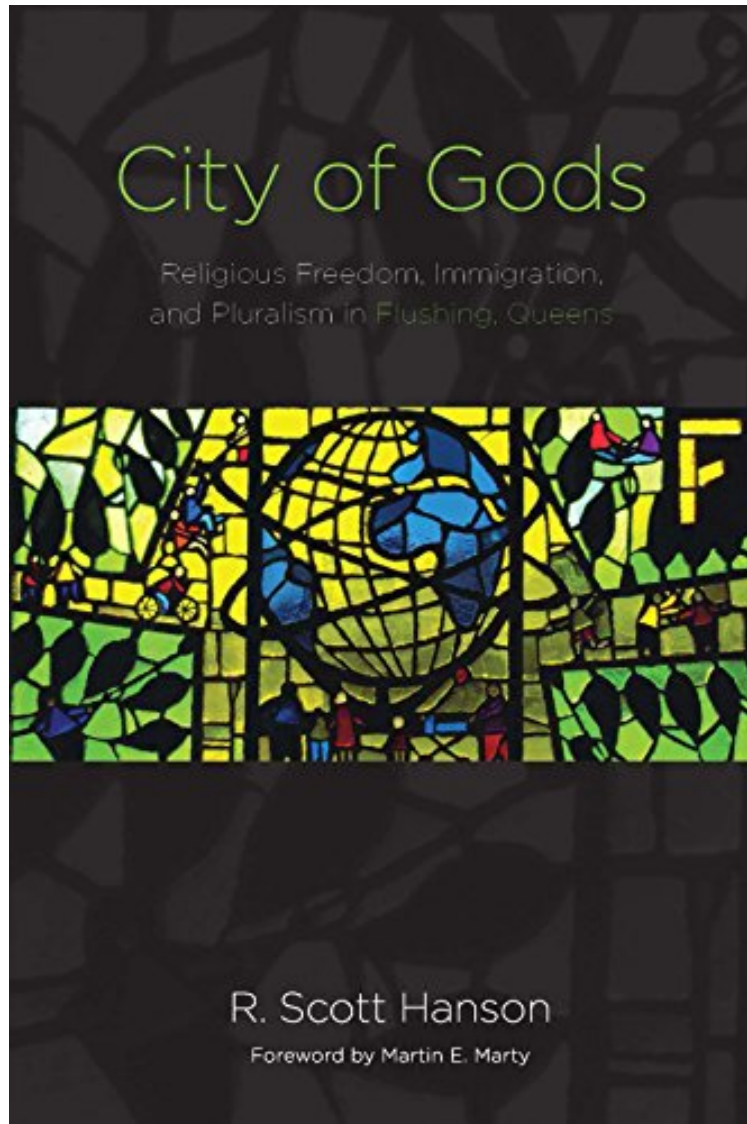


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# City of Gods: Religious Freedom, Immigration, and Pluralism in Flushing, Queens

*R. Scott Hanson*

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**R. Scott Hanson : City of Gods: Religious Freedom, Immigration, and Pluralism in Flushing, Queens** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised City of Gods: Religious Freedom, Immigration, and Pluralism in Flushing, Queens:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Chronicle of Religious PluralismBy Richard BayanAs a

history buff and a onetime resident of Queens, I approached this book with the intention of skimming it for its most salient nuggets of information. Instead, I found myself irresistibly drawn into Hanson's fascinating, eminently readable history of religious pluralism in what eventually became one of America's most diverse communities. Scholarly yet readily accessible to the general reader, "City of Gods" traces the religious evolution of Flushing over three-and-a-half centuries -- from the early tensions between Quaker and Dutch Reformed settlers through the conventional Protestant-Catholic-Jewish alliance of the early-to-mid 20th century to the astonishing influx of world religions in the decades that followed. Hanson makes generous use of historical documents while developing his detailed portrait of Flushing as a microcosm of America's emerging pluralistic society. Well worth reading for the richness of its historical narrative as well as its intelligent exploration of the often-bumpy road to genuine religious pluralism. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fresh Approach By Book Guy3441 Though I'm not an academic, I found this fascinating story of Flushing, Queens, and its people as a possible antidote to help defuse some of the hysteria and panic of recent months regarding immigrants and religious diversity.

