

Reawakening our Origins.

*Beginning an Exploration of a
British Monastic Ecclesiology.*



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2016

Columcille fecit.

**Delightful would it be to me to be in Uchd Ailiun
On the pinnacle of a rock,
That I might often see the face of the ocean;
That I might see it's heaving waves over the wide ocean,
When they chant music to their Father upon the world's course;
That I might see its level sparkling strand,
It would be no cause of sorrow;
That I might hear the song of the wonderful birds, source of happiness;
That I might hear the thunder of the crowding waves upon the rocks;
That I might hear the roar by the side of the church of the surrounding sea;
That I might see its noble flock, over the watery ocean;
That I might see the sea-monsters, the greatest of all wonders;
That I might see its ebb and flood in their career;
That my mystical name might be, I say, Cul ri Erin;
That contrition might come upon my heart upon looking at her;
That I might bewail my evils all, though it were difficult to compute them;
That I might bless the Lord who conserves all,
Heaven with its countless bright orders, land, strand and flood;
That I might search the books all, that would be good for my soul,
At times kneeling to beloved Heaven, at times psalm singing;
At times contemplating the King of Heaven Holy the chief;
At times at work without compulsion this would be delightful,
At times plucking duilisc from the rocks; at times at fishing;
At times giving food to the poor; at times in a Carcair
The best advice in the presence of God to me has been vouchsafed.
The King whose servant I am will not let anything deceive me.**

St. Columba

Introduction.

For as long as I can remember I have always been drawn to stillness. This does not of course mean I have always been still and as those that know me will testify very rarely quiet. Silence and stillness have over the years become good friends. The longer we walk together the greater an appreciation of their presence and personality I am developing. Silence and stillness are like two ancient spiritual seers, whose call to every generation is to rediscover the Divine Creator in the simple act of listening and holy living. Like many Christians whose introductory experience was predominantly charismatic non-denominational, I have grown to appreciate there is life beyond the noise, ebullient and imminent expectation of a national revival and a resurgence of evangelical social reformers. In and of themselves these expectancies are fine, yet given the increasing flood of political, social and climate chaos the western hegemony finds itself in, I wonder whether they truly are able to deliver on their promise. A chaos the western church is by and large an active economic participant in.

We are of course, all products of our culture, our Godly encounters and our ecclesiology, I am no different. The culture of late 20th, early 21st century Britain has shaped a particular expression of popular Churchmanship that in turn has shaped and framed the encounter we have with God. This became apparent to me as I listened to the stories recounted by my daughters and friends, of how their peers were encountering the corporate manifestations of the Holy Spirit during worship gatherings at Soul Survivor.¹ Not a lot would appear to have changed since I attended in the late 1990's.

The journey from conversion, charismatic encounter, Christ in the poor, contemplative activism to creational wholeness represents a continuum of spiritual peregrination, that when viewed through the eyes of faith is both instructive and life affirming. If this journey is *authentic*, it has also been spiritually *turbulent*. *Authentic* in that it is progressive, I am still in spiritual motion towards my Creator. After all dead people do not move. Life is always in motion, growing, straining, searching for the light. *Turbulent* as genuine spiritual growth always creates a worldly resistance that must be overcome in our own inner resistance to change (Romans 12:21). The resistance we encounter is always focussed on what we prioritise in our lifestyle and the subsequent allegiances we allow ourselves. St. Mark was unequivocal in his assessment of this point in his retelling of the parable of the sower (Mark 4: 1-9).

Having recently completed studies in Celtic Christianity with the University of Wales, I have come to the conviction we can no longer afford the luxury of allowing a justifiable love for Celtic Christianity to remain just that. Celtic Christianity is a wonderful indigenous lens through which we can seek the Kingdom Of God with optimism and hope. Yet perhaps the most pertinent aspect of my studies was the realisation that the British & Irish monastic church must no longer be the sole pursuit of academics, archaeologists, hierophants and historians. Celtic Christianity must now migrate into the hands of the practitioners, the

¹ Soul Survivor is the largest attended Christian youth gathering in Britain.

builders, the farmers, the creational activists and spiritual entrepreneurs whose focus is on living a Christian witness that is rooted in the simplicity of prayer, work and reading in this our green and pleasant land.

