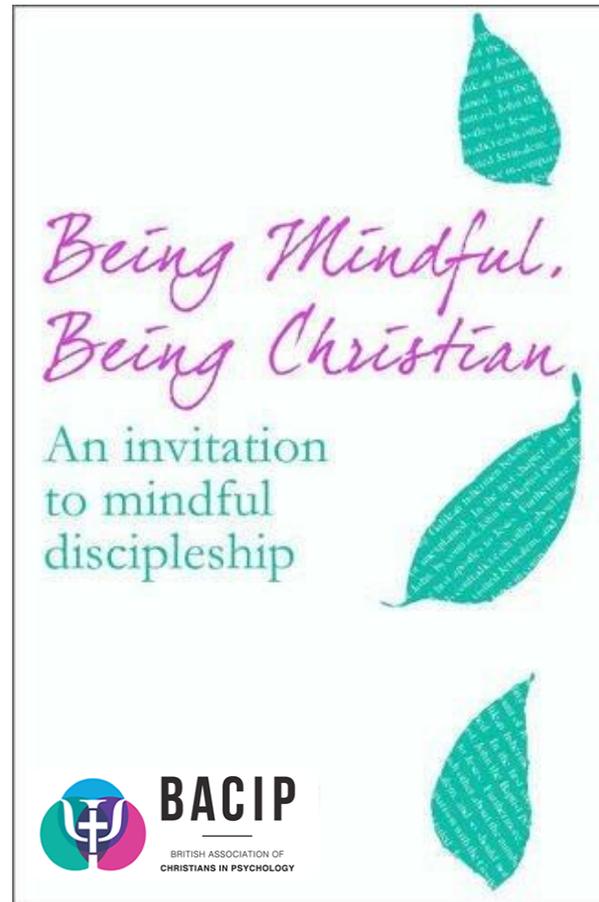


Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture



Joanna Collicutt

Mindfulness is everywhere

- The workplace
 - Claims that it improves wellbeing by
 - reducing stress
 - increasing concentration
 - improving work engagement
 - improving colleague relationships
- The health sector
 - MBCT & MBSR
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Chronic pain
- Education
 - Claims that it improves study skills
- TV & Internet
 - E.g. headspace www.headspace.com

Why did BACIP write a book on mindfulness and Christianity?

- Positive reasons
 - Christian psychologists who have experienced the benefits of mindfulness want to share this with the churches
 - The history of Christian spirituality suggests that there are strong points of connection with mindfulness
 - A desire to delineate common ground with other faith traditions
 - A desire to recover traditions of Christian meditation that had been forgotten
 - An enriched account of the faith (Matthew 13:52)
 - An assertion of some degree of ownership ‘we had it first’
 - An opportunity for serving the community ‘churches as potential centres for meditation’

