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Ùrnaighean nan Gàidheal: Text and Context of Gaelic Prayer in South Uist, 1880-1960

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Research**

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Abstract

This study explores the Gaelic folk prayer tradition in South Uist in the Western Isles of Scotland over the period of the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, and in particular the question of what functions Gaelic folk prayers had for Catholic Gaels and their communities in this time period, as well as the impact that devotional literature had on the tradition during this period. This study places the folk prayer tradition of late nineteenth and twentieth-century South Uist within a local Highland and national Scottish cultural context, examining the role of prominent folklore collectors in the collection and publication of folk prayers from South Uist, such as the work of Fr Allan MacDonald (“Maighstir Ailein”), and the publication of *Carmina Gadelica* by Alexander Carmichael.

In particular, the interplay between printed devotional resources and the oral prayer tradition is highlighted in this study. A review of Gaelic language prayer manuals available during this period, such as *Iùl a' Chrìostaidh* is included, as well as an exploration of the influence of the Catholic “Devotional Revolution” and the Scottish “Celtic Revival” on the publication of Gaelic prayers. Included is an in-depth examination of multiple versions of the Gaelic folk prayer, *An t-Altachadh Laighe* (“The Lying Down Prayer”), gleaned from a range of printed and oral sources, as well as original transcriptions of archival interviews, including folk prayers, from tradition-bearers from South Uist and Barra, conducted by the School of Scottish Studies in the mid-twentieth century.

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Mo mhìle beannachd oirbh uileadh.

Abbreviations Used

CW Carmichael Watson Collection, University of Edinburgh

TanD Tobar an Dualchais

TGSG *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*

TGSI *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*

Ùrnaighean nan Gàidheal: Text and Context of Gaelic Prayer in South Uist, 1880-1960

Introduction

This study will explore the Gaelic folk prayer tradition in South Uist over the period of the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, and in particular the question of what functions Gaelic folk prayers had for Catholic Gaels and their communities in this time period. A particular focus of this study will be on the relationship between oral and printed versions of prayers and an exploration of how this relationship works through an examination of literary influences on the oral folk prayer tradition. A need for research of this nature was identified by John Lorne Campbell, who noted in his 1978 article, “Notes on Hamish Robertson’s ‘Studies in Carmichael’s *Carmina Gadelica*’”:

Enquiry should be made into the extent to which the oral tradition of South Uist and Barra may have been influenced by Roman Catholic hymnaries and devotional literature (15).

In the intervening time, little research has been undertaken that addresses this question and associated issues of authenticity, the primacy of the written word over oral sources, and the stability of the oral tradition over time. This study aims to provide a preliminary exploration of these issues by placing the folk prayer tradition of late nineteenth and twentieth-century South Uist within a local and national cultural context, examining the role of prominent folklore collectors in the collection and publication of folk prayers from South Uist, and by exploring the interconnection between oral and printed sources for these prayers. Finally, one particular folk prayer collected in South Uist will be examined in depth in order to demonstrate the interaction between all these currents, as well as the functions that folk prayers had for the Catholic Gaels doing this time period.

A unique aspect of this study is that printed versions of prayers that exist in the oral tradition will be considered, as well as archival interviews with informants reciting prayers and speaking about the transmission of these prayers within their families and communities. For these aspects of this

work, several new transcriptions of oral prayers and interviews with informants have been produced. These transcriptions are of interviews conducted by the School of Scottish Studies in the mid-twentieth century, which are accessible through the *Tobar an Dualchais* website: (www.tobarandualchais.co.uk).

There will be terminology used throughout this dissertation which may have some ambiguity and will therefore need definition. The term “prayer,” or in Gaelic, “ùrnaigh” is defined in the Catholic context¹ in the Gaelic prayer manual *Iùl a’ Chrìostaidh* (“The Christian’s Guide”) as “ar cridhe ’thogail suas ri Dia, a bhi ’còmhradh ’s a labhairt ri Dia” – “a raising of our hearts to God, to converse with and speak to God” (1885, 8). Most of the prayers included in this study will fall under the category of prayers of petition, in which the reciter requests “na gràsan ’s na beannachdan spioradail no corporra” – “spiritual or physical blessings or graces” (Ibid.). The term “folk prayer” is used here to refer to prayers that exist in the oral record and are local to the Gàidhealtachd of Scotland. It should be noted that the collectors featured in this study referred to some of these items as “hymns” and included them in collections as such.² However, the term “prayer” will be adhered to, unless quoting from another source.

When lines of prayers or items in their entirety from printed sources appear, the Gaelic orthography used in the original text will be maintained. For new transcriptions of prayers and interviews by this author, standard Gaelic orthographic conventions will be employed. All transcripts of interviews have been translated into English by the author, while the English is given for particular lines of prayers as they are discussed. Unless otherwise noted, English translations of individual prayers have also been composed by the author.

Chapter 1 of this study will consider the cultural and historical contexts that have contributed to the richness of the folk prayer tradition in South Uist, while Chapter 2 will look at the work of the two major collectors of religious folklore in late nineteenth-century South Uist, Fr Allan

¹ The understanding of prayer and its contexts would of course have different nuances for Protestant Gaels. For example, see Parman’s discussion of “cùram,” (“conversion”) in a Free Church context in Lewis (1990, 146-152).

² For example, Fr Allan MacDonald includes three folk prayers, the “Altachadh Leapa,” (“The Lying Down Prayer”); “Smaladh an Teine” (“Smoothing the Fire”) and “Pears’ Anma” (“Soul Shrine”) in a list entitled “Laoidhean,” (“Hymns”) made in preparation for his 1893 hymnal, in which these prayers were included (CW 58 B, 48v).

MacDonald and Alexander Carmichael. Chapter 3 will then examine the relationship of literary sources and the oral tradition in regard to folk prayers collected in South Uist, and Chapter 4 will consist of a close examination the “Altachadh Laighe,” (“Lying Down Prayer”) a folk prayer that shows evidence of this interplay.

Chapter 1

Gaelic Folk Prayers in South Uist: Cultural Context

Impoverished though many of the people were, their lives contained many elements of great interest to the folklorist and to the social historian ... even today [South Uist] preserves a greater amount of Gaelic tradition than any other part of Scotland.

