

# RELIGION

## ALTERNATIVES

### The Power Of Blessings

BY MARGARET ISAACS

There are many cultures that formally bless their people in many stages of their lives. There are two that readily come to mind; the Jewish Blessings and the Blessings given within the Black culture. Beginning with the children, the Jews and Blacks have blessed in the name of the one God, Jehovah. The Birth blessing covers the child from birth unto death, shielding him from harm and places God solidly into the child's training, his healing, his growth, his vocation and avocation, his prosperity, his faithfulness and all other aspects of the child's life. It is believed and yea, it is promised of God, that this blessing will be honored throughout the child's life by God himself. In the Black culture the naked child is lifted to the heavens; and God is thanked for the giving of the child and the child is given back to God and blessed in the name of God, for a life covering under the mercy and guidance of God, the Father. Children of righteous parents receive blessings from God. "But the mercy of the Lord is

from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and his righteousness unto children's children. PS. 103:17.

Every New Testament Book in the Word of God begins with a blessing: "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." Peter 1:1, 2, 3.; "Grace, Mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord", Timothy 1:1, 2; "Blessed with the preparation of The Way", Mark 1:1, 2, and etc.. There are nine blessings in the Sermon on the Mount. The last thing Jesus did before ascending unto heaven was to bless his disciples. The Bible says to "bless and curse not". The power of blessings places a cover over the blessed. The children of a Christian mother will bless her through their actions and words. "Her children arise us, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her". Prov. 31:28. It is believed in the Black race and the Jewish race that God, who is our Father and we his children, will pity us and have mercy on us; "Like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that

fear him." PS 103:13. It is in the fear of the Lord that Blacks and Jews have blessed their children at birth and it is by the cover of this blessing that these races have survived in spite of all that has come upon them throughout the ages. It is believed, sincerely that if we bless those who curse, as the Word of God admonishes, the curses spoken against us will leave us untouched and will return to its source and the source of the curse will enjoy the fruits of that curse. Thus blacks especially will never yield to worldly pressures that attempt to force non-correction of our children; for it is necessary for parents to correct their children. "For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth". Prov. 3:12. "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die." Prov 23:13. Some parents have gone against the culture of their people and refrained from the correction of their children; thus, we find children disrespecting parents; children killing their brothers/

sisters; children beating their parents and slaying their parents; children disobeying the law; and becoming vile in all things; for God judges our house forever for the iniquity which we see, when our children make themselves vile, and we restrained them not. ISam. 3:13. We are admonished to "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Prov 22:6.

Be careful upon whom you evoke the blessings of God! Blessings cannot be recalled, once given. Jacob and Esau, twins, are a recorded example of this. Jacob stole Esau's birth blessing by deceiving Isaac, their father. Once spoken the blessing could not be recalled and the blessing came to pass for Jacob and not for Esau.

*God blessed the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, his son:*

We received the right hand of the blessing and Jesus received the left hand of the blessing of God. We received living water, and Jesus received vinegar; We received healing, and Jesus received stripes; We

received forgiveness and Jesus received separation from God; We received life everlasting, Jesus suffered death and went down into hell (the grave). Jesus bore all that was intended for us Gentiles (those not included in the blessings of Isreal), and arose victorious as our Lord and the savior of our souls...all through the blessings of Jehovah God. We now, through Jesus, enjoy the blessings of provisions; God provides for our needs, not our greeds. God provides where he leads, not where we chose to go. He provides a mind to think and a behind to sit on. Think with our minds, hear with our hearts and enjoy the provisions of God! Sit and wait for God's blessings and we gain nothing. Heads we win, tails we lose. We enjoy the blessing of unity, with Jesus as our source. Unity is not seeing everything the same as others. If you see everything the same as another, one is not needed. We are to restore those among us who falls; lift them up and bless them. We enjoy the blessing of peace. "I will keep them in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on

me, saith the Lord". Live by the standards of the Sacred text, the Bible, and ye shall have the peace of God.

We, as a black race, surviving through many trials and tribulations, must continue in cultural mores; and those who have strayed, taking on other methods that are not of God, must return to the tried and true standards of our ancestral heritage; blessing our children and lifting up and blessing those who have strayed; remembering the proven blessings of God from generations past unto the present generation. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Proverbs 16:7. Obey the God of our forefathers; for if we harken to the voice of the Lord, our God, and will do that which is right in his sight, and will give ear to his commandments and keep his statutes, God will put none of the diseases upon us, which he has brought upon others; for he is the Lord, that healeth us." Exod 15:26. Everything Is Possible, And Has Been Proven To Be So, Through The Blessings Of God.

