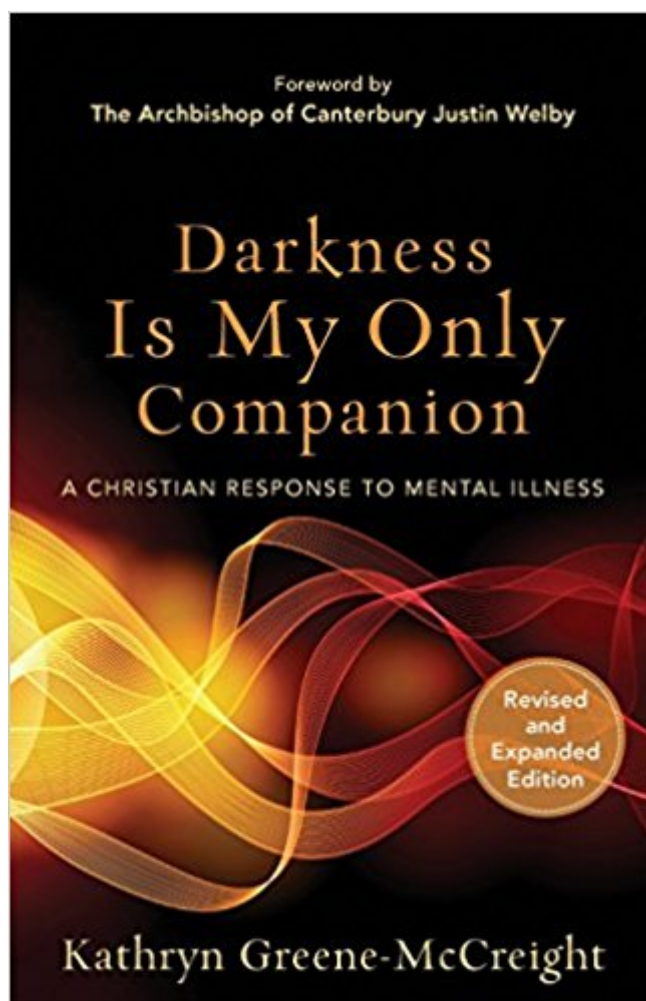


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# Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response To Mental Illness



## Synopsis

Where is God in the suffering of a mentally ill person? What happens to the soul when the mind is ill? How are Christians to respond to mental illness? In this brave and compassionate book, theologian and priest Kathryn Greene-McCreight confronts these difficult questions raised by her own mental illness--bipolar disorder. With brutal honesty, she tackles often avoided topics such as suicide, mental hospitals, and electroconvulsive therapy. Greene-McCreight offers the reader everything from poignant and raw glimpses into the mind of a mentally ill person to practical and forthright advice for their friends, family, and clergy. The first edition has been recognized as one of the finest books on the subject. This thoroughly revised edition incorporates updated research and adds anecdotal and pastoral commentary. It also includes a new foreword by the current Archbishop of Canterbury and a new afterword by the author.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Darkness is my only companion. The words of the psalmist rang hauntingly true for Kathryn Greene-McCreight when she was in the depths of her mental illness. In this brave and compassionate book, she confronts the difficult questions raised by her struggle with bipolar disorder. This thoroughly revised edition includes a new foreword by Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, an afterword by the author, refreshed resources, and questions for group discussion."I am often asked by people who have read Hannah's Child, my memoir wherein I tell the story of what it meant to live with someone suffering with bipolar disorder, how to go on in the face of such an illness. I simply recommend Greene-McCreight's Darkness Is My Only Companion. I do so

because the story she tells is shaped by her profound Christological commitments and wisdom, making this a book that we simply cannot live without."--Stanley Hauerwas, Duke Divinity School

"Kathryn Greene-McCreight takes the reader on her private journey through the hidden world of mental illness. Personal, painful, and informative, this experience is shared so that others may be healed. This book is a must read for every person struggling with a mental health problem, every pastor that ministers to those in distress, and every family member whose loved one has been taken away from them by a mental disorder."--Matthew S. Stanford, author of *Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness*

"In this honest and poignant reflection Kathryn Greene-McCreight seeks to 'witness to the working of the triune God in the pain of one mentally ill Christian.' She does so beautifully, graciously guiding readers through the depths of depression and the cacophony of mania to the hard road of 'reconstruction'--always relying on Scripture and the prayers and hymns of the church to give voice to her experience. This 'extended prayer' of a book is a gift to the church and to anyone who seeks to walk faithfully alongside someone with mental illness."--Warren Kinghorn, Duke University Medical Center and Duke Divinity School

Kathryn Greene-McCreight (PhD, Yale University) is associate chaplain at The Episcopal Church at Yale, priest affiliate at Christ Church in New Haven, Connecticut, and a theological writer. She also serves on the board of the Elm City Chapter of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and on the Patient and Family Advisory Council of Yale-New Haven Psychiatric Hospital.