John Lorne Campbell, "Introduction," *A School in South Uist* (1964, xiii)

The island of South Uist is considered remarkable in many aspects, but perhaps most particularly for the persistence of both the Catholic religion and the Gaelic language and culture amongst its people. The combination of the two means that South Uist is a rich source of Catholic Gaelic folk prayers, which will be examined in subsequent chapters. What is it about South Uist that has caused writers in the modern period to recognize it as a privileged place in which important aspects of Gaelic culture such as folk prayers have been preserved, perhaps better than anywhere else in the Gàidhealtachd? This chapter will examine the historical and cultural context that has allowed this combination of Catholicism and Gaelic language and culture to flourish in South Uist, while at the same time, indicating how the people of the island responded to challenges to their culture and religion by nurturing them within the domestic sphere. In particular, this chapter will outline the history of Catholicism in South Uist since the Scottish Reformation and survey firsthand accounts of life in South Uist contemporary to the modern time period examined in this dissertation, with a focus on the religious and linguistic and cultural aspects of the lives of the people of South Uist. An overview such as this is necessary as it will contribute to the understanding of some of the forces that have impacted upon the survival of the folk prayer tradition in South Uist.

History of Catholicism in South Uist

The Scottish Reformation of the mid-sixteenth century did not effect the same religious change in South Uist that it did in many other areas of Scotland. The reasons for this are complex, and include the religious and political allegiances of landowners. Fiona MacDonald writes, “in the Clanranald area of Uist ... Catholicism was still practiced at the height of the Reformation” (2006, 37). The reason for the persistence of Catholicism can be at least partially attributed to the fact that ministers of the new state church were not plentiful in places such as South Uist: “It was not generally until the early seventeenth century that anything approaching even a basic provision of ministers was made for the Isles” (Ibid., 16).

The Catholic Church took advantage of this lacuna and between 1619 and 1637, Irish Franciscan missionaries were sent to the Western Isles in order to bolster the faith of the population (MacDonald, 2006, 55). In the intervening years between the Reformation and the arrival of the Franciscan missionaries, many Gaels in the islands did not abandon the Catholic faith, despite an absence of priests to instruct them and administer the sacraments. MacDonald highlights South Uist as an example of the persistence of Catholicism after the Reformation: “in South Uist the people seemed to have shown no inclination for Protestantism even prior to the advent of the Irish Franciscans” (Ibid., 24).

Derick Thomson explains the resilience of Catholicism in areas such as South Uist by highlighting the importance of religious knowledge being passed down in a non-institutional way, a feature of Gaelic culture that will form an integral part of this study. He writes, “when missionaries eventually came they found the main truths of the Christian faith were still known, for they had been passed on by oral tradition” (1983, 251).

Writers on the history of Catholicism in the Western Isles of Scotland emphasise the crucial role these Franciscan missionaries played. Thomson, citing Giblin (1964), underlines the importance of these missions for the future of Catholicism in the Western Isles: “It is precisely in the areas in which these seventeenth-century missionaries laboured that the Catholic faith survived for the next three hundred years” (1983, 251). MacDonald concurs: “That so many of the Highland and

Island areas remain Catholic today is a result not only of the labour of the later indigenous ministry, but also of the Irishmen who preceded them” (2006, 96). MacDonald also notes that “as a result of the Franciscan mission, vibrant pockets of Catholicism were established, many of which have survived into the present century in South Uist, Barra, Eigg and Moidart...” (Ibid., 94). It should also be noted that these areas in which seventeenth-century Catholic missionaries were active were primarily Clan Donald territory (Spurlock, 2015, 178). This observation contributes to an understanding of why Protestantism took a stronger hold in adjacent clan territories, such as in North Uist.

Part of the success of the Franciscan missions can also be attributed to the strong linguistic and cultural links between the Irish priests and the people of their Scottish Gaelic mission territory.³ There is evidence that some inhabitants of the Western Isles were travelling to Ireland for religious reasons after the Scottish Reformation. MacDonald states that “in 1593, the Barramen were still making the pilgrimage to Cruach Phádrúig, County Mayo, in Connacht” (2006, 38). MacDonald goes on to explain that:

Linguistically and culturally the West Highlands and Catholic Ireland were so similar that Irish Franciscans were able to fit easily into West Highland society, and it was on these men that the Scottish Catholics chiefly relied, throughout the seventeenth century, to provide a Gaelic-speaking priesthood (Ibid., 39).

These early missionaries served under less than ideal conditions. As Christine Johnson writes:

Any priests venturing into Post-Reformation Scotland not only ministered under constant threat of imprisonment, banishment, or even death, but, unless they were supported by a religious order, had to endure grinding poverty, dependent on their sustenance on the charity of their congregations (1983, 33).

³ Not all missions were successful. See Roberts (1998) for an account of the failure of Irish Catholic missionaries in Gàidhealtachd areas including Skye and Lewis.

The folk memory of missionaries serving during penal times⁴ remained with the people of South Uist and the surrounding islands. One particular missionary stands out in the oral historical record. Irish Vincetian⁵ Father Dermit Dugan served as a missionary in the Hebrides from 1651-1657 (Blundell, 1917, 1). Despite his short time in the islands, he was remembered in Uist and Barra folklore into the twentieth century.⁶ His name also remains attached to locations in South Uist, such as Caibeal Dhiarmaid in Hoghmor, where, according to Dòmhnall Iain MacDhòmhnail, Fr Dugan is buried (1981, 25). Dugan recognized the importance of his Franciscan predecessors. In a letter written to his superior, the future Saint Vincent De Paul, Fr Dugan states:

I have found some of the inhabitants of Uist, who called themselves Catholics. [...] This was due to their having been to Confession and Communion formerly to some Fathers of the Order of St Francis who came here from Ireland (Blundell, 1917, 3).

In 1731 the “Highland Vicariate” was established, with Hugh MacDonald being named as the first bishop in the Highlands since the Reformation (MacDonald, 2006, 243). Subsequently, Highland Catholics began to rely less on “imported” missionaries and more on an indigenous priesthood. By 1743, there were eleven Scottish priests in the Highland Vicariate and only two Irish priests (Ibid., 241). It is worthy of further research to discover how this contingent of eighteenth-century Highland priests fared during the Penal years.

Despite this new crop of “homegrown” priests, Catholic clergy were not plentiful in the Gàidhealtachd even into the nineteenth century,⁷ a period of poverty and of immigration to North America (Johnson, 1983, 239). This no doubt contributed to the point that Fr Michael MacDonald makes: even in the early nineteenth century in South Uist, “the villages were largely

⁴ The Catholic faith was officially proscribed in Scotland after 1560. The “Act for preventing the growth of Popery” was passed by the Scottish Parliament in 1700, and Catholics in Scotland were not officially permitted to worship freely until the passage of the Scottish Relief Act in 1793 (Johnson, 1983, 245-246).

⁵ “A congregation of secular priests with religious vows founded by St. Vincent de Paul.” Founded in 1624, it is also known as the Congregation of the Mission (Randolph, 1911).

⁶ See Nan MacKinnon of Vatersay’s recorded account:

SA 64.80.A2 (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/72270/1>).

Also Canon Angus John MacQueen on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal’s program “Dealán-dè”:

DealánDe 1990.06.14 (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/95478/1>).

