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Faith in the Market: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture

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Scholars have long assumed that industrialization and the growth of modern cities signaled a decline of religious practice among urban dwellers - that urban commercial culture weakened traditional religious ties by luring the faithful away from their devotional practice. Spanning many disciplines, the essays in this volume challenge this notion of the "secular city" and examine how members of metropolitan houses of worship invented fresh expressions of religiosity by incorporating consumer goods, popular entertainment, advertising techniques, and marketing into their spiritual lives. Faith in the Market explores phenomena from Salvation Army "slum angels" to the "race movies" of the mid-twentieth century, from Catholic teens' modest dress crusades to Black Muslim artists. The contributors-integrating gender, performance, and material culture studies into their analyses-reveal the many ways in which religious groups actually embraced commercial culture to establish an urban presence. Although the city streets may have proved inhospitable to some forms of religion, many others, including evangelicalism, Catholicism, and Judaism, assumed rich and complex forms as they developed in vital urban centers.

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