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Blue Windows: A Christian Science Childhood



Synopsis

From Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Church of Christian Science, to Deepak Chopra, Americans have struggled with the connection between health and happiness. Barbara Wilson was taught by her Christian Scientist family that there was no sickness or evil, and that by maintaining this belief she would be protected. But such beliefs were challenged when Wilson's own mother died of breast cancer after deciding not to seek medical attention, having been driven mad by the contradiction between her religion and her reality. In this perceptive and textured memoir *Blue Windows*, Wilson surveys the complex history of Christian Science and the role of women in religion and healing.

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Customer Reviews

This book is a fairly good memoir, despite long digressions into overly detailed memories. I skimmed some chapters, especially in the first half. However, as therapy for a recovering Christian Scientist, it was a wonderful experience that I would highly recommend. Particularly in the second half of the book, when Ms. Wilson gets into the meat of her family's troubles, her writing style hits its

stride and the insights are especially clear and penetrating. It may be flogging a dead horse to critique Christian Science these days, as it fades away with the passing of the last generation to grow up without antibiotics. However, those of us who were raised in it need to critique it for our own benefit. The public image of CS has to do with shunning doctors and medicine. There's much more to it. In my family, as in Wilson's, the greatest pain was caused by the avoidance of relationship problems and mental disorders. An untreated infection may kill you quickly, but an abusive parent can affect your quality of life, and those of the rest of your family, over many years. My father was a third-generation Christian Scientist, First Reader of our church, and served on the board of a CS sanatorium. He went to church twice a week and served on countless church committees. I'm sure he never once tasted alcohol or tobacco, he never went to a doctor, and he always had one of us sitting by the TV (in the days before remote controls) to turn down the volume when ads for medicine came on. He was also an abuser with chronic untreated depression and suicidal impulses. Nobody could acknowledge that my father's abuse was happening because we had to pretend that life was Perfect. This made us all enablers.

Barbara Wilson "was the co-founder of two publishing companies, Seal Press and Women In Translation," and has written other books such as *If You Had a Family: A Novel*. The title of this 1997 book refers to her statement that Christian Science "was about choosing to see only beauty and happiness, no matter what, about choosing... to look at life through the rose windows, not the blue windows." (Pg. 7) She recalls in the first chapter, "My mother developed cancer when I was nine and died when I was twelve... At the time she was actually sick and dying, cancer seemed the least of her problems. Far more obvious... was the mental breakdown that had driven her to make a suicide attempt, an attempt that disfigured her face... What was wrong with my mother was never talked about at all, and after she died, she was almost never referred to by anyone again." (Pg. 6) She points out, "From the start Christian Science was attractive to women. Not only was the founder a woman and the theology of an androgynous god, but in a practical sense Christian Science offered employment as healers for women who had been barred by men from their traditional occupations as midwives and doctors. At the founding of the church, the ratio of women to men practitioners was five to one. In 1926, a study showed that while 55.7 percent of the membership of all churches was female, in Christian Science the percentage was 75 percent. In the 1950s, 87.7 percent of all Christian Science practitioners were women, and most recently a study showed a ratio of only one male practitioner for every eight women." (Pg.

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