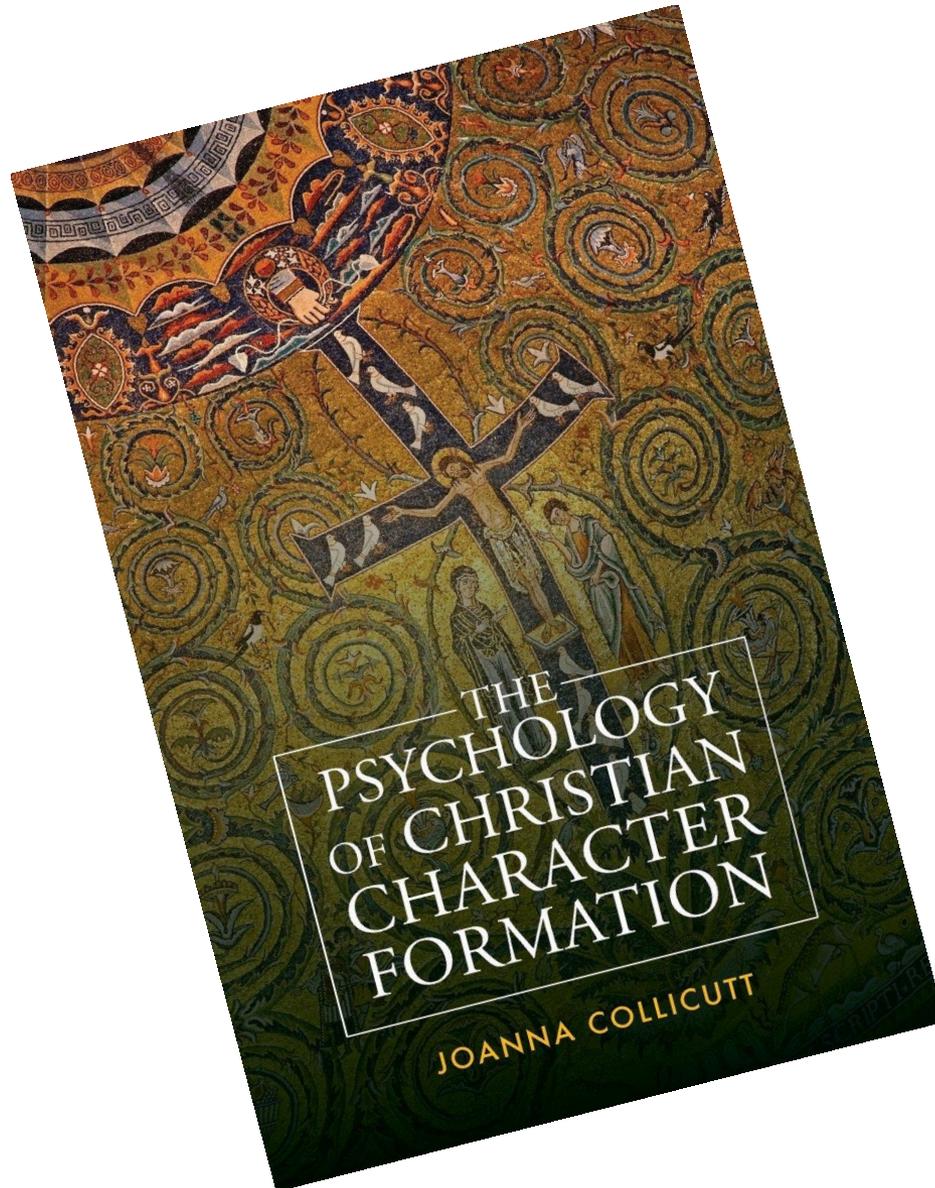
Why did BACIP write a book on mindfulness and Christianity?

- Negative reasons
 - A perception among conservative Christians (both protestant and catholic) that mindfulness is unorthodox
 - ‘Buddhism by the back door’
 - A concern among charismatic Christians that mindfulness may be spiritually oppressive
 - ASC open the door to the demonic
 - Therefore anxiety at the requirement to practice mindfulness as part of their professional practice as psychologists
 - Hence a need to address this anxiety with good data and trustworthy theology

What we mean by mindfulness

- There is great inconsistency in the use of the term and no agreed definition
 - A type of meditation?
 - A mode of cognitive processing?
 - A personality trait?
 - An aptitude?
 - An attitude?
- We chose one essential characteristic:
 - *‘paying attention to the present moment without wishing it were otherwise’*

To give a flavour...



The structure of the book

- Part I Being mindful
 - The mindful God
 - The mindful person
 - The mindful Christian?
- Being Christian
 - Compassion
 - Turning to the compassionate God
 - Courage
 - Turning inwards with eyes to see
 - Turning towards pain and need
 - Curiosity
 - Mindful Bible reading
 - Mindful reflection
 - Character
 - Mindfulness and Christian character
 - Mindful gratitude
 - Mindful wisdom

The mindful God

- When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?

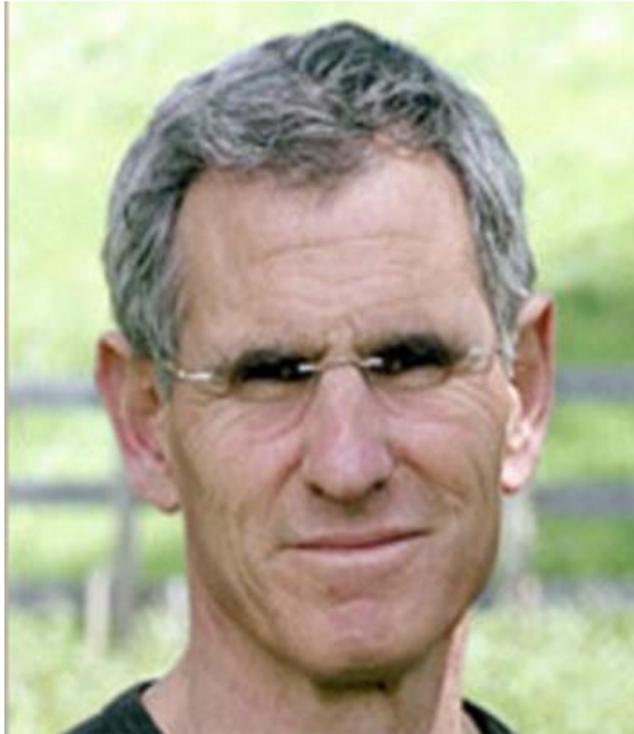
Psalm 8:3-4

- "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Luke 23:42

- *Zākar, mimnēskomai*

The mindful Christian?



