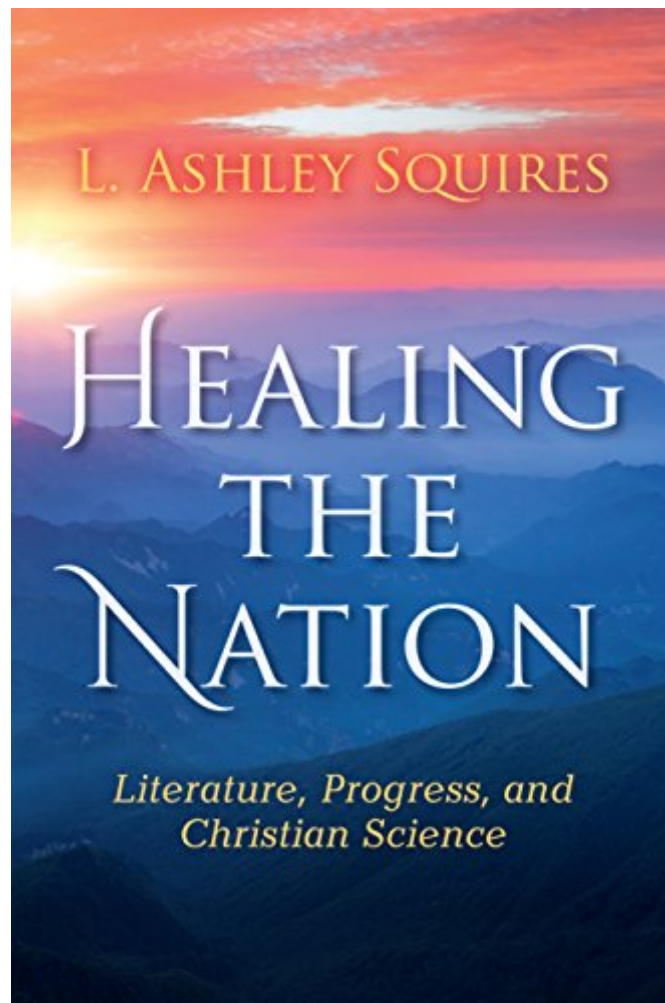




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Healing The Nation: Literature, Progress, And Christian Science (Religion In North America)



Synopsis

Exploring the surprising presence of Christian Science in American literature at the turn of the 20th century, L. Ashley Squires reveals the rich and complex connections between religion and literature in American culture. Mary Baker Eddy's Church of Christ, Scientist was one of the fastest growing and most controversial religious movements in the United States, and it is no accident that its influence touched the lives and work of many American writers, including Frances Hodgson Burnett, Willa Cather, Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, and Mark Twain. Squires focuses on personal stories of sickness and healing—whether supportive or deeply critical of Christian Science's recommendations—penned in a moment when the struggle between religion and science framed debates about how the United States was to become a modern nation. As outsized personalities and outlandish rhetoric took to the stage, Squires examines how the poorly understood Christian Science movement contributed to popular narratives about how to heal the nation and advance the cause of human progress.

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Customer Reviews

Healing the Nation is a well-researched and very well written overview of little known nor appreciated historical connections that had profound effects on American culture and literature at the turn of the 20th century. I found it to be a real page turner with regard to the history it covers. As a physician who has practiced medicine for 30 years and whose main side interest is studying the history of science, medicine, and religion in the US, this book was for me a home run. The historical discussion on the development of the concept of professionalism in medicine is provided as a backdrop in the first 2 chapters, but is in and of itself excellent and insightful. How the professionalization of medicine was used in an understandable but often self-serving way to gain control and power over the many alternative/sectarian practitioners of the day and how personally and spiritually unsatisfying was its biologically deterministic narrative to the mainstream, sheds light on what we face even today in how our culture views and struggles with these same issues. The book highlights a similar biased and messy process in the development of ethical standards in journalism, a battle that led to the founding of the Pulitzer Prize winning Christian Science Monitor. The author is fair in the treatment of Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science, seeking to mainly place her in historical context and show the surprisingly broad influence of the movement on American culture that would continue far into the century. The book shows this surprising influence in the literature of the time, some of which (The Secret Garden, A Little Princess) are beloved even today. The arguments are compelling and well referenced.

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