Surveys indicating that large percentages of evangelicals believe that persons can overcome mental illness simply by Bible reading and prayer prove the need for this kind of work, which deserves a wide reading. The book is largely autobiographical. Ms. Greene-McCreight is a priest who has suffered from debilitating bipolar disorder that has resulted in multiple hospitalizations. Out of her training and experience, she provides a rich understanding that takes in the spiritual, physical, and psycho-social aspects of mental illness. The result is a work that can benefit patients, family, clergy, therapists, and other caregivers. In addition to the rich theological reflection on her own experience, she addresses practical concerns such as talking to family about one's illness, choosing a therapist, and deciding on therapists that have unfavorable attitudes toward the patient's faith. The author comes from a different theological tradition than this reviewer, and I don't follow her in all of her interpretative work. Nonetheless, the theological dialogue, especially that which relates the Psalms to her illness, is intensely rich and satisfying. I would encourage readers not to let theological quibbles prevent them from appreciating this valuable work.

I've been looking for a book like this for a long time. As a person of faith, and having mental illness in my family, I have found this book to be very encouraging and affirming. Though she mostly talks of her own mental illness, the author also talks about dealing with the mental illness of family members. She is very brave in her stories that she shares. I have had the same thoughts as some of the thoughts she has had, yet I have hardly admitted them to friends, and she confesses them in print. For me, that was uplifting. It is also interesting to know what goes on inside the head of a person with manic depression who is also religious (and educated theologically). It is a helpful reminder to the outsider that the ill person suffers far more than she or he causes suffering. What a tragedy to make someone's illness worse by failing to acknowledge it as an illness! I've read other books by people with manic depression, trying to understand what the sufferer goes through in order to be more sympathetic and helpful. This is just a great book by a brave person. I am glad to have found a book by a Christian that deal with mental illness seriously. I am sorry for her that she has to experience such suffering in order to be able to enlighten others about it. But her suffering does not need to be in vain; through her suffering she is able to help others who suffer from a painful, invisible illness that robs them of joy. The whole thing is very Christian, and maturely so. She is sometimes funny, but not glib or cynical. Overall a very serious tone; but anyone who has been near anyone with manic depression knows that it is a serious condition. I am so happy that I found this book, and that she wrote it. It was encouraging to hear someone who is much more educated and much wiser think some of the same thoughts, and ask some of the same questions, that I myself have asked. I hope that this book can help you understand yourself, or your loved one, as it helps you understand your faith and the hope of healing that we share. I am so glad that she persevered through her bouts with suicidal impulses. It is so tragic when people lose hope and become overwhelmed by the pain, when they truly believe, "Darkness Is My Only Companion." What a beautiful line. The title caught my eye because it is the last line from Psalm 88, a very sad Psalm. But it is a hopeful Psalm, even though it ends in sadness and darkness. God inspired that Psalm. And God inspired His people to keep that Psalm in His book. In doing that, God is acknowledging the suffering that those with mental illness (and others) suffer. It is not ever true that Darkness In Our Only Companion. But we are not damned for thinking that way, or for feeling that way. That is how such a sad Psalm could be so hopeful. I love Psalm 88, and always have ever since I noticed that it ends in darkness, loneliness, and despair. I love Kathryn Greene McCreight for choosing as the title of this book which I love her for writing. If you are a person of faith, and you or someone you know has a mental illness (especially depression or manic depression), this book is a

must-read. I'm sure that it is destined to be a classic in Christian Psychological Literature. I hope you and your loved ones find help and healing in her words, and in her God. Darkness is not your only companion. But it is OK if you feel like it is; God has not abandoned you. I hope you find love, joy, and peace.

This is one of the greatest books I have read. I read it for my Challenges in Ministry class. It focuses on Mental Illness, but some of the information can also apply to other illnesses, including Dementia. I have already recommended this book to several people, who said that it really helped. Am considering using this book as a study for my church to help them understand ministry with individuals struggling with mental illness.

Honest, edgy, and raw, this autobiographical piece provides insights into what it's like to live with bipolar disorder and not give up on finding the help needed. Great for mental health practitioners, general doctors, families, and friends--and others with not just BP, but also with other mental health conditions.

I love this book. Her honesty as she relentlessly turns to God in the midst of her pain is encouraging.

Really helpful knowing there was someone else who was in the battle. I liked the complexity.

A really Great read. It truly gets you into the mind of person suffering with a mental disorder

It's been a good book.

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