

The Conservative Holiness Movement: A Historical Appraisal

Wallace Thornton Jr.

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This booklet presents a germinal essay on the formation of the Conservative Holiness Movement, providing a broad overview from its early twentieth-century roots in the radical Holiness tradition fostered by such visionaries as Martin Wells Knapp and Seth Cook Rees to the development of self-identified "conservative" dissenting fellowships that coalesced under the leadership of ministers like H. E. Schmul and Glenn Griffith during mid-twentieth century. It brings into focus the underlying rationale of the conservative position which perceived the quest for upward social mobility (embourgeoisement) as a three-prong threat-a nefarious spiritual trident endangering the Holiness people's beloved "ship of Zion." It further documents how the radical response to this challenge led to a shift in the primary rationale for Holiness ethics throughout much of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. An Afterword shares additional reflections refined in light of continued research into the movement's history.



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