⁷ In 1800, for an estimated 30 000 Scottish Catholics, there were 40 priests and 12 churches (Hunter-Blair, O., 1912).

self-sufficient when it came to practising their spiritual life” (2010, 11). This indicates a reliance on domestic devotions and oral tradition in the absence of institutional religious support. This self-sufficiency in the maintenance of an indigenous devotional tradition can also be seen as a form of resistance against oppression from outside cultural forces. Charles Withers suggests that:

Both the retention of Gaelic as the language of spiritual worship and the significance attached to religion in the Highlands may be considered expressions of opposition (1988, 328).⁸

The case of the Laird of Boisdale’s confrontation with his tenants over local religious observance circa 1770 is recounted in both the historical record and South Uist folk tradition.⁹ It appears that an initial dispute arose between Colin MacDonald of Boisdale, who had converted to Protestantism (Symonds, 2003, 144) and Father Matthias Wynne, an Irish Dominican priest serving on the island, concerning the laird’s coercion of his tenants to work on Michaelmas, a day that was kept in Uist as a major celebration. However, after Fr Wynne chastised Boisdale from the pulpit, Boisdale apostatized and attempted to force his tenants to do the same (Stiùbhart, 2012, 269). According to Dom Odo Blundell, OSB (1868-1943):¹⁰

the poor people, though exposed to every sort of maltreatment from him, were resolute in suffering all, rather than act against their consciences (1917, 34).

Although Boisdale eventually relented, the incident was fixed in folk memory and became associated with the story of the “Maide Buidhe,” a yellow stick supposedly used by Boisdale to strike those of his tenants attempting to attend Mass on Sunday.¹¹

By 1838, South Uist was no longer in the possession of the Clanranald MacDonalds, with the island being sold to Colonel John Gordon of Cluny (Symonds, 2003, 145), whose management of the estate would eventually lead to widespread clearances (Stewart, 1998-1999, 217). During

⁸ James Symonds also cites this proposition made by Withers in his article, “Toiling in the Vale of Tears: Everyday Life and Resistance in South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 1760-1860” (1999, 116).

⁹ See Morag Morrison’s account, “Glag a’ bualadh mar chomharra do na Caitligich”: SA1958.90.B1 (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/36038/1>).

¹⁰ A Catholic historian and monk of Fort Augustus Abbey (Downs and Roberts, 2005, 14).

¹¹ See Neil MacMillan’s account on the 1999 BBC Television production “Na h-Eilthirich”: (https://learngaelic.scot/watch/index.jsp?v=na_h_eilthirich_ep4_2).

the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the people of South Uist also moved from a largely self-directed Catholicism to regularised religious practice under the leadership of resident parish priests.¹² During this time of change, the local Catholic clergy's attitude to local religious tradition was complex. Blundell tells of the contribution of Fr John Chisholm,¹³ whose time as the parish priest of Bornish in South Uist included the 1846-1848 potato famine and the 1851 Bornish evictions (1917, 49). Blundell writes: "Mr Chisholm was very fond of the old customs, numbers of which still survive, thanks in large measure to his encouragement." (Ibid., 50). Blundell describes some of these practices connected with feast-days, including first-footing customs on New Years' Eve, which he notes included a blessing of the house offered by the visitors and answered by the oldest person present (Ibid., 51). According to Blundell, this practice was still current at the time of writing. Blundell also gives an account of Michaelmas horse racing in the past, as well the baking of the Michaelmas "cakes" for each member of the family, and ones to be sent to those absent (Ibid., 52).

Blundell also highlights the persistence of secular aspects of traditional folklife in Uist. A mention of winter ceilidhs is made: "the evenings were enlivened with song and story, bagpipe and fiddle, several of which still may be seen in every cottage. Little wonder that Catholic Uist should have been a happy home where the ancient ballads survive better than elsewhere" (1917, 52). Blundell attributes this survival to the sympathetic attitudes of the Catholic clergy of Uist and contrasts this with Alexander Carmichael's account of how "Calvinist ministers did their¹⁴ best by their stern disapproval to stamp out the old Gaelic poetry and customs" (Ibid.). This contrast is simplistic however, as nineteenth-century Protestant clergymen like Rev. John Gregorson Campbell of Tiree (1836-1891) worked as active collectors of Gaelic folklore (Black, 2005). In addition, Highland Catholic priests were not always fully supportive of local customs. Ironically, according to Dòmhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart, the same Fr John Chisholm praised by Blundell as a proponent of folk customs brought an end to public Michaelmas celebrations in South Uist in 1820 (2012, 288). Stiùbhart suggests that this action may have been influenced by

¹² See Fr Michael MacDonald's pieces, "Priests of South Uist" (n.d.) and "Priests of South Uist: Alexander Forrester to John MacKintosh, 1732 – 1900" (2010) for more information on the priests of the island during this time.

¹³ Fr Chisholm was a native of Strathglass and served as parish priest in Bornish from 1819 to 1867 (MacDonald, 2010, 9).

¹⁴ It is also worthy of note that the perception of the demise of Gaelic oral tradition in Protestant areas such as North Uist has been contested by recent scholarship (See Callan, 2012).

a desire for regularisation of church practices as well as an attempt to maintain harmony between estate ownership and tenants in a time of economic uncertainty (Ibid., 289-90). Clearly, the relationship between the local population, clergy and the maintenance of indigenous traditions was a complicated one. The change from the celebration of Michaelmas from public to private is also an illustration of the process of domestication of an indigenous religious tradition. The horse races ceased in South Uist¹⁵, but the baking of the “struan Mhicheil” remained into the twentieth century, with Margaret Fay Shaw giving an account of the tradition in the 1930s (1955, 14).

In 1878 the independent Diocese of Argyll and the Isles was founded and its first Bishop was Angus MacDonald (MacDonald, 2010, 14). When the diocese was founded there were sixteen priests: four were involved in scandal and two of these had been dismissed; one had abandoned his post; two were over seventy; two are described as being ‘beyond their best’; only seven were fit and able. For the priests of the diocese, Bishop MacDonald appears to have been a supportive and reforming force. According to Fr Roderick MacDonald, the bishop addressed his priests with the words:

It appears to us to content ourselves at present with doing a little ... but what little we take in hand should be done thoroughly (1958, 20).

