



The Positive Thinkers

Donald Meyer

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The subject of Professor Meyer's superb study concerns the dissolution of the Protestant ethic, its relationship to a general failure of nerve within the American community, and the consequent rise of a pseudo-theology in the guise of a pseudo-psychology, as reflected through the work of certain "mind-cure" practitioners, from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale. It is a subject largely ignored by intellectuals, and Professor Meyer, in taking it out of the domain of the *Reader's Digest* similar habitations, has produced a real service, not only to sociology and political science, disciplines in which he is very well versed, but also to mass-culture and the vague but insidious ethos behind it. In describing what the sub-title states as "the American Quest for Health, Wealth, and Personal Power," Professor Meyer works from an historical perspective, does not beat any drums nor ride any hobby horse; scholarly care and an in-depth generosity illuminate a number of intricate concepts, whether they be "individualism," *laissez-faire* industry or the peculiar role and influence of women within society. His work is schematized yet fluid, showing how a process of ego-disintegration has paradoxically resulted out of the improperly understood religious orientation of the past and the anxiety-ridden religious revival of the present. Today God "means" Adjustment.

—Virginia Kirkus, *Kirkus Reviews*

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