### The Scrooges Who Stole Christmas: What Does It Mean To Be An American?

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

I've written a lot about the so-called welfare reform and the impact that the Republicans' bills will have on poor women and children. I've followed closely the various drafts of the bills which threatened to take away infant formula and food and income from poor children and which threatened foster care and adoption services for those children abandoned or abused by their parents. So I thought I had seen it all, that I understood the depths to which this Congress

could sink as it seeks to take food from the mouths of poor children in order to finance a tax cut for the rich and to give the Pentagon \$7 billion that they didn't even ask for.

But then I opened the New York Times to find that the House-Senate conference committee had put in a little-noticed change which would end health coverage for our nation's poor. Just as many of us took a little sigh after we had successfully gotten the Women and Infant Children (WIC) feeding program

to continue assisting pregnant women, infants and children at risk and seemed to have gotten school lunches back for poor children, then the grinch that stole Christmas take away health care for poor children.

The new bill says that states are not required to provide medical care to any individual receiving aid or assistance in the form of Aid to Families With Dependent Children, foster care payments or adoption assistance. The Children's Defense Fund estimates that 4.6 million parents and 1.6 million children over 12 would lose their health benefits. In addition, state programs which would extend health care coverage to working poor families, like those in Tennessee and Oregon which are designed to encourage families to get off welfare, would not be allowed under the new bill.

All of this means poor children will be sicker next year. It means that children with special needs or disabilities who are in foster care or eligible for adoption will no longer be eligible for health care, and thus less likely to be adopted or placed with foster parents who have the love but not the money. It means poor

children will be sicker while we got tax cuts that many of us don't want and none of us need. It means poor children will be sicker while the Pentagon tries to figure out how to spend dollars it did not request.

In a talk to the nation's religious leaders recently Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, asked the question, "What does it mean to be an American?" She asked that question in light of the \$250 billion in proposed budget cuts which will finance the \$245 billion in tax cuts. She asked that question in light of proposed cuts in child welfare services food and nutrition programs, health and income programs for our nation's poorest and most vulnerable. She asked that question while pointing out how 26,000 families together earned less than one entertainment executive in 1993.

"Babies are sacred gifts of loving God," said Edelman, "but we would deny them food, immunization, health care and education. This is not reform, but a trojan horse for Republican ideology." Edelman added that Republicans have made "entitlement" a dirty word, when it really means a fundamental moral

principle that our nation had agreed upon -- that our federal government should be the protector of last resort for the most vulnerable of our society -- poor women and children -- that when that husband and families and states fail them, poor women and children can count on the rest of us for help.

What does it mean to be an American? Does it mean that the rich and the middle class care only for their own and the rest must go for themselves? Does it

mean poor children will be sicker and hungrier while the rest of us prosper? Does it mean that those who are disabled and abandoned will have no chance of living in a family? Does it mean that we as a nation have lost our soul?

(If you care, write President Clinton, the White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC 20500 or call (202) 456-1414 and ask him to stand strong and veto any bill which denies health care to poor children.)



*Homegoing Celebration of Richard L. Branch*

September 14, 1929 Jonesville, Louisiana  
December 2, 1995  
Portland, Oregon

Richard Lee Branch was born on September 14, 1929, in Jonesville, Louisiana, to Charlie and Rebecca Branch. Richard was the youngest of six children.

He was married to Betty Fisher, and from this union, a son was born. In about 1943, Richard moved to Portland where he lived until the time of this death. Later, in his marriage to Bernice Gibson, eight children were born. He worked for and retired from the Soule Steel Company, in 1973. He accepted Christ as his Savior and united with the Morningstar Baptist Church, where he served on the Usher Board. Richard recently married his long time friend, Patricia Howard.

He leaves to mourn: his wife, Patricia Howard; Daughters, Dionne and Sharon Branch of Portland, OR; Sons, Byron, Marcus, Eric and Rickie Branch, and Alex Spearman, all of Portland, OR, Ronald Strong of Seattle, WA, and Richard Lee Fisher of Albuquerque, NM; Sister, Jessie Hodges of Portland, OR; Step-children, Kayleen Williams of Warrenton, OR Nyla Johnson, Minister Jeffrey Howard, Romund Howard and William Howard, all of Portland, OR; twenty grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also. St. John 14:1-3



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