Bishop MacDonald was an effective leader for the diocese in terms of bolstering his clergy. Fourteen years later, in 1892, when he left Argyll and the Isles to become Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, there were twenty-three priests serving in the diocese, all of whom are described as being ‘fit and able’ (MacDonald, 2010, 14). One of these priests was Fr Allan MacDonald, whose contribution to the religious life of South Uist as well as his role as a collector of religious folklore will be examined in a subsequent chapter. As we have seen, throughout the post-Reformation history of South Uist, the Catholic faith was shaped by neglect,

¹⁵ Shaw does not mention Michaelmas horse racing in her account of 1930s saints’ day practices in South Uist (1955, 14). Further research may provide definitive evidence of when the last races were held in South Uist. Michaelmas horse racing continued in North Uist until around the turn of the twentieth century. See Donald MacAulay’s account: “Rèisean Each ann an Uibhist a Tuath”: SA1966.065. (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/64269/3>) as well as Donald Ewen MacDonald: “Odaidh ann am Bàgh Hòigearraidh”: SA1968.142.B5 (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/46925/2>).

oppression by landlords,¹⁶ Irish visiting priests, and Scottish priests who had a variety of responses to local practice. More specifically, the leadership role taken on by resident and visiting priests influenced the shape of public and domestic religious expression among the people of South Uist. This pattern continues in the more recent history of the island.

South Uist, 1880-1960: Firsthand accounts

Over the course of South Uist's modern history, many firsthand accounts of life on the island have been published. Usually, these are from visitors or incomers to the island, although there are a few examples of South Uist natives telling their own or the island's story, such as Aonghas Mac'IlFhialain's *Saoghal an Treobhaiche* (1972)¹⁷ and Dòmhnall Iain MacDhòmhnaill's *Uibhist a Deas* (1981). One may argue that an accurate picture of island life is not to be found in the writings of those who spent only a few years living in Uist, especially in the case of Frederick Rea, author of *A School in South Uist* (1964), who did not speak Gaelic, the majority language of the island of the time. However, firsthand accounts serve as contemporary "time capsules" of South Uist life at the time of writing and as such are a useful primary source for evidence of cultural, religious and linguistic developments amongst the people of the island. A brief survey of a selection of this writing is included here in order to fill out the picture of the culture of South Uist from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. In particular, the role of the Catholic church and clergy, Gaelic language use and cultural change is highlighted in each account.

¹⁶ Further research is needed to examine the relationship between South Uist tenants and particular landlords during this time period. However, the persistence of accounts of tenants' mistreatment by the Laird of Boisdale in the oral record attests to a general sense of injustice in regard to landlords that exists in the folk memory of South Uist.

¹⁷ "The first autobiography of a Hebridean crofter, told in his everyday colloquial Gaelic, ever to have been composed" (Mac 'Ill Fhialain, 1972, 1). MacLellan was awarded an MBE in 1965 and this was celebrated "at a special céilidh held in Bornish parish hall, at which not a word of English was spoken" (Ibid., 3).

South Uist at the turn of the twentieth century: Frederick Rea

In 1889, Frederick Rea, a young teacher from the Midlands of England, was appointed to the headship of Garrynamonie School in South Uist. His experiences of life on the island at the turn of the twentieth century are the subject of his book, *A School in South Uist* (1964, xiii). John Lorne Campbell provides an informative introduction to the book, in which he gives a sketch of the linguistic and social makeup of South Uist and its neighbours Benbecula and Eriskay during this time. He states that in 1890, a school board district comprising these islands was formed, serving “a total population of 5821, of whom 3430 spoke Gaelic as their only language and 2102 were bilingual in Gaelic and English” (Ibid., xi). Campbell sketches out a picture of the social structure of South Uist, with the absentee landlord, Lady Gordon Cathcart, as owner of the island. According to Campbell, Cathcart’s factor and other employees as well as those who held the tacks for the large farms of the island made up the bilingual middle class, as well as “the doctor, a few merchants, hotel-keepers, schoolmasters and government officials” (Ibid.). The fact the majority of these middle-class residents were Protestants is also notable, with the landowners bringing in Protestant settlers from surrounding islands in an attempt to “protestantise” the estate (MacDonald, 2010, 13).

Campbell notes that the clergy also formed part of the middle class, and in 1890, there were three Roman Catholic priests and a Church of Scotland minister resident in South Uist (1964, xi). The majority of the island’s population consisted of Gaelic-speaking crofters (Ibid., xii). An illustration of the relative poverty of most of the residents of South Uist is given by Campbell with statistics from 1891 census of South Uist and Benbecula showing that out of 1213 houses in the district, 1117 had three windows or fewer (Ibid.).

Campbell also gives a background to the hiring of Frederick Rea as “the first Catholic to be officially appointed to headmastership [in South Uist] since the Reformation” (1964, xiii). Campbell reveals that the balance of power in the local school board, from its formation in connection to the 1872 Education Act, had been held by members of the Protestant minority with only a token minimum of seats given to Catholic clergymen. He cites a letter from Bishop Angus MacDonald to the Crofters’ Commission of 1883 in which this is explained (Ibid., xv). Campbell

states that the Catholic population did not challenge the status quo when it came to a Protestant-run School Board because they risked the wrath of estate management and the spectre of eviction (Ibid.). It was not until the Crofters' Act of 1886 that South Uist crofters were granted security of tenure and therefore had the freedom to vote for School Board members without fear of reprisal from the estate (Ibid., xviii).

The matter of School Board representation in the late nineteenth century evident in Rea's account illustrates well several aspects of life for the Catholic, Gaelic-speaking crofters in South Uist at this time. Although they had freedom of worship and their own clergy on the island, their right to fully engage in public life was curtailed by the power of Protestant estate management to take away their homes and livelihood. This, combined with folk memory of the penal laws and instances of persecution that existed only a few generations earlier would have strongly encouraged the Catholics of South Uist at the end of the nineteenth century to confine many of their faith practices to the private, domestic sphere of the home. This would likely have directly contributed to the richness of the domestic folk prayer tradition that was being recorded in South Uist at this time by collectors such as Alexander Carmichael and Fr Allan MacDonald.

In his memoir of his time in South Uist, Rea includes a description of a Sunday Mass in early 1890 at St. Peter's Church, Daliburgh, when Fr Allan MacDonald was the resident priest. He explains that the people of the island of Eriskay, included within the parish boundaries at this time, travelled from South Uist by boat and "walked six to eight miles to hear Mass" (1964, 14). The commitment of those who would travel great distances to attend Mass is notable, and can be seen as evidence of the importance of the sacraments to the people of South Uist, as well as a possible echo of the folk memory of earlier times in which the availability of priests was patchy at best and undergoing hardship to receive the sacraments was taken as a given.¹⁸

Rea notes that the Mass, as expected, was in Latin, but that the concluding prayers were in Gaelic (1964, 15). This is evidence of a role for Gaelic in public liturgy that no doubt raised the

¹⁸ As Fr Anthony Ross, OP, observed of the Catholics of Morar in the 1930's, "Not that Sunday obligation seemed to weigh very heavily on people who for centuries had been accustomed to irregular opportunities of attending Mass" (1989, 135).

language's prestige in the eyes of parishioners, as well as linking the public Mass with their own domestic prayers, a connection which will be explored in Chapter 4. Rea also recounts a visit with Fr Allan to Eriskay, in which Fr Allan said Mass in the church there. After the Mass, all the congregants left the church, and re-entered after makeshift seating had been assembled. It was then that Fr Allan preached in Gaelic (Ibid., 40). At both Masses, Rea notes that men were on one side of the church and women on the other (Ibid., 15, 40), even at the Mass in Eriskay, where there were no pews (Ibid., 40). This illustrates the division of the sexes in many aspects of life, including the spiritual, which was part of the culture of South Uist and Eriskay at the time.¹⁹

Reay's overall picture of life in South Uist at the end of the nineteenth century is one of a population in which poverty and disenfranchisement were common; for whom religion with a particularly Gaelic flavour played a key role, but who were also witnessing some new recognition of their rights and identity, such as the passing of the 1886 Crofters' Act and the use of Gaelic in public liturgy.