My purpose is to explore the simple ecclesiology of the indigenous monastic church of Britain. My primary inspiration for this will be St. Columba, the monastic houses that he established, Adomnan's Life of St. Columba (VC) and the monastic Rule of St. Columba (rule). This Columban charism was archetypal of the British & Irish monastic flourishing between the 5th to 9th centuries. Arriving at its door has been an adventure, a distillation of life experience, creational awakening, a longing for spiritual authenticity and a recognition that the world system cannot deliver on the aspirations that we all feel for a better future for our children, communities and our human longing to find social meaning and purpose.

Arriving at an ecclesiology of the monastic church has been the culmination of numerous factors that have focussed heart, mind and spirit on a grounded response to the human, economic and ecological crisis that the world system continues to pursue unabated. I would summarise this worldly obsession as,

- The normalisation of the pursuit of wealth as the ideal human condition.
- Rampant consumerism that has led to an explosion of unsustainable personal debt.
- The alignment of political power with the pursuit of wealth.
- The commodification of land as a resource to be exploited and consumed.
- The impotence of the western Church to demonstrate a cohesive alternative way of life in the face of the world system.

Our acquiescence to the power structures of the world as the defining authority on how we live our lives, has denuded our Christian witness of authenticity and led society as a whole to disregard the church as a cultural artifact. In his essay *Racism and the Economy*, the Christian agrarian mystic Wendell Berry writes the following,

The great enemy of freedom is the alignment of political power with wealth. This alignment destroys the commonwealth - that is, the natural wealth of localities and the local economies of household, neighbourhood, and community - and so destroys democracy, of which the commonwealth is the foundation and practical means. This is happening - it is happening - because the alignment of wealth and power permits economic value to overturn value of any other kind.²

In my 30 years of being a Christian I have come to the realisation that despite the rhetoric and efforts of well meaning missional groups focussing on confessional conversion, as a body politick, the current western Protestant church is failing in its basic purpose of making disciples and liberating these disciples from the destructive values of the world. 'You cannot

² Wendell Berry. *Racism and the Economy*, in, *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, (ed.) Norman Wirzba. (Shoemaker & Hoard: 2002), p.58.

serve God and wealth' (Matthew 6:24b) is the starkest choice that Jesus presents his followers with. Western orthodoxy has overwhelmingly ignored this basic maxim in favour of a Christianised version of the pursuit of wealth and material comfort. We now have a proliferation of churches, church leaders and church members whose only point of distinction from worldly values is an intellectual confession of faith. We are indistinct from the wider world. This cultural settlement is an anathema to the teachings and life of Jesus.

The Monastic Church.

The Monastic Church was the earliest indigenous ecclesiology in Britain whose strength and dynamism was its simplicity of prayerful practice alongside a geographically liminal location in the cosmology of Gods created order. In today's world, the idea of Church is often seen as a distraction to those whose natural tendency is towards contemplation, mystery and wisdom. Similarly the word monastic conjures imaginings of cloistered separation for the spiritual elite, hidden away from the daily lives of the great unwashed. For the executive styled career Christian, platform preachers and Church leaders it can quickly become an idol at the heart of the narrative, a means by which we secure material wealth and maintain the gratification of public popularity. It is not the responsibility of human beings to build the church. Not something Jesus ever sanctioned. We must be clear, it is not our job to build the church, this is the purview of God alone. The followers of Christ are called to 'strive first for the Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well' (Matthew 6:33). The Church is the by-product of this Kingdom focus.

When discussing the reawakening of a British & Irish monastic church I start from the understanding that ecclesiology is not a fixed social, cultural or theological position. The axiomatic passage on church building is of course Jesus's proclamation over the man Peter, 'you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church' (Matthew 16:18a). What is instantly clear is that Jesus builds the church and that Peter is a human being and not a rock (either in character or temperament). Later in his life St. Peter recalls Jesus's words, when he speaks of 'living stones... being built into a spiritual house' (1 Peter 2:5). St. Paul talks of a body, the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5 & 1 Corinthians 12:12) and bodies are not stone or walls, concepts or ideas, they are precisely what we live in - namely the skin we are in. The *Ekklesia* (called out ones) of God are human beings, physical bodies, being formed in purpose and will to that of God the Creator as revealed in and through Jesus. The authenticity of the Body of Christ should never be about the quality of buildings, organisational political structure, size of congregation or commercial success. These things are helpful, but not defining as they are products of socio-economic conditioning and context. The Body of Christ is only ever to be judged on the quality of the love (John 15:12-17) expressed between the bodies that inhabit it and where those bodies choose to locate themselves. It is as simple as that.

