

PREFACE

A WRITER in *The Times Literary Supplement* for June 26, 1948, stated that "the history of the Evangelical revival in the Church of England has yet to be written". Although it is now more than two centuries since that movement arose, no account of it on any considerable scale has yet appeared. The present volume is an attempt, so far as the first half-century or so is concerned,¹ to supply this lack.

My task has been made lighter through the appearance, in recent years, of a number of sectional studies, such as Canon C. H. Smyth, *Simeon and Church Order*, and G. C. B. Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*. Furthermore, we are now able to see the eighteenth century in clearer perspective, thanks to the lapse of time and the work of historians such as Professor Norman Sykes and others.

I have described the volume as "a religious and social study" for two reasons. In the first place, because the revival was much more than is commonly realized the result of social conditions, and itself had an effect upon them; and, secondly, because the writings of those who took part in it throw an interesting light on such conditions and have not been greatly utilized by secular historians of the period, many of whom, indeed, are probably unaware of their existence.

As in the case of *Religion in the Victorian Era*, I have made an extensive use of contemporary biographies. But biographies of eighteenth-century ecclesiastics, if they are not to mislead us, must be used with great caution. Some of them reach a high standard of accuracy, but many are the work of pious admirers, lacking in critical ability and with no apparent desire to verify their statements. They are, in addition, often swayed by prejudices of one kind or another.

No bibliography has been provided, as a complete list, in view of the great variety of subjects and persons dealt with, would have swollen to vast proportions. References, however, will be found to the necessary literature in the footnotes.

I have to thank various incumbents, too numerous to mention by name, who have supplied me with information concerning their several parishes.

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¹ In a number of cases I have strayed beyond the strict limits of my period (which ends at 1789), where light is thrown back on ideas and conditions then prevailing; especially have I availed myself of the very revealing journals of Henry Martyn