Known locally as the birthplace of American religious freedom, Flushing, Queens, in New York City is now so diverse and densely populated that it has become a microcosm of world religions. *City of Gods* explores the history of Flushing from the colonial period to the aftermath of September 11, 2001, spanning the origins of Vlissingen and early struggles between Quakers, Dutch authorities, Anglicans, African Americans, Catholics, and Jews to the consolidation of New York City in 1898, two World's Fairs and postwar commemorations of Flushing's heritage, and, finally, the Immigration Act of 1965 and the arrival of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists, and Asian and Latino Christians. A synthesis of archival sources, oral history, and ethnography, *City of Gods* is a thought-provoking study of religious pluralism. Using Flushing as the backdrop to examine America's contemporary religious diversity and what it means for the future of the United States, R. Scott Hanson explores both the possibilities and limits of pluralism. Hanson argues that the absence of widespread religious violence in a neighborhood with such densely concentrated religious diversity suggests that there is no limit to how much pluralism a pluralist society can stand. Seeking to gauge interaction and different responses to religious and ethnic diversity, the book is set against two interrelated questions: how and where have the different religious and ethnic groups in Flushing associated with others across boundaries over time; and when has conflict or cooperation arisen? By exploring pluralism from a historical and ethnographic context, *City of Gods* takes a micro approach to help bring an understanding of pluralism from a sometimes abstract realm into the real world of everyday lives in which people and groups are dynamic and integrating agents in a complex and constantly changing world of local, national, and transnational dimensions. Perhaps the most extreme example of religious and ethnic pluralism in the world, Flushing is an ideal place to explore how America's long experiment with religious freedom and religious pluralism began and continues. *City of Gods* reaches far beyond Flushing to all communities coming to terms with immigration, religion, and ethnic relations, raising the question as to whether Flushing will come together in new and lasting ways to build bridges of dialogue or will it further fragment into a Tower of Babel.

"A minutely detailed... 'case study' of the promises and drawbacks of pluralism." - The New York Times "[an] intimate portrait of lived religion... inspiring... deserves a place alongside Robert Orsi's *The Madonna of 115th Street*." - Publishers Weekly, Starred From the Back Cover "Through this narrative, the reader gets close to battlers for religious freedom, will see immigration not as an issue but in a story of people, and come to regard pluralism anew, not as a philosophical analysis of diversity but instead as the perplexing and yet promising story of how people of different faiths share some features of a common life." --Martin E. Marty, from the Foreword "Flushing, Queens, is surely one of the most religiously diverse places on the planet today. Scott Hanson's study shows how it got this way. This deeply researched and thickly described account of the gods of Flushing makes an important contribution to the history of immigration after the Hart-Celler Act of 1965 and to the study of American urban religions. *City of Gods* is as well a timely and necessary contribution to the public debate about the nature of American civilization." --Robert Orsi, author of *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* "This invaluable study of America's most religiously complex community effectively enshrines Flushing as a pioneer of American religious pluralism. Established by English immigrants--religious refugees from both Old and New England--under Dutch patronage, Flushing has offered a home to religious diversity from its seventeenth-century beginnings. Scott Hanson's smart, lovingly researched account illuminates how connections between the local and the international transformed a small town into a globalized urban gateway to America's religious future, while drawing inspiration from its distinctive colonial past." --Evan Haefeli, author of *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty* "City of Gods breathes fresh life into the religious pluralism tradition of theorizing and study. In this compelling--often lyrical--book, R. Scott Hanson sheds new light on urban religious history and offers vibrant, ethnographically grounded insight into the promise and challenges of life in this remarkably diverse religious environment. In our age of inter-religious conflict and immigration controversy, this work is very timely--but *City of Gods* is also a landmark to which people concerned with religious pluralism will return for many years to come." --

Omar M. McRoberts, author of *Streets of Glory, Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood* "An illuminating account of what Scott Hanson rightly calls 'perhaps the most compelling case of religious and ethnic pluralism in the world.' *City of Gods* is an important contribution to the literature on religious diversity in America, and an inspiring read for those committed to interfaith cooperation." --Eboo Patel, Founder and President, Interfaith Youth Core

About the Author R. Scott Hanson is a Lecturer in History at the University of Pennsylvania and an Affiliate of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University.