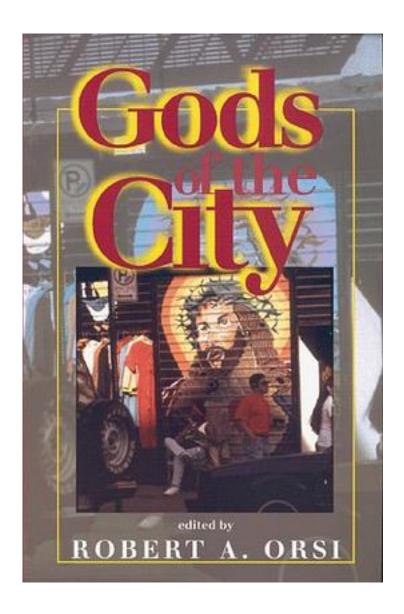
Gods of the City



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oUrban religionO strikes many as an oxymoron. How can religion prosper in the alienated, secular, fast-paced, and materialistic world of the modern, Western city? But much of what is characteristic about American religious life has developed in cities. Pentecostalism, settlement houses, Christian Science, the various forms of modern American Judaism, gospel and soul music, immigrant street shrines and festivals, and the American encounter with the many religious traditions of Africa and Asia, to cite just a few examples, are all phenomena of cities. The ochallenge of the citiesO to customary American moral understandings at the turn of the century provoked the development of innovative institutions, theologies, and pastoral strategies in long-established American denominations. Religious idioms, improvised, recreated, and invented, served as media for immigrants and migrants in making new lives for themselves and their children in between the memories of the places they left and the realities of their new homes; in the process both religion and city were changed. The authors in this collection believe that there are distinctly urban forms of religious experience and practice that have developed in relation to the spaces, social conditions, and history of industrial and post-industrial cities. CitiesNeach with its specific geography, social and political history, demographics, and architectureNare not merely the settings for religious experience and expression, but materials of them, too. People work on city spaces and realities in their religious practice, as the city works on them. The introductory chapter, oCrossing the City Line, O establishes the broad historical context for the volume, and develops the theoretical issues and perspectives that orient the collection. The essays that follow offer close-grained studies, ethnographic and historical in method, of the struggles of Haitian vodou practitioners to serve the spirits in the unfamiliar landscape of New York City; the contested construction and interpretation of places of worship by Hindu immigrants in suburban Maryland, Asian American Presbyterians in Seattle, and Cuban Catholics in Miami; the transformation of city apartments into suitable venues for the spirits of santeria in New York and New Jersey; the role of Italian American street festivals in staking out and negotiating the boundaries between neighborhoods, races, and ethnic groups in Brooklyn and East Harlem; political conflict during a Good Friday Stations of the Cross on the Lower East Side; and the transformation of New York city streets into a ocathedral of the open airO by Salvation Army lassies at the turn of the century. Religion in North America series NCatherine L. Albanese and Stephen J. Stein, editors

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