South Uist in the 1930s and 1950s: Margaret Fay Shaw

Margaret Fay Shaw (1903-2004), an American folksong collector, spent six years between 1929 and 1935 living in the household of Peggy and Màiri MacRae, South Lochboisdale, South Uist (Shaw, 1955, 1-2). In the introduction of her book based on her collecting undertaken during this time, *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist*, Shaw provides a vivid picture of life in South Uist during her time there, highlighting many of the traditional practices that persisted on the island in the first half of the twentieth century. She includes descriptions of the communal nature of agricultural work, done by both men and women (Ibid., 3-4). Shaw also gives an account of various beliefs in the supernatural in which prayers and incantations played a role, including the

¹⁹ Rea also recounts attending a funeral and participating in the burial of a local man (1964, 30-31), as well as a post-wedding toast in Fr Allan's kitchen in Daliburgh (Ibid., 45-46). At these events, conducted in the presence of the priest, there is no mention of Gaelic prayers being used. However, as Rea did not understand Gaelic, this could be an omission on his part rather than an accurate description of events. Rea does mention that when he hosts a party of local peat-cutters at the school-house, "...each man said a grace of thanksgiving, signing himself with a cross as he did so" (Ibid., 66).

use, current at the time, of a *snàithlin* to “remove the curse of the evil eye from cattle” as well as the story of a woman remembered in local memory who had the power to make a *frìth* or divination (Ibid., 7-8).

Shaw includes a description of Midnight Mass in Daliburgh, and notes that “the Christmas story was read in Gaelic and they sang the Gaelic Christmas hymn, *Tàladh Chrìosta* or the Christ Child’s Lullaby” (1955, 15). Shaw also gives descriptions of the celebrations connected to feast days also mentioned by Blundell in his earlier account, that were still current during her time in Uist, including the baking of the *strùthan* on St. Michael’s Day (Ibid., 14) and visiting rituals on New Year’s Eve (Ibid., 13). She mentions that the *rèiteach* or betrothal custom was still kept up and describes the involvement of various community members in preparing the wedding feast (Ibid., 15). It is notable that other than the Mass, most of these communal celebrations centre around the home, an indication of the domestication of community rituals at the same time as the reinforcement of Gaelic as a language suitable for worship in the local Catholic churches.

Shaw comments on the changes that have taken place in Uist in the twenty years between her stay in South Lochboisdale and the writing of *Folksongs and Folklore in South Uist* in the early 1950s. She notes that by this time, the Gaelic traditions of South Uist faced the triple threat of “English-language schools and broadcasting, and the influx of strangers during the war years” (1955, 17). Despite these challenges, Shaw insists that “South Uist still retains in greater measure than any other part of the Highlands and Islands the great traditions of its Gaelic past” (Ibid.). This assessment of Uist as the most traditional Gaelic island concurs with her spouse’s introduction to *A School in South Uist*, written a decade later, a statement that is of course problematic, as it difficult to quantify and based on individual value judgements.

Twentieth-century Uist: Priests' Diaries

It can also be noted that the mid-twentieth century history of South Uist, with a particular focus on parish life, is documented through diaries kept by priests, including Fr Con Ó Mongáin C.Ss.R., an Irish Redemptorist who spent time conducting missions in the Catholic Gàidhealtachd in 1925 and 1926 (Mac Mánuis, 1997) as well as Uist native Fr John MacCormick, parish priest of Bornish, South Uist from 1939 to 1940 (MacDonald, "Diary of Fr John MacCormick," n.d.). The Redemptorists' accounts give details on the numbers of communicants in the parishes where they preached missions, as well as evidence of the prominence of Gaelic in their missionary work through the inclusion of a copy of a Gaelic prayer pamphlet produced as a souvenir of their 1930 mission to the Hebrides (Mac Mánuis, 1997, 30-31). Their presence also underlines the continued Irish ecclesial connection to South Uist, dating back to the Vincentian and Franciscan missions of the seventeenth century, highlighted earlier in this chapter.

Fr MacCormick's diary, kept over an eight-month period from his ordination, gives a picture of a priest who is integral to the life of the community and is expected to sacrifice personal comforts in order to serve his parishioners, but who no longer faced the same challenging circumstances of isolation and persecution dealt with his predecessors serving the island during penal times. As a Gaelic speaker and Uist native, Fr MacCormick passes little comment on Gaelic usage in the island, but does note that "the Rosary and appropriate Gaelic prayers" were said at the bedside of a dying woman in Stoneybridge (n.d., 4), and that he recited Gaelic prayers at the graveside of a Lochboisdale man (Ibid., 15). Fr MacCormick also records that Fr Barron, a visiting Scottish Redemptorist filling in for the regular parish priest in Daliburgh, composed his Sunday sermon in Gaelic: "... it was tolerable Gaelic – in fact quite good for a Redemptorist" (Ibid., 5). The fact that even visiting priests who were not native speakers would use Gaelic in the pulpits of South Uist at this time indicates the continuing connection of the language with Catholic religious belief and practice in the public sphere. At the same time, Fr MacCormick's account evidences the continuing existence of domestic Gaelic devotions as well.

Bantighearna nan Eilean

Developments in mid-twentieth century South Uist brought a new visibility to Gaelic devotional life on the island. Much of the impetus for this visibility is credited to a dynamic priest native to Kilpheder, South Uist, Canon John Morrison (1919-1992) dubbed “Father Rocket” (Cladh Hallan Association, 2009). In response to a proposal in the late 1940s for a Ministry of Defense rocket range in South Uist, which would involve a twentieth-century population clearance from a large area of the island, Canon Morrison staged a campaign to maintain the traditional way of life in South Uist that included the construction of numerous roadside Marian shrines in parish of Ardkenneth in the north of the island. According to Fr Michael MacDonald:

These are not just expressions of the devotion of the people but they were deliberately placed alongside the intended military roads to remind ‘strangers’ that they were in a ‘different’ place (“Our Lady of the Isles,” n.d.).

