

## Black Divinity: A Ghetto Theology for the Black Community: Shahidi Collection Volume 1

### Shahidi Islam

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*About Black emancipation and the revival of repressed beliefs, Black Divinity is a compelling religious tract.*

Shahidi Islam's forceful religious tract *Black Divinity* aims to inform, educate, and uplift the Black community.

Endorsing the godbody movement, which originated in low-income neighborhoods in New York, the book includes background on the 120 lessons of Elijah Muhammad and strives towards Black thearchy, or a world led by gods and goddesses. It also includes information about the apostle Paul, Malcolm X, Friedrich Engels, and Frantz Fanon, called godbodies and revolutionaries who sought to decolonize society from within.

The book's true start is delayed by its three prefaces, prologue, and introduction. It also includes a conclusion, an appendix, and an epilogue. The three main parts of the book cover ecclesiology, eschatology, and soteriology, their language complicated and verbose. The book suggests bold alternatives to common beliefs and suppressed ideas and aims to cultivate pride in Blackness, showing that the roots of Black divinity trace back to ancient Ethiopia and the Judeans and asserting that "the only images of the Messiah were as a Black man." The apostle Paul, the book suggests, was "likely" Black.

The prose is lavish and returns to the concept of Afrosensualism often, developing it in complex if compelling terms. Claims such as that libidinous love for godbodies is the "highest form of understanding" are forwarded alongside defenses of pluralistic sexual relationships, which, the book asserts, were common in African countries before colonialism. Polyamory and "light exhibitionism" are also upheld as ways for the Black community to attain unity and freedom from patriarchal Victorian standards of morality.

The book's arguments are often persuasive, though some off-putting and contradictory hypersexualization of Black women occurs. Further, the book is topically diffuse, analyzing passages from the Bible, Quran, and Egyptian mythology in addition to its other topics. It is also sometimes too obscure, as when it considers the "relation between the seven last plagues and the seven trumpets," includes a list of mountains that has "great chiasmic symmetry," and addresses pneumatological concepts without pulling them back to a central argument in full. At its most accessible when its topics are contemporary, as with its nuanced takes on Malcolm X's separatist ideas, the power of the original Black Panthers, the US prison system, and Israel/Palestine, the book is often eloquent in asserting that a new society needs to rise from the ashes of a system that never worked for the majority of people, but especially not for the Black community.

Utilizing aspects of religion and social science, *Black Divinity* advocates for a new, different way of thinking that draws from the wisdom of Africa and the teachings of the Nation of Islam.

ANDREA KREIDLER (April 8, 2026)

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