- Jon Kabat-Zinn
 1. Non-judging
 2. Patience
 3. Beginner's mind
 4. Trust
 5. Non-striving
 6. Acceptance
 7. Letting go
 8. Generosity & gratitude

Jesus of Nazareth

- Trust
 - God is good
- Gratitude
 - God is a God of grace
- Beginner's mind
 - God reveals himself to humble open-hearted folk
- Not worrying
 - God is GOD
- Attentiveness and awareness
 - God's kingdom has drawn near
- Non-judging
 - God has a particular time frame

Trust: The facts are friendly

- 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'
- Human beings can and should address God intimately as 'Abba'
- God can be trusted
 - Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Gratitude: It's a gift

- All that we have is gifted, not earned
- Therefore grasping or trying to 'take back control' is not appropriate
- The appropriate response is then
 - To receive (in every sense)
 - This is the true nature of 'faith'
 - To be grateful
 - This is the motive behind changed lives

Beginner's mind: Becoming like little children

- 'Become like little children!' (Matthew 18:3)
- 'Be born afresh!' (John 3:3-5)
 - Second naïveté
- Children 'get it' (Matthew 11:25)
 - No emotional, intellectual, or material baggage;
 - No preconceptions
 - Humble, free to ask 'stupid' questions
 - Wonder and curiosity

Not worrying: God is GOD

- ‘Do not worry!’ (Matthew 6:31-34)
 - God is in charge and all will ultimately be well
- Do not allow your preoccupations to rule you (Luke 10:41)
- Travel light
 - Possessions, wealth, family demands, even religious observance are all potential sources of worry (Matthew 6:19-21; 19:24)
 - Paying attention to such things diverts from a proper attentiveness to the things of God (which is the ‘better part’)
 - This is an aspect of idolatry

Attentiveness and awareness: Consider the lilies



- Intentionally notice the things that you might otherwise ignore
 - Seeds
 - Yeast
 - Salt
 - Sparrows
 - Children
 - A poor widow

Non-judging: Now is not the time

- ‘Do not judge’ (Matthew 7:1)
 - *chronos* and *kairos*
- A judgment-free zone
 - ‘The year of the LORD’s favour’ (Luke 4:19)
- Seed-time and harvest
 - The wheat and the tares (Matthew 13)
 - The fig tree – ‘leave it alone’ (Luke 13:8)
 - Patience is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)
- ‘Watch and pray’

‘Pray without ceasing’: The early years after Jesus

- Early versions of 24-7 prayer
 - Meditating on Scripture, especially the Psalms
 - Liturgy of the Hours: 7-24 prayer
 - Embodied and biological
 - The Lord’s Prayer
 - Trusting childlike attitude embraced
 - Breaking of Bread
 - *Marana Tha*

Be still and know that I am God

- Early eastern practice: The Jesus Prayer (4th century)
- ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner’
 - Luke 18;13
 - 1 Corinthians 12:3
 - *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison* (a sign of faith Matthew 15:22,28)

- Later Eastern practice
Hesychasm (8th century)
- *Hesuchia* – stillness
- Breathing
 - Inhale
 - Say Jesus Prayer
 - Exhale
- Foetal posture
'designed to take the
mind into the heart' and
eyes turned away from
heaven in humility
- *Nepsis* – watchful
attentiveness



From meditation to contemplation

- Meditation is not prayer but ‘the birth of prayer’
 - Ground clearing
- Contemplative prayer is relational
 - I-Thou

Receiving the gift of the present moment



- Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)

- Insisted that Christians should develop the capacity to sit lightly to all things, including their thoughts, and especially their thoughts about God. Instead, trusting in God's invisible presence, we are to come to a mentally still point, what he called a '*Gelassenheit*' or complete letting-be.
- 'To be receptive to the highest truth, and to live therein, a man must needs be without before and after, untrammelled by all his acts or by any images he ever perceived, empty and free, receiving the divine gift in the eternal Now, and bearing it back unhindered in the light of the same praise and thanksgiving in our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Receiving the gift of the present moment

- Jean-Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751)
 - ‘The sacrament of the present moment’
 - All we have is the present and that is the gateway to eternity
 - God is *now*
 - ‘Souls who can recognize God in the most trivial, the most grievous and the most mortifying things that happen to them in their lives, honour everything equally with delight and rejoicing, and welcome with open arms what others dread and avoid’

Receiving the gift of the present moment

- RS Thomas (1913-2000)

- From 'The bright field'

Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