The question then arises what do we do with our bodies and where do we choose to place them? These questions are at the heart of a monastic church ecclesiology. The monastic

church is a place that creates the social and creational context in which the individual can be formed in the likeness of Christ. This spiritual formation occurs in three principle ways, through discipleship, imitation and location. So is there an ecclesiology that harnesses the strength of a rooted spirituality, an inclusive communitarian edge and creational harmony?

Discipleship in its simplest terms means to follow after, to learn from and to be taught. We learn by example and clearly for Jesus the call to come 'follow me' (John 1:43) was at the very heart of His life's work. This discipleship however should not be interpreted as primarily evangelistic (if we understand evangelism as a process of converting individual people). Yoder summarises the sociological traits of discipleship as three fold,³

- A visible social structure or fellowship (Matthew 10:1-4).
- A sober decision regarding the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33).
- A clearly defined lifestyle that is distinct from the world (Matthew 5:1-14).

Jesus was intentional about the establishing of an alternative society or fellowship that was in direct contrast to the existing system of the world and established governance. During His final meal, Jesus speaks plainly about the essential difference between the kingdoms of the world and the Kingdom of God, being that of servanthood rather than power and control (Luke 22:25). The Kingdom of God is the in breaking of a new social order of love expressed as service and sacrifice, not the revolutionary overturning, or coalescing to, the existing political and social structures of the world.

*Monastic disengagement from the start was a social and political statement as well as a theological one. We cannot overlook the vital importance in the fourth century of 'social meaning'. The presence of heavenly power on earth expressed in the monastic life was closely related to an ascetic stance to 'this world' - represented by disentangling oneself from the conventional social and economic obligations in the favour of reshaping of human relations.*⁴

This visible counter-cultural community is established in lifestyle, a lifestyle that revolves around the primary commandment, 'that you love one another as I have loved you' (John 15:12).

Imitation of Christ is at the very centre of all the monastic traditions and the heart of a Columban ecclesiology and expectation. 'Be naked in your imitation of Christ and the Evangelists' (rule 2) is the injunction that follows on from 'being alone in a separate place' (rule 1). Imitation is often understood as the copying of Jesus in all aspects of lifestyle and it cannot be denied that this aspirational devotion over the centuries has produced many inspirational exemplars of transformational holiness. What imitation cannot be understood to mean however is that every disciple of Christ should live an identikit lifestyle to Jesus. Jesus was not married, was a carpenter, was itinerant etc. The very fabric of life itself would be out

³ John Howard Yoder. *Politics of Jesus*. (Eerdmans: 1972), p.47

⁴ Philip Sheldrake. *Spaces for the Sacred*. (SCM Press: 2000), p.91-92.

of balance if every Christian copied Jesus in this fashion. If discipleship is an outward expression of an in breaking Kingdom, imitation is the process of inward formation that leads to that out breaking of the Kingdom becoming a material reality. (Luke 17:20-21). The imitation of Christ is authenticated in our orientation towards the power structures of the world. Are we transformed (internally and externally) by the authority and values of God or the authority of the world value system? Imitation of Christ is a transformation that leads to the realisation and fulfilment of our true nature. A nature created in the Image of God. Imitation is participation, partaking, abiding, corresponding with the very nature of who God is. 'Be holy for I am Holy' (Leviticus 19:2), and 'be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect' (Matthew 5:48) captures the very lifeblood of what it means to be created in the image of God. At this point we must concede failure and our need of grace. No one is perfect in holiness, yet our desire for union with God leads us to climb the ladder of holiness each and every day and when we fall off, start all over again.

Actions without internal concordance swiftly become meaningless religious observance. The heart and soul of our humanity must be liberated from worldly values, so our lifestyle and actions are authentic expressions of our faith (James 2:26). Matthew's beatitudes, not only focus on external behaviours, they also focus us on the inner world of love, peace, reconciliation, equality, inclusiveness and being free in our hearts from hatred, materialism, revenge, violence, segregation and greed. St. Paul captures a high point of Christian theology when he writes, 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

From the inner world of intentional imitation flows the required detachment from the corrosive worldly values that would have us formed in the image of all that is destructive to humanity and creation.

