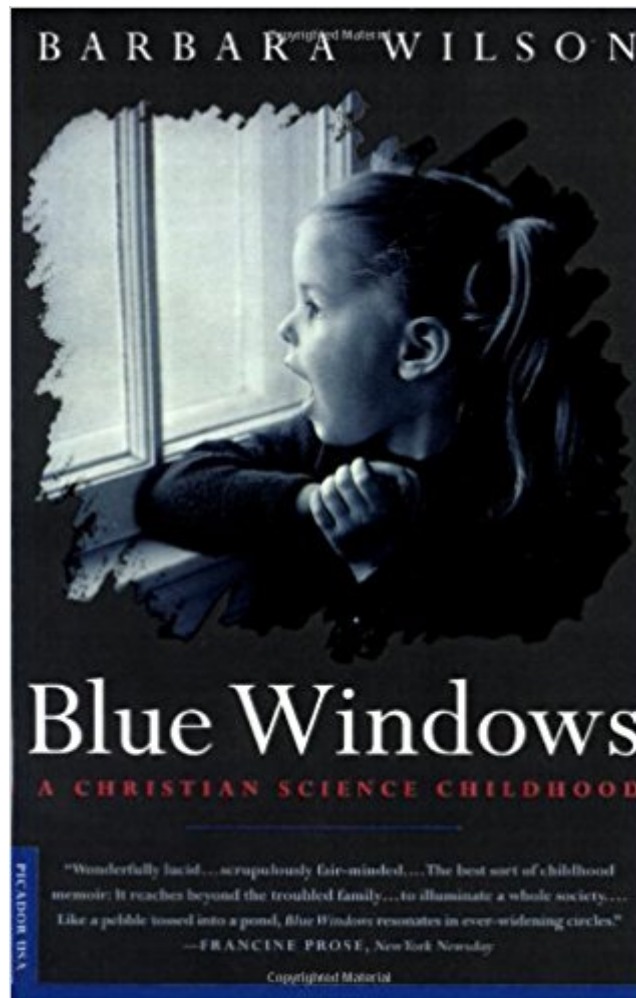




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Blue Windows: A Christian Science Childhood



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, Wilson surveys the complex history of Christian Science and the role of women in religion and healing.

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Customer Reviews

Frequently caricatured as the religion that rejects medical treatment, Christian Science gets a balanced, nuanced appraisal in this memoir by a writer who grew up within the faith. Barbara Wilson appreciates Christian Science's unusual openness to women, who gained self-respect and status as its practitioners and healers, but she bares its inadequacies in a wrenching account of her mother's battle with cancer, suicide attempt, and eventual death. Her precise, unsentimental prose delineates a decades-long journey toward self-knowledge and peace with her past: it's a very American saga, sensitively told. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Christian Science, a belief system with over one million adherents, pivots on the premise that the material world, and therefore physical illness, is an illusion. Recently, its consequent doctrinal

rejection of conventional medicine has led to government prosecution of several church members whose children have died because of the refusal of such treatment. Wilson (*Trouble in Transylvania*, LJ 10/1/93) here recalls her childhood as the daughter and granddaughter of Christian Scientists, focusing on her crisis of faith as a 12-year-old, triggered by the mental breakdown and premature death of her mother. (Wilson told this story previously in her work of fiction, *If You Had a Family*, LJ 10/1/96). Despite the potentially provocative subject matter, bathos here conspires with a paralytic writing style ("The picture is by Norman Rockwell, or would be, if he'd painted it") to undermine the work. A better Christian Science memoir is Thomas Simmons's *The Unseen Shore* (LJ 5/1/91). Wilson's work is a marginal purchase. Bill Piekarski, Southwestern Coll. Lib., Chula Vista, Cal. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is really the author's memoir of her childhood in the Midwest, which involved MUCH more than Christian Science, although CS was her parents' and grandparents' strong belief.

Grew up a CS but no longer involved. Book was very interesting. gs

This book is the best I have read so far on the Christian Scientist religion. I have not finished the book yet. I find it painful to read about all the lives that were harmed, so I have to put it down for a while and then go back. There are many writings about Mary Baker Eddy and the beliefs that she influenced people to embrace. My mother's family members were Christian Scientists. My mother became seriously ill and went to a doctor. She could never have contact with her mother again and rarely mentioned the religion or her mother. Everything was always so secretive. I want to read more about the women who succumbed to this religion -- about their personalities, marriages, and ways of raising children. I haven't found anything that focuses on just that or that answers my questions about the pain I know she endured.

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. Society is full of abusers and people who enable them, but few have a basis for enabling that's as powerful as the belief that the abuse literally doesn't exist. In Christian Science, if you see abuse, this is a problem in your perception--an instance of Error. You need to work on your perception, not on the person who seems to be imperfect. Domestic abuse thrives in such a setting. There are statistics that show Christian Scientists live shorter lives. I don't know of any statistics on how common abuse or mental illness is in CS families. My guess: very common. Kudos to Barbara Wilson for talking about this in her own life, and helping the rest of us survivors of CS to confront and fix the problems in our families that medicine can't touch.

Perfect book and speedy delivery6

This is an outstanding book! As someone who also was raised in Christian Science, and who also lost her mother to the religion, I have never read a better book. I was riveted by it. It brought back all the old memories, while providing a lot of information I never knew about the religion. I highly recommend it.

If you grew up in Christian Science and left the church like I did, you'll like this book. If you are still a Christian Scientist then you'll hate it if you let yourself read it, which Mrs. said you probably shouldn't do. If you know nothing about Christian Science, don't read this until you read God's Perfect Child: Living and Dying in the Christian Science Church.

This story of a Christian Science childhood makes it obvious that Christian Scientists are no better prepared than 'ordinary' folks to recognize mental illness and deal with it. This is especially true of depression in men--the case in this family. It has only recently been discovered that angry men are frequently depressed--they are angry at their depression, and at those around them. This young woman does deal successfully with her problems.

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