Canon Morrison’s most visible legacy was the commission of a statue of “Bantighearna nan Eilean,” Our Lady of the Isles, sculpted by Scottish artist Hew Lorimer, standing 25 feet in height and erected on Rueval, a prominent South Uist hill that overlooked the proposed rocket range site (MacDonald, “Our Lady of the Isles,” n.d.). The statue was dedicated in 1958, shortly after plans for the rocket range were significantly scaled down and the proposed relocation of islanders was scrapped. Canon Morrison’s campaign also included a domestic element, beginning in the Marian Year of 1954, when a statue of Our Lady of Fatima made the rounds of houses in the South Uist parishes of Bornish and Ardkenneth, and neighbours would gather nightly to pray the Rosary in Gaelic together. This practice has continued to the present day (Ibid.).

Conclusion

Canon Morrison's initiatives bring together many of the themes that can be traced throughout the history of Catholicism in South Uist since the Reformation and provides a key to understanding the endurance of Catholic Gaelic tradition on the island. By establishing what is known locally as "the statue," the nightly Gaelic Rosary said by neighbours within homes, he was tapping into the oral tradition of domestic devotion that helped keep the Catholic faith alive in Uist during post-Reformation clergy shortages. At the same time, by beginning this practice during the Marian Year of 1954, he was making a link between private domestic devotion to Our Lady to public and official Church worship, in much the same way that his predecessors such as Fr Allan MacDonald introduced Gaelic into aspects of the public celebration of Mass. Canon Morrison also engaged the tradition of engaging in Catholic practices as a marker of resistance against the establishment, just as the Boisdale tenants refused to stop attending Mass at the behest of their landlord two hundred years previously. Through these initiatives, Canon Morrison was fulfilling the role of the dedicated priest serving his flock, as his predecessors had done throughout times of persecution and poverty.

Throughout the post-Reformation history of South Uist, Catholicism and forms of Catholic religious expression have been a marker of identity for the people of South Uist, as has Gaelic language and culture as expressed locally. These two aspects of identity for the people of South Uist have been combined to form an indigenous religious tradition that has lasted until the present day. When this tradition has been threatened or challenged by outside forces, it is nurtured within the domestic sphere and also serves as a form of resistance. However, when circumstances permit more public expression, it thrives openly. The tradition is not static, but has adapted to circumstances over time. This adaptational quality is one aspect of the Catholic Gaelic tradition in South Uist that has contributed to its endurance and has given South Uist the reputation as one of the places in the Scottish Gàidhealtachd where traditional practices remain strongest. We will see tenacious yet adaptable quality in the prayers themselves as they are examined Chapters 3 and 4 of this study.

This chapter has considered the historical and cultural context for the maintenance of the Gaelic folk prayer tradition in South Uist. This has been done through the exploration of memoirs of priests and folklorists in order to examine their observations about the place of the Catholic faith in South Uist and the role of Gaelic in religious practice. Another part of understanding the Gaelic folk prayer tradition in South Uist is the awareness of the impact that collectors had on shaping the tradition and its perception through their collecting and publishing activities. Chapter 2 will focus on Fr Allan MacDonald and Alexander Carmichael, two important collectors of Gaelic folk prayers in South Uist.

Chapter 2

Fr Allan MacDonald and Alexander Carmichael: Collectors of Gaelic Religious Folklore in Late Nineteenth-Century South Uist

When examining folk prayers collected in South Uist, the corpus of two collectors is indispensable: that of Fr Allan MacDonald (1859-1905) and Alexander Carmichael (1832-1912). Both collected numerous examples of prayers from the South Uist folk tradition and both were popularisers of these prayers through their publication. This chapter aims to examine what factors prompted and influenced these two figures' collecting and in turn, the influence their collections and publications had on the communities from which they gleaned their materials and on the wider public. This chapter will also situate Fr Allan and Carmichael in the wider intellectual culture of late nineteenth-century Scotland, which affected their collecting and publishing activities. This background information will then be incorporated into the analysis of items they collected in Chapter 4.

Fr Allan MacDonald: “Maighstir Ailein”

Fr Allan MacDonald is remembered to this day as an influential, charismatic and sympathetic priest who served the Catholic communities in the South Uist and the island of Eriskay.²⁰ Born in 1859 in Fort William, Allan MacDonald was a hosteller's son who was raised without Gaelic. In 1871, he began studies at the junior seminary, Blairs College in Aberdeenshire (Campbell, 1954, 7). Although Gaelic was not taught as a subject at Blairs, it appears that MacDonald had already begun to undertake self-study in Gaelic at this point (Ibid., 7). MacDonald succeeded in becoming fluent and literate in the language to the degree that he spent most of his priestly life in predominately Gaelic-speaking parishes, collected a wide range of Gaelic folklore, and composed accomplished Gaelic poetry. However, he regretted that he was a learner of Gaelic. In a diary he kept in 1898, while serving as the parish priest of Eriskay, he wrote:

²⁰ See Peggy MacRae's account, “Maighstir Anndra agus a' Ghriùthrach” (“Father Allan and the Measles”): CW0162C.870 (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/35102/2>).

A dh'aindheoin dìchill, 's fheàrr cleachdadh na h-òige. 'S ann an sin bha mise 'n call – 'gam thogail ann am baileachan eadar a bhith Gallda agus Gàidhealach, gun uiread is a' Phaidir fhèin do dh'ùrnaigh, gun iomradh idir air facal sgoileadh, 'ga fhaighinn ann an Gàidhlig (...) Tha bhlàth sin ann – an car cam a chuir a' Bheurla 'nam bhial an tràth sin, tha e ann fhathast, agus bithidh (Campbell, 1952, 55).²¹

It is notable that MacDonald mentions as a particular regret not having been brought up even knowing the “Our Father” in Gaelic. This can be seen as an indication of the importance that he placed on Gaelic spiritual expression, as well as an acknowledgement that a knowledge of Gaelic was essential to his role as a priest serving Gàidhealtachd communities. This sense of deficiency is also a possible impetus for his later folklore collecting work and his composition of Gaelic hymns and poems. Likely the fact of not having grown up surrounded by Gaelic prayers impressed upon MacDonald the value and uniqueness of the tradition he experienced as a priest in Gaelic-speaking parishes.

MacDonald completed his priestly training at the Scots College in Valladolid, Spain, and after his ordination in 1882, his first posting was to the cathedral in Oban. Campbell gives an account of MacDonald beginning his religious folklore collecting during this time through work with Eigg native Donald McLeod. He notes that “from Donald McLeod Fr Allan recovered traditional hymns, some of which were later printed in the hymn book he published in 1893” (1954, 9).²² Campbell credits MacDonald's collecting in Oban as “the beginning of an interest in oral tradition” (Ibid.).

