

Best Self Theology:

- *Building a Best Self Church and a Best Self Movement*

Introduction

- “The existence of Black people in America depends entirely upon whether or not it is possible to change the Black man’s theology.”
- *Albert B. Cleage, Jr. Introduction, Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church 1972*

The Opiate of the People

- The Christianity introduced to Black people on the plantation was developed as a means of control for slaves.
- Emphasis on obedient servitude and the promise of heaven or hell.
- Never intended to serve the interests of Black people.
- Black Christianity today is otherworldly and promotes magical thinking that leads to irresponsible decisions.

Religion is developmental.

- Religion originally played a positive role in human development.
- The African Mystery Temples made personal development the greatest and highest good and the object of religious life.
- The pharaohs, priests, judges, engineers and the entire leadership class of Egypt were trained in the Mystery Temples.

Religion is developmental

- *The ancient Egyptians had developed a very complex religious system, called the Mysteries, which was also the first system of salvation. As such, it regarded the human body as a prison house of the soul, which could be liberated from its bodily impediments, through the disciplines of the Arts and Sciences, and advanced from the level of a mortal to that of a God. This was the notion of the summum bonum or greatest good , to which all men must aspire, and it became the basis of all ethical concepts. “Stolen Legacy”, p.1 George G.M. James*

Religion is developmental

- Jesus had developmental expectations of his disciples.
- In the Book of Acts, we see the disciples doing the things that Jesus did.
- They evolved to do what they once thought was impossible.
- This developmental journey is what religion is about.

The Myth of Black Inferiority and the Intentional Underdevelopment of Black People

- The myth of black inferiority is the greatest propaganda campaign of all time.
- *“In today’s world, companies spend billions of dollars to establish, promote and protect their brands- Nike shoes, McDonald’s hamburgers, Apple computer, Starbucks coffee, United Airlines and Ivory soap. However, one the first high-value brands in America was not an inanimate product. It was humans. African Americans were turned into animate products: slaves. And the brand that the early ruling class burned onto black Americans, as they did with livestock, was the permanent identifier of subhuman inferiority.”*
Brainwashed; Challenging the Myth of Black Inferiority Tom Burrell 2010

The Myth of Black Inferiority and the Intentional Underdevelopment of Black People

- Declare inferior.
- Cut off every avenue of human development.
- Provide white privilege to white Americans that improves their material conditions over time as evidence of their superiority.
- Teach total dependency (learned helplessness) to subdue the natural drive for full development.

Obsolete Slaves

- We are living in the midst of a technological revolution.
- Human physical labor is obsolete.
- Human knowledge jobs (i.e. law, medicine, engineering, etc.) are shrinking as machines take over routine functions.
- However, the myth of black inferiority is embedded in American culture. It is still operational and destroying our natural drive for full development.

Self-Reliance, Self-Determination and Entrepreneurship:

- Self reliance – the belief that human beings can rely on their gifts, talents abilities and efforts to meet their needs.
- Self determination – the ability of a group of people to define and control their own destiny.
- Entrepreneurship – the ability to turn what we know how to do into into a business that can provide for our needs.

Black Theology to Best Self Theology

- Black theology developed to provide a theological foundation to Black people's struggle for freedom and justice.
- The need for a theology that went beyond social issues became apparent with the awareness that black oppression had been internalized. "*We suffer not only from a slave condition but also a slave mentality.*" Black Church as a Change Agent, Albert B. Cleage, Jr. 1975
- This realization led to the BCN Change Process and the Science of KUA. Best Self Theology was a logical next step.

Best Self Theology

- All attempts to change society have failed because they failed to change people.
- We can only change the world by changing ourselves since that is the only thing we can control.
- Human beings are endowed with a spark of divinity that gives us the *dynamic potential* to learn, grow, improve and adapt.
- Our life is essentially cosmic energy and creative intelligence expressing itself through us.

Best Self Theology

- The object of life is to *flourish*. Life seeks abundant life.
- We all have a natural inner drive to attain the highest expression of our humanity.
- Hence, the maximization of our potential is our primary religious obligation.
- Personal development is a form of worship.
- Best Self Theology is about becoming our best possible selves as the ultimate act of worship.

Best Self Theology

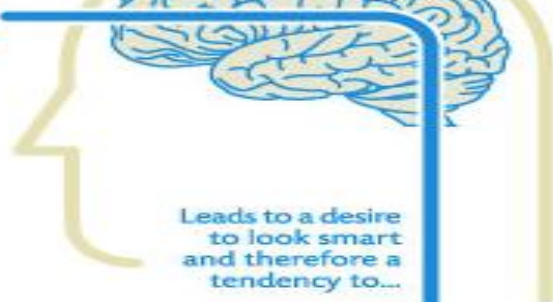
- Best Self Theology teaches that our first divine obligation is to develop our potential.
- Our second divine obligation is to use our developed potential to serve God by serving others.
- Life imposes upon us the obligation to serve.
- We are expected to maximize our potential through will, effort, discipline and faith, then use it to advance divine purposes.

Best Self Theology

- No specific techniques or processes.
- Best Self Theology is about shifting perception – seeing differently/changing mindsets.
- GOD is our animating force.
- There are only two types of people in the world those with a *fixed mindset* and those with a *growth mindset*.

Fixed Mind-set

Intelligence is static



Leads to a desire to look smart and therefore a tendency to...

