatic spiritual leader, for they too are fleeting, and as transient as the shifting sand.

True, lasting hope is found only in the person of Jesus Christ and His saving grace.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 5:1-5 NKJV

Perhaps President Obama is a good man, and has only the best of intentions. But he does not walk on water. He is not a messiah. He is not a savior. He is just a man.

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:13 NKJV