MacDonald was appointed as the parish priest of Daliburgh, South Uist, in 1884 (Campbell, 1954, 10), and he was to remain as a priest in South Uist and Eriskay for the rest of his life. Campbell states that at the time, South Uist was “the most populous, as well as the poorest, island in the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles” (Ibid.). Also resident in the priests' house in

²¹ An English translation of Fr Allan's diary was published in Campbell, 2000, 81-83. The translation for the above is given: “In spite of diligence, practice in youth is better. That is where I lost—brought up in a village half Lowland and half Highland without as much as even the Paternoster, let alone any schooling in Gaelic (...) The effect of that is there – the twist English put in my mouth then is still there and will remain (83).

²² *Comh-cruinneachadh de Laoidhean Spioradail*, (“*A Collection of Spiritual Hymns*”), published by Oban Times of Oban in 1893.

Daliburgh was the retired priest, Fr Alexander Campbell, a South Uist native. Ronald Black notes that Fr Campbell had made a collection of Uist folklore, which is still extant (2002, 9).²³ Fr Campbell had also aided Alexander Carmichael's collection of Uist folklore in 1871. Writers on the life of Fr Allan MacDonald agree that it was likely that Fr Campbell inspired MacDonald to begin his own collecting of folklore in South Uist (Hutchinson, 2010, 96; Black, 2002, 9; Campbell, 1954, 15). Campbell describes the beginning and the method of Fr Allan's collecting: "...from 1887 on, once he was settled in and mastered the local Gaelic dialect, Fr Allan kept a series of note-books in which he jotted down whatever of interest he heard and had time to record..." (1954, 15).

Four of these folklore notebooks are still extant, two being held at the University of Glasgow Library and two in the Carmichael-Watson collection at the University of Edinburgh Library (Black, 2002, 451).²⁴ Black notes that two further notebooks were seemingly in the possession of the Rev George Henderson, but are not to be found in his papers at the University of Glasgow library (Ibid., 452). "Whatever of interest" covers a wide range of topics, including anecdotes about second-sight, traditional cures, Gaelic songs, proverbs, and Fenian tales.²⁵ All of the existing notebooks contain religious lore, in the form of folktales concerning religious figures, such as Christ and his mother, and transcripts of Gaelic prayers collected from the people of South Uist and Eriskay. Some of these prayers will be examined in detail in Chapter 4.

There are also folklore items among Fr Allan's papers held at Canna House,²⁶ including a manuscript containing extensive folklore materials that became the basis for John Lorne Campbell and Trevor Hall's book, *Strange Things* (1968).²⁷ In addition, the University of Edinburgh Library holds the manuscript that became *Gaelic Words and Expressions from South*

²³ Details about this collection are unavailable.

²⁴ University of Glasgow manuscripts: GUL 1090 (28); GUL 1090 (29).

University of Edinburgh manuscripts: EUL CW 58 A; EUL CW 58 B. The University of Edinburgh library also holds several other manuscripts of Fr Allan's, including EUL CW 61, containing a number of prayers and hymns. For a full listing of extant manuscripts, see Black 2002, 451.

²⁵ See Black 2002 (451-480) for listings of the contents of notebooks.

²⁶ The former residence of collectors John Lorne Campbell and Margaret Fay Shaw. Their papers are still held in the house. See Thomson, 2004.

²⁷ A compilation of Fr Allan's "ghost and second sight stories" as well as an account of Fr Allan's work with the Society of Psychical Research's Ada Goodrich Freer, who used much of Fr Allan's material, uncredited, in her own publications (Campbell, J.L., Hall, T, 1968, "Preface," ix-xvi).

Uist and Eriskay, edited by John Lorne Campbell and published in 1958. This manuscript also includes folklore material, including religious lore.

Fr Allan published little of this extensive collection of folklore, other than a number of traditional prayers that were included in two collections of Gaelic hymns he compiled. These hymnals were published by Hugh MacDonald of Oban, the first entitled *Laoidhean Caitligeach airson Chloinne*, “Catholic Hymns for Children” (1889),²⁸ and the second, more extensive publication, *Comh-chruinneachadh de Laoidhean Spioradail*, “A Collection of Spiritual Hymns” (1893).²⁹ Both were published anonymously. John Lorne Campbell, writing about these two collections, observes:

[Fr Allan] was quick to see the immense interest, both religious and secular, of the vast but sometimes ignorantly despised Gaelic oral tradition, of which Uist was then, as it is now, the main storehouse, and his efforts to rescue what he could from the danger of oblivion and to incorporate the traditional religious material into modern devotional literature were worthy of the greatest praise (1954, 15).

How widely known *Laoidhean Spioradail* was at the time of publication is difficult to determine. Copies are currently held at the libraries of the universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and St. Andrew’s.³⁰ A copy held by the National Library of Scotland has been digitized³¹ and copies of it can be found for sale online. It is also known that Fr Allan sent a copy to fellow collector Alexander Carmichael with a personal note (Carmichael Watson Project, 2010).

John Lorne Campbell traces the origins of the hymns and prayers that appear in *Laoidhean Spioradail*, drawing on Fr Allan’s unpublished manuscripts for evidence. He concludes that there are five hymns and prayers included in the collection of 63 that definitely or likely have a traditional³² origin: “Laidhidh mis’ a nochd,”³³ (“I lie down tonight”) also known as “Altachadh Laighe,” (“Lying Down Prayer”); “Bu trom a bròn, bu ghoirt a leòn,” (“Her sorrow was heavy,

²⁸ For the remainder of this study, this publication will be referred to as *Laoidhean Chloinne*.

²⁹ For the remainder of this study, this publication will be referred to as *Laoidhean Spioradail*.

³⁰ See COPAC website: (<http://copac.jisc.ac.uk/>).

³¹ See National Library of Scotland website: (<http://digital.nls.uk/rare-items-in-gaelic/archive/102696460>).

³² Campbell’s adjective “traditional” is taken to mean arising from the local oral tradition.