At the core of discipleship and community is a spirit shaped by Holiness that is free to love without reward or notoriety. The Utopia that is the Kingdom of God is fashioned first in the heart and soul of each follower. St. Columba's call to imitate Christ and the Evangelists (rule 2), is so we are able to confess with integrity that the ruler of this world 'has no power over me' (John 14:30, 19:11).

Location is an indispensable positioning in order to mature in Christ. What is unequivocal in the historical analysis of the British & Irish monastic church was that liminal creation was the physical location for their ecclesial settlements. These liminal wildernesses in turn actively shaped and formed the monastic life in Christ.

*God's indwelling spirit is not merely in humankind or even in animate objects. The Spirit dwells in all things without exception. In that sense the elements such as earth and water are powerful spiritual forces because they have within them the creative energy that is God's own.*⁵

⁵ Philip Sheldrake. *Living Between Worlds: Place and Journey in Celtic Spirituality*. (Darton, Longman & Todd: 1995), p.82.

On the monastic island of Iona, St. Columba has a word of fore-knowledge that a pilgrim from Ireland would be blown off course and arrive on the island exhausted and near death. St. Columba instructs one of the monks to wait for the unfortunate to arrive, to take him to one of the monasteries guest rooms, give him hospice until he is fully recovered and able to continue his onward journey. This pilgrim turns out to be a Heron, blown off course in a storm and it is significant the bird is afforded the same hospitality that a human guest would have been (VC 1:48). In this simple prophetic encounter we witness a charismatic creational balance at work in the life of the monastic house.

Those early adherents of British monasticism sought places of creational liminality that afforded the minimal amount of secular distraction and maximised the immanence and transcendence of God in creation. Theirs was a spirituality that embraced wilderness as home.

There can be little doubt that early British and Irish Christians built on the tenants of desert monasticism that included;

- Separation from worldly values of empire
- An embracing of ascetic practices
- A creational worldview
- A focus on an imitation of Christ in all aspects of life.

This indigenous desert in the ocean asceticism was rooted and emerged from within the soil of these islands and uniquely found expression upon the waters that surround them. It recognised that although monastic principles espoused in the Egyptian and Syrian deserts⁶ may be inspirational, these principles cannot be imposed from above, they emerge from beneath our feet, from the very soil on which we tread and the waters we sail on.

All of creation proceeds from God, all of creation participates in God, all of creation returns to God.

John Scottus Eriugena.

Creation, of which humanity is uniquely a part, is an active participant in our spirituality and ecclesiology, not a passive recipient. To speak of the whole of life as being (w)holy is a theological confession few would disagree with. Yet the challenge comes in living a life that treats all of creation as Holy. To live an intentionally (w)holy life is the most difficult and challenging vocation in today's aggressively secularised Britain. A privatised modern secularism and liberal economic dogma demand life is structured into manageable monetised and politicised components. This dystopian segregation fails to recognise the primary creational mandate that all of life is sacred and an inter-dependent whole under God. Our

⁶ For a good summary of the theological and spiritual link between desert monasticism of the fourth century and its influence on British and Irish Monastic practice, see chapter 2 of *The Church in Early Irish Society*, Kathleen Hughes.

spiritual maturity is dependent on a right relationship with creation, and creation needs a (w)holy people to work in partnership to fulfil God's expectation for salvation.

The Call to (W)Holiness

It appears that monasticism, in its origins, should be viewed as having a prophetic role vis-a-vis the human city rather than simply as providing an escape route into an alternative, purified, universe.⁷

How we walk through this world has never been of more significance than it is today. If discipleship is communal and imitation is communion of the heart, the question of how we live this balanced life becomes a pressing question. The beauty of the Church is to be found in the quality of the living stones from which it is fashioned. The spiritual governance of these living stones through prayer, work, reading was the daily rhythm/rule that St. Columba established for both *cenobitic* (communal) and *eremitical* (hermit) monastic living, 'Three labours a day; prayer, work and reading' (rule 15).

