

Bipolar Faith: A Black Woman's Journey with Depression and Faith. By Monica A. Coleman. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016. xv + 356 pages. \$26.99.
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Monica Coleman is what psychologist Gail Hornstein calls a mental-health “expert by experience.” As someone living with bipolar II disorder, Coleman is an authority on the nuances of the condition, including the dimensions that evade diagnostic categories. In this spiritual autobiography, she invites readers into the experiences that honed her unwanted wisdom. They reveal the entanglements of mental health, racism, sexual violence, stigma, and religion. Informed also by her professional expertise as a womanist process theologian and ordained elder in the AME Church, Coleman offers readers subtle but compelling insights into the implications of bipolar II for spirituality and theologies of God.

Bipolar Faith is pure memoir, a departure from the author's previous books, which weave autobiographical reflections into academic argumentation or supplement spiritual guidance with personal stories. Her previous book on depression, *Not Alone: Reflections of Faith and Depression—A 40-Day Devotional* (Culver City, CA: Inner Prizes, 2012), was a version of the latter. The few overlapping stories and theological insights shared by these books take on greater depth and vividness in this memoir, making it a fresh read for those familiar with her previous book.

Coleman situates her mental-health struggle within a multigenerational context, beginning with the haunting suicide of her great-grandfather on through the depression her cousin suffered alongside her. Through their stories and her own, Coleman creates a book that is at once an accessible page-turner and a complicated portrait of depression. Still, bipolar disorder does not take center stage as often as one might anticipate in a book titled *Bipolar Faith*. It is the major events of Coleman's life—encounters with family members, her participation in African American studies at Harvard, the trauma of her rape, her ministry work, physical illness—that drive the narrative. Depression always lurks in the background, however. Mirroring Coleman's own late awakening to her lifelong depression, readers will look back on the book's early chapters to recognize that its symptoms were always there.

This distinguishes Coleman's book from many other so-called memoirs of madness, which are structured almost singularly around the interior movements of an author's mental-health struggles. Coleman's approach confronts readers with the complex relationship of depression to an individual's other experiences and cultural realities, including matters of faith. It also demonstrates how mental-health stigma can blind individuals to their own conditions.

Theologians will take interest in how Coleman's depression informs her interest in process theology. She frankly recounts how trauma and depression extinguished her personal relationship with God as a young adult. During this time, it was in the revelation of a God who suffered alongside her that Coleman recognized the "only God [she] could believe in." She attributes her formal study of process theology to this eye-opening conception of God. The weaving of her personal and intellectual histories puts flesh on the often-abstract metaphysical debates of process thought.

Just as traditional metaphysics failed Coleman amid her suffering, so too did many Christian spiritual practices. While Bible studies, Sunday worship, and common approaches to prayer helped Coleman on occasion, she writes most passionately about the unconventional spiritual practices that guided her back to God in times of particular strife. Such practices include African dance, knitting, and listening to music.

Like depression, religion is a constant presence in Coleman's life story. Yet this is not a theological manifesto about process metaphysics or unconventional spiritual practices. This is a vulnerable testimony about the theology and spirituality that emerged as one bright African American woman struggled with bipolar II. The book will appeal to religious and nonreligious audiences because of this gentle approach to faith.

The book's length may be an obstacle for professors using this text with undergraduates. It is not until late in the 356-page text that many of Coleman's insights about depression and faith become clear; the book should thus be assigned in its entirety. Graduate students in theology, ministry, or pastoral counseling will fly through these pages and benefit from Coleman's story as an engaging starting point for advanced theological reflection on suffering, God, and spirituality in today's world. It could also be assigned as a text on theologies of trauma, for the middle chapters about the effects of rape are among Coleman's most engaging and theologically rich.

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The Divine Quest, East and West: A Comparative Study of Ultimate Realities.

By James L. Ford. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016. xvii + 411 pages. \$28.95.

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In this book, James L. Ford, professor of religion at Wake Forest University, has set himself a formidable, some would say audacious, task: he wants to use one hermeneutical flashlight to explore multiple religious traditions. Casting