CHALLENGES

...avoid challenges



...embrace challenges

OBSTACLES

...give up easily



...persist in the face of setbacks

EFFORT

...see effort as fruitless or worse



...see effort as the path to mastery

CRITICISM

...ignore useful negative feedback



...learn from criticism

SUCCESS OF OTHERS

...feel threatened by the success of others



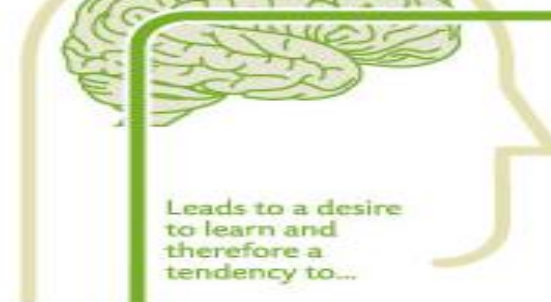
...find lessons and inspiration in the success of others

As a result, they may plateau early and achieve less than their full potential.

All this confirms a **deterministic view of the world.**

Growth Mind-set

Intelligence can be developed



Leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to...

As a result, they reach ever-higher levels of achievement.

All this gives them a **greater sense of free will.**

Best Self Theology

- Developing a growth mindset is the object of Best Self Theology.
- Best Self Theology is designed to trigger and reinforce a growth mindset through inspiration, encouragement, modeling and faith.
- A person with a fixed mindset cannot understand or accept Best Self Theology since they believe that what we are is fixed, static and unchangeable.

PAOCC: A Best Self Church

- As a Best Self Church we seek to be the inspirational force behind the Best Self Movement.
- We seek to create an “inspiracy”- an inspiration conspiracy to inspire people to strive to be their highest and best selves all over the world.
- We believe that if we can move enough people to strive for total expression of their potential as an act of worship, we can change the world.

Best Self Movement

- Our goal as a ministry is not simply to create a church but to inspire a movement.
- Our movement seeks to inspire one heart/mind at a time to strive to become their absolute best selves as an act of worship.
- Our faith is that a critical mass can be reached and a tipping point breakthrough will occur.
- This is the ultimate revolution!

Best Self Movement

- We believe that the Kingdom of God is not a place but a state of being attained when human consciousness has come into alignment with divine will and purpose.
- We believe that global transformation is simply a matter of inspiring enough best self practitioners to cause a shift in human consciousness.
- The PAOCC seeks to be the church of the future and the 21st Century Mystery Temple by initiating a global Best Self Movement

○ The power to do this I already have within me. It comes from GOD. It is GOD. And with GOD...all things are possible. Amen!

The Problem of a Dying Conception of God

- Every age creates a God that only serves until human understanding evolves.
- Over the last 100 years, the anthropomorphic conception of God has been gradually eroding.
- *“The idea of a personal God is alien to me and seems even naïve. Try and penetrate with our limited means the secrets of nature, and you will find that, behind all discernable laws and connections, there remains something subtle, intangible and inexplicable. Veneration for this force beyond anything that we can imagine is my religion.”* Albert Einstein

- Today most people live outside the God-consciousness of the old world.
- The sense of psychological security and well-being that comes from the belief that we live beneath the protective umbrella of an all knowing, all loving and all powerful Father God is comforting. To begin to suspect that this may not be true can be terrifying and disorienting.
- Black people need an updated understanding of God that liberates our human potential and allows for its full expression as we continue to struggle for full humanity and group self-determination.

The Emergence of a New Concept of God

- Ancient faiths conceived of God as a Universal Spirit existing in everything.
- The rise of Judaism, Christianity and Islam or the anthropomorphic faiths declared these other faiths to be primitive and ignorant.
- The developments of quantum physics proved the existence of a Unified Field - an energy field that pervaded the universe.
- Unified Field Theory used modern science to verify what ancient mystics had discovered by instinct, intuition and direct experience.
- Some theologians began to consider that a more scientific conception of God might be more accurate.
- A few years after the atomic age began Paul Tillich defined God as the Ground of All Being.

What Makes a Seeker?

- The desire to be real
- A feeling of being called
- The courage to step into the unknown
- A refusal to be fooled by temptations/illusions
- The need to feel fulfilled
- The ability to go beyond material satisfactions
- The desire for higher levels of existence

Tools for Seeking

- Meditation
- Contemplation
- Prayer
- Self-reflection
- Stress management
- Studying spiritual material
- Psychotherapy
- Commitment to Personal Growth
- Fellowship (intimacy, bonding and compassion)
- Periods of silence

Seeking: The Inward Journey

- Through seeking we find our center - our real selves.
When you do you live authentically.
- Act with integrity
- Speak your truth
- Remain unswayed by the need to be liked.
- Stop people-pleasing and placating
- Do not fear authority

Seeking: The Inward Journey

- Protect your dignity and the dignity of others.
- Remain self-reliant not dependent upon others
- Practice tolerance
- Become slow to anger and quick to forgive
- Do not blind yourself with denial or self-deception
- Aim to understand others as you understand yourself
- Feel appreciation and gratitude for what God is doing through you

Seeking: The Inward Journey

- When I begin to suspect that I am author of my own existence, seeking has begun.
- When I start to use my awareness to actively shape my own life, seeking has brought an answer.
- When I look around and know that reality is shaped by my conscious participation, seeking has reached its goal.
- I am a Co-Creator!