This rule of St. Columba provides a simple framework of life that assists the follower to focus on the core essentials in perfecting his or her Christian faith. The task for followers of Christ is to focus on the quality of our life in Christ. In doing so we become witnesses to a living holiness that cannot be replicated by a corrupt world. Holiness is a currency secularism cannot trade in, and for the follower of Christ it becomes a sign and symbol of our genuine freedom from the corruption that is so prevalent in the world system.

He (St. Columba) spent thirty-two years as an island soldier and could not let even an hour pass without giving himself to praying, or reading or writing or some other task.⁸

St. Columba led by example and the countless stories Adomnan tells of how this indigenous Apostle lived as a holy man, are testimony to the effectiveness of keeping things simple in your spiritual life.

Prayer - being nurtured in love.

Whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Matthew 6:6).

The Apostle Paul teaches us to 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians 1:17). For those who follow Christ prayer is the primary vocation. It becomes the sweetest sustenance to our being and the bitterest taste to our stomachs when we forget. The world is the battleground of our soul and prayer is the only weapon the soldier of Christ is given by which to undertake this battle.

We must take this battle seriously, recognising that the world is full of distractions designed to lure us away from the source of our humanness. Prayer is the fulfilment of our human

⁷ Philip Sheldrake. *Spaces for the Sacred*. (SCM Press: 2001), p.94.

⁸ Adomnan of Iona. *The Life of St. Columba*. (trans.) Richard Sharpe. (Penguin Classics: 1995) p. 106.

purpose and the liberation of a suffocating creation. St. Columba teaches us, 'Be alone in a separate place, near a chief monastery (city), if your conscience is not prepared to be in common with the crowd' (rule 1). Being alone in prayer reveals our true nature, there is no other position under heaven when we are more truly ourselves than when we face God alone. The Holy Spirit invites us, woos us, leads us willingly to a place of prayer. Setting aside a location to pray enables us to move to a physical place of no distraction. 'Let a fast place with one door enclose you' (rule 4) is St. Columba's injunction to be in a place of zero distraction, a chance to give our Creator our full and undivided attention.

Prayer is not something we do, it is something we are.

Prayer is a request for what is good, offered by the devout of God. But we do not restrict this request simply to what is stated in words. We should not express our prayer merely in syllables, but the power of prayer should be expressed in the moral attitude of our soul and in the virtuous actions that extend throughout our life. This is how you pray continually — not by offering prayer in words, but by joining yourself to God through your whole way of life, so that your life becomes one continuous and uninterrupted prayer. Basil the Great.

For the monastics the rule is a means by which the individual is perfected in faith, therefore let us use St. Columba as an inspiration, aspiring to pray continually in all things.

Work - being transformed by love.

Words are never adequate. The purpose of our life is to live out the mystery of the Holy Trinitarian community in all its fullness and work is part of that mysterious relationship. What we work at is both devotional and sacred. All we turn our hand to should reflect God's holiness, and should never be valued according to financial reward. Work is one of the three daily labours upon which the Columban charism is founded and holds a unique transformational energy for revealing and creating that which is hidden (rule 15). Work is not as the secular world would have us believe principally for servicing material comforts or paying off unsustainable forms of material consumption. Perhaps one of the biggest lies perpetrated by the voices of secular materialism is that work is principally transactional, time for money, rather than transformational, time with love. For God is love (1 John 4:8b) and God sustains all things (Hebrews 1:3).

For St. Columba perfect work retained a spiritual quality that promoted genuine tears of emotion and satisfaction (rule 27). One notable example of the spiritual nature of work comes when St. Columba was an old man, unable to do much manual labour, he would pray for the monks labouring in the fields. This prayer led to a spiritual refreshment described by one of the brothers as 'like a wonderful fragrance, like all flowers gathered into one; and a heat like fire, not the fire of torment but somehow sweet. And I feel too a strange incomparable joy poured into my heart' (VC I:37). This refreshment and joy was experienced by all the monks of the work party when St. Columba prayed for their physical health.

St. Paul focusses attention on work as a means by which we sustain our physical needs and to live in peace with our neighbours. The quality and value of our work is focussed on providing

for ourselves, family and the common weal of the wider community (Titus 3:8 & 3:14). Again we see the value of work is measured in its impact for God's Kingdom of righteous and justice, not the amount of financial return we can enrich ourselves with.

