

The Mercy of Eternity: A Memoir of Depression and Grace

Eric G. Wilson



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In his best-selling book *Against Happiness: In Praise of Melancholy*, Eric G. Wilson challenged our culture's blindly insistent pursuit of happiness at all costs. In his harrowing yet ultimately hopeful memoir, *The Mercy of Eternity*, the author turns an unsparing eye on his own continuing struggle with bipolar depression and finds, within the very illness that causes so much suffering, the resources for hope, forgiveness, and love.

As a bright student-athlete on his way to West Point, Eric Wilson seemed to be well on the way to a fulfilling life. Yet he was haunted by overwhelming feelings of his deep insignificance. As he grew older, the traditional means of fulfillment—marriage and professional success—did nothing to assuage the descents into darkness and destructive behavior. Therapy and medication have offered some relief, but the birth of his daughter ultimately forces his hand. In some ways, the answer has been in front of him the whole time, for English professor Wilson finds in the literature of Coleridge, Blake, and others the lessons that depression might teach. When he comes upon "negative theology"—the school of thought that finds God in the "dark night of the soul"—Wilson discovers the framework for a radical call to *forgive* depression.

Only by forgiving this capricious, impersonal force is Wilson able to find the grace to move beyond the cycles of destructive self-absorption. Wilson admits that he continues to struggle, but in facing his depression instead of trying to escape it, he finds wisdom and grace.

Beautifully and accessibly written, *The Mercy of Eternity* is a brief yet profound meditation on the largest question of life.

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