



Victorian Reformation: The Fight Over Idolatry in the Church of England, 1840-1860 (Religion, Culture, and History Series)

By Dominic Janes

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In early Victorian England there was intense interest in understanding the early Church as an inspiration for contemporary sanctity. This was manifested in a surge in archaeological inquiry and also in the construction of new churches using medieval models. Some Anglicans began to use a much more complicated form of ritual involving vestments, candles, and incense. This "Anglo-Catholic" movement was vehemently opposed by evangelicals and dissenters, who saw this as the vanguard of full-blown "popery." The disputed buildings, objects, and art works were regarded by one side as idolatrous and by the other as sacred and beautiful expressions of devotion. Dominic Janes seeks to understand the fierce passions that were unleashed by the contended practices and artifacts - passions that found expression in litigation, in rowdy demonstrations, and even in physical violence. During this period, Janes observes, the wider culture was preoccupied with the idea of pollution caused by improper sexuality. The Anglo-Catholics had formulated a spiritual ethic that linked goodness and beauty. Their opponents saw this visual worship as dangerously sensual. In effect, this sacred material culture was seen as a sexual fetish. The origins of this understanding, Janes shows, lay in radical circles, often in the context of the production of anti-Catholic pornography which titillated with the contemplation of images of licentious priests, nuns, and monks.

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Review

"[a] fine study. . . Janes' approach is lively and original. . . *Victorian Reformation* is a stimulating volume that is likely to become an important point of reference in future discussions of Victorian religion and cultural history".--*Britain and the World*

"This engagingly written and handsomely produced volume. . . coruscates with ideas. . . thoughtful, thought provoking, informative. . . convincing, and a welcome addition to the literature on Victorian religious controversy."--*Journal of British Studies*

"interesting and stimulating study"--*Contemporary Review*

"The ambition of Janes's book is to be applauded. . . Janes's theses are bold and provocative and will be of interest to all specialists in nineteenth-century English Christian history. The case study of 1850s Knightsbridge, where the fight over idolatry resulted in riots, legal actions and political maneuvering, is the highlight of a very interesting book."--*Religious Studies Review*

"Janes's discussion of the financial aspect is a significant contribution to Victorian religious history. . . I found both the central argument and the individual points compelling."--Carol Engelhardt Herringer, *Victorian Studies*

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"Dominic Janes's work takes Anglo-Catholicism out of a 'quaint' historical backwater and brilliantly shows how the Victorian Catholic revival and the protestant anxieties over ritual and 'idolatry' relate to important broader material cultural dynamics, then and today."

-- Gary Waller, Professor of Literature and Cultural Studies, Purchase College, SUNY

"Janes deserves great credit both for the deft skill with which he blends traditional empirical historiography

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"Idolatry is a subject of major historical importance - how refreshing to find a lively exploration of its Victorian manifestations in Dominic Janes's innovative volume. His integration of visual and material culture into our understanding of nineteenth-century Anglicanism deserves a warm welcome. This is a gripping story of contested meanings and practices. It concerns a recent Reformation that is of compelling interest in the twenty-first century."

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"This book provides a wealth of detail and cultural background that helps make things more comprehensible. Recommended for academic libraries supporting graduate level coursework in English or Church history."

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About the Author

Dominic Janes is a cultural historian. He has worked at Cambridge, Lancaster, and London universities. He has written *God and Gold in Late Antiquity*, *Romans and Christians*, and edited *Back to the Future of the Body*, and *Shopping for Jesus: Faith in Marketing in the USA*

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