Reading - being shaped by scripture.

Reading and its sibling study, recognise the importance of the mind in the formation of holiness. There can be no doubt that the discipline of reading and study was foundational to St. Columba and his community. Indeed the monastic way is a measurable journey into a deeper understanding of the scriptures, their relevance and centrality to life. Scripture was also foundational in both personal and communal pray. Praying the scriptures, memorising them and copying them was a daily ritual of the Columban family. Copying Psalm 34 was St. Columba's very last activity. From the scriptorium he retired to the chapel to pray where he died in the arms of his servant and colleague Dairmait (VC III:23)

This immersion in reading and study was not only focussed on scripture, the library on Iona held many other sacred texts. Evagrius's latin translation of the Life of St. Anthony and Sulpicius's Life of St. Martin were well known throughout the Columban foundations. The Dialogues of Pope Gregory, including the Life of St. Benedict were also known and read.⁹ We know from St. Columba's early life in Ireland he got into trouble for secretly copying a Psalter by St. Jerome.

Illuminated manuscripts such as the Book of Kells, Durrow and the Lindisfarne Gospel all give a clear idea of the focus and dedication that all Columban foundations displayed when it came to reading, copying and decorating the Scriptures.

What is clear is that the scholastic devotion given to the reading of scripture and other religious texts demonstrated an intellectual inquiry that was both encouraged as well as dictated to all the monks who lived under the protection of the monastic house (rule 5). The monastic houses were therefore centres of learning, scholarly exploration, education and philosophical reasoning. There was no hint in their practice of shying away from growing in mind and understanding.

In the world the populous culture of personal opinion as truth (aped by significant sections of the modern western church) and a strong anti-intellectual rhetoric, is understandable when viewed against the backdrop of the deification of the mind since the (so called) enlightenment. The pre-eminence of scientific reasoning as the arbiter of truth in the post enlightenment settlement of western society has left an existential void to the meaning of the human condition and a yearning for deeper spiritual meaning. Science has opened many wonderful doors of discovery to humanity, and created as many questions about our human condition as it has attempted to answer. A Godless rationalism coupled with an a-moral economic philosophy has unleashed the demons of apocalyptic destruction upon the very creation itself. Abandoning God the Creator from our thinking is akin to walking towards a

⁹ see Sharpe, in Adomnan's Vite Columbae p.58-59.

cliff edge wearing a blindfold on a moonless night - there is terminal danger with every step you take. However the notion of a reasoned, scholarly devotion to scripture and learning is both welcome and balancing for the growth of the follower of Christ, but only when equally yoked to devotional work and prayer. (W)holiness demands attention is given to prayer (the life of the Spirit), work (the engagement of the physical body) and reading (the expansion of the mind) in equal measure.

Starting Over Again.

We all dream of a pure church, a church not made with hands, a church that not only retains the presence of God but also embodies the very activity of God in its participants. The creation, the people of the land, the poor and disempowered all seek a church that is true to its original *raison d'être*. A purpose where the presence and activity of a Holy Creator God is made known by the quality of love lived out and expressed by the individual members of the Body of Christ one to another and welcoming of the stranger. It is the quality of our faith in Christ that sets us apart from a corrupted world system, not the eloquence of our words. This is the essential purpose of the monastic church - to be a place set aside in creation where holy souls can grow and holy communities can flourish.

Creation is the location for the rediscovery of an indigenous monasticism. Perhaps the climate crisis we now face as a species has helped us to focus on what was always our original mandate, namely to care for creation and live in harmony with all living things (Genesis 1:28-30). Our Celtic Christian ancestors understood this principle, their embracing of liminal geography and wilderness was their ascetic stance in relation to the world system. It is in the creational wilderness of mind, body and spirit that they found a pure love and joy in the undistracted presence of God.

This re-awakening of our origins will require nothing less than a starting all over again. It will take courageous men and women willing to pay the price of intentional detachment from the world order to begin to cast a future hope that has (w)holiness as its foundation. This is a movement towards simplicity of life, an acknowledgement of our need of creation and an embracing of humility and a child like faith.

St. Columba offers us a practical means by which to begin this journey. Through prayer, work and reading we can strip back the excesses in the Christian spiritual life and learn to focus on that which has eternal value.

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