

Dictionary of National Biography - William Maskell

MASKELL, WILLIAM (1814 ? -1890), medievalist, only son of William Maskell, solicitor, of Shepton Mallet, Somerset, born about 1814, matriculated on 9 June 1832 at University College, Oxford, whence he graduated B.A. in 1836, and proceeded M.A. in 1838, having taken holy orders in the previous year. From the first an extremely high churchman, he attacked in 1840 the latitudinarian bishop of Norwich, Edward Stanley [q. v.], for the support which he lent to the movement for the relaxation of subscription (see *A Letter to the Clergy upon the Speech of the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Norwich in the House of Lords, 26 May 1840, by a Priest of the Church of England*, London, 1840, 8vo). In 1842 he was instituted to the rectory of Corscombe, Dorset, and devoted himself to learned researches into the history of Anglican ritual and cognate matters. His 'Ancient Liturgy of the Church of England according to the Uses of Sarum, Bangor, York, and Hereford, and the Modern Roman Liturgy, arranged in parallel columns,' appeared in 1844, London, 8vo; 2nd edit. 1846; 3rd edit. 1882, and was followed by 'A History of the Martin Marprelate Controversy in the Time of Queen Elizabeth,' London, 1845, 8vo, and 'Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicanae, or Occasional Offices of the Church of England according to the Ancient Use of Salisbury, the Prymer in English, and other Prayers and Forms, with Dissertations and Notes,' London, 1846, 3 vols. 8vo; 2nd edit. Oxford, 1882.

These works at once placed Maskell in the front rank of English ecclesiastical antiquaries. Having resigned the rectory of Corscombe, he was instituted in 1847 to the vicarage of St. Mary Church, near Torquay, and appointed domestic chaplain to the Bishop of Exeter, Henry Phillpotts [q. v.], in which capacity he conducted the examination of the Rev. George Cornelius Gorham [q. v.], touching his views on baptism, on occasion of his presentation to the vicarage of Bramford Speke, near Exeter. For this office he was peculiarly well qualified, having made profound researches into the history of catholic doctrine and usage in regard to baptism from the earliest times. The fruit of these investigations appeared in his 'Holy Baptism: a Dissertation,' London, 1848, 8vo. In 1849 he published a volume of 'Sermons preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary,' London, 8vo, in which the highest views both of baptism and the holy eucharist were set forth; and in 'An Enquiry into the Doctrine of the Church of England upon Absolution,' London, 8vo, he attempted to justify the revival of the confessional. While the Gorham case was before the privy council he disputed the authority of the tribunal in 'A First Letter on the Present Position of the High Church Party in the Church of England,' London, 1850, 8vo, and after its decision he deplored the result in 'A Second Letter' on the same subject, London, 1850, 8vo. Soon afterwards he resigned his living, and was received into the church of Rome. He signalled his secession by appealing to Dr. Pusey to justify his practice of hearing auricular confessions (see his *Letter to the Rev. Dr. Pusey on his receiving Persons in Auricular*

Confession, London, 1850, 8vo). Though himself a firm believer in the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, he regretted its definition by Pope Pius IX in 1854, and acquiesced with reluctance in the decree of the Vatican council defining the dogma of papal infallibility (see his *Letter to the Editor of the Dublin Review upon the Temporal Power of the Pope and his personal Infallibility*, London, 1869, 8vo, and his pamphlet entitled *What is the meaning of the late Definition on the Infallibility of the Pope?* London, 1871, 8vo). From the 'Tablet' in 1872 he reprinted in pamphlet form, under the title 'Protestant Ritualists' (London, 8vo), some very trenchant letters on the privy council case of Sheppard v. Bennett, and generally on the position of the high church party in the church of England.

Maskell never took orders in the church of Rome, and spent his later life in retirement in the west of England, dividing his time between the duties of a country gentleman and antiquarian pursuits. He was a man of considerable literary and conversational powers, had a large and well-assorted library of patristic literature, and was an enthusiastic collector of mediaeval service books, enamels and carvings in ivory, which from time to time he disposed of to the British and South Kensington Museums. For the committee of council on education he edited in 1872 'A Description of the Ivories, Ancient and Modern, in the South Kensington Museum,' with a preface a model in its kind reprinted separately under the title 'Ivories Ancient and Mediaeval' in 1875, London, 8vo. Maskell was in the commission of the peace, and a deputy-lieutenant for the county of Cornwall. He died at Penzance on 12 April 1890. He married twice, but had issue only by his first wife.

Besides the works above mentioned Maskell published : 1. 'Budehaven; a Pen-and-ink Sketch, with Portraits of the principal Inhabitants,' London, 1863, 8vo, reprinted, with some other trifles, under the title 'Odds and Ends,' London, 1872, 12mo. 2. 'The Present Position of the High-Church Party in the Established Church of England' (a review of the Rev. James Wayland Joyce's 'The Civil Power in its Relation to the Church' with a reprint of the two letters published in 1850), London, 1869, 8vo. 3. 'The Industrial Arts, Historical Sketches, with numerous Illustrations' anon, for the Committee of Council on Education, London, 1876, 8vo, and some other miscellanea. He printed privately a catalogue of some rare books in his library, as 'Selected Centuries of Books from the Library of a Priest in the Diocese of Salisbury,' Chiswick, 1848, and a 'Catalogue of Books used in and relating to the public services of the Church of England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', 1845, 16mo.

[Times, 15 April 1890; Church Times, 18 April 1890; Athenaeum, 19 April 1890; Men of the Time, 11th edit.; Foster's Alumni Oxon.; Clergy List, 1843, 18-48; Moore's Gorham Case. 1852; Allies's Life's Decision, p. 334 ; E. G. Kirwan Browne's Annals of the Tractarian Movement, 1861, pp. 193-200, 214; Correspondence between the Rev.

William Maskell, M.A., and the Rev. Henry Jenkyns, D.D., relating to some Strictures by the former on the Oxford edition of Cranmer's Remains, 1846; Correspondence of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Exeter with the Rev. W. Maskell, 1850; Brit. Mus. Cat.] J. M. R.

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