³³ Explored in depth in Chapter 4.

her grief was mournful”), also known as “Moire an Du-Bhròin,” (“Mary of the Great Sorrow”);³⁴ “Crìosta nochd, ’Athair nam bochd,” (“Christ tonight, Father of the poor”) also known as the “Pears’ Anma,” (“Soul Shrine”); “Aingeal Naoimh chaidh chur a nuas,” (“Holy Angel who was sent down”), also known as “An t-Aingeal Coimhideach,” (“The Guardian Angel”) and “Smàlaidh mise nochd an aingeal,” (“I smoor the fire tonight”), also known as “Smàladh an Teine,” (“Smoothing the Fire”) (Campbell, 1956, 105-107). Versions of these five items can be found in manuscripts Fr Allan produced prior to the publication of *Laoidhean Spioradail*, CW 58 A and CW 61. “Smàlaidh mise nochd an aingeal,”³⁵ as it is transcribed in Fr Allan’s collection, is given below with a parallel English translation.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 Smalaidh mise ’nochd an aingeal | 1 I will smoor the fire tonight |
| 2 Mar a smalas Mac Moire. | 2 As the Son of Mary smoors. |
| 3 Gum bu slan an tigh 's an teine! | 3 May the house and the fire be well! |
| 4 Gum bu slan a chuideachd uile! | 4 May all the inhabitants be well! |
| 5 Co bhios air a lathair? Peadar agus Pal. | 5 Who will be present? Peter and Paul. |
| 6 Co bhios air an fhaire ’nochd? Moire geal 's a Mac. | 6 Who will be on watch tonight? Fair Mary and her Son. |
| 7 Bial Dé a dh-innseas, | 7 The mouth of God that tells it, |
| 8 ’S ’Aingeal a labhras;— | 8 And the Angel who says it; |
| 9 Aingeal ’an dorus mo thaighe | 9 An Angel in the door of my house |
| 10 Gu ’n tig an latha geal am maireach | 10 Until the fair day comes tomorrow |
| (MacDonald, 1893, 107). | |

³⁴ Unlike the other “traditional” items included in “Laoidhean Spioradail” “Bu trom a bròn” appears in Fr Allan’s notebook CW 61 as a printed leaflet, rather than a handwritten version. The typography for the leaflet resembles the only other known version of “Bu trom a bròn” in print, featured in Colin Chisholm’s article “Old Gaelic Songs” in *TGSI* Vol.11 (1884-1885, 216-240). Chisholm prefaces the section of the article in which it appears with, “I will now give you some of the hymns which used to be sung from my earliest recollection on Strathglass” (Ibid., 232). This evidence indicates that “Bu trom a bròn” was not an item that Fr Allan collected directly from his parishoners. Further research may lead to the identification of a composer for the hymn.

³⁵ In Fr Allan’s *Gaelic Words and Expressions from South Uist and Eriskay*, the use of the word “aingeal” (“angel”) for a fire is explained:

John M’Kinnon, Dalibrog, tells me how he would not say *teine* for [fire] on any account. The fire, he said, was a dangerous thing and the fire in a kiln specially so. He always blessed it that it might cause no harm. He felt if he should say *teine* that fire would be apt to come and put the place ‘on fire.’ It looks like the fear of invoking the demon of fire (MacDonald, 1958, 23).

A large proportion of the remaining items in *Laoidhean Spioradail* were either translated from English or Latin by Fr Allan or composed by him, with some hymns having been composed by Sileas na Ceapaich and others (Campbell, 1956, 106-107). Significantly, Fr Allan did not distinguish between indigenous items, translations and original compositions in his publication. This is reinforced in his manuscript, CW 58 B, which contains a list of hymns to be included in *Laoidhean Spioradail* simply entitled “Laoidhean,” in which hymns are given with the number of lines in each (48v).³⁶ Three “traditional” items, “Altachadh Leapa,” “Smaladh an Teine” and “Pears’ Anma” are included at the end of the list (Ibid.). The placement of these items does not necessarily indicate that they ranked low in Fr Allan’s estimation in comparison to translated or original hymns, but rather that they had fewer lines than many others.

This observation underlines the importance of the publication of *Laoidhean Spioradail*, which can be seen as an attempt by Fr Allan to create a canon of Gaelic hymns for the use of Catholic Gaels. In this canon, indigenous items were just as worthy of inclusion as items translated from Latin or composed by priests or Gaelic poets. There was no gap between the indigenous tradition and the tradition of the universal Church in a publication which features the humble “Altachadh Laighe” as well as a Gaelic translation of the venerable “Pange Lingua” (1893, 45-46). In addition, by adding his own compositions, Fr Allan was indicating that the canon of Gaelic hymns was not fixed, but could be expanded to include new items. Significantly in *Laoidhean Spioradail*, Fr Allan was also combining aspects of the Catholic “devotional revolution,” which saw the advent of an expanded Catholic lexicon of hymns and devotions, with the Scottish “Gaelic Revival” of the late nineteenth century, which sought to “restore dignity to the language” after centuries of derision and oppression (Hutchinson, 2005, 36).

Laoidhean Chloinne and *Laoidhean Spioradail* were also significant in that they contained Fr Allan’s “Gaelic Mass,” actually a commentary in verse to be sung during parts of the Mass.³⁷ Commentators have credited Fr Allan with a revolutionary bent in introducing this innovation. Black claims that “he was certainly not afraid to be out of step with the letter of Church law”

³⁶ Black remarks on this list, “Clearly made during preparation of *CLS*” (2002, 463).

³⁷ In *Laoidhean Caitligeach airson Chloinne* these are found on 3-9 and in *Comh-Chruinneachadh de Laoidhean Spioradail* they are found on 133-139.

(2003, 351), while Hutchinson characterizes Fr Allan’s composition as “his latter-day assertion of the proud autonomy of the old Celtic Church” (2010, 119). What neither commentator mentions is that congregational singing of a vernacular paraphrase of Mass texts was common in other European countries (Ruff, 2016, 212). However, this does not detract from Fr Allan’s attempt to communicate the truths of the faith to his parishioners in their own language. In addition, the use of Gaelic alongside Latin during the Mass would have raised the prestige of Catholic Gaels’ language in their own eyes.

Fr Allan was a composer of secular as well as religious verse. From his arguably most well-known secular poem, *Eilein na h-Òige*,³⁸ we can infer how Fr Allan viewed his beloved island of Eriskay³⁹ and its inhabitants, and therefore gain insight into what prompted his collecting of religious and secular folklore among these people. In this 29-verse poem, in which each verse consists of eight lines, nine verses are devoted to the work done by the islanders: the men fishing, the women spinning, girls carrying peats and old men working with foot-ploughs. As Black comments on the poem, “[Fr Allan] portrays Eriskay as a buzzing ecosystem – man and nature occupying a scrap of space together, busy being themselves” (2002, 37).

In the concluding lines of the last verse of the poem, Fr Allan presents a picture of Eriskay’s isolation as a small island:

Ach se chuir air barrachd lurachd
 Air gach tulach ’s gleann deth,
 Dion na tuinne a bhith uime
 Cumail muigh na h-anntlachd (Black, 2002, 184).⁴⁰

The concluding lines of the poem point towards Fr Allan’s understanding of Eriskay as a place whose geographical isolation, rather than being a disadvantage, serves as effective protection against malign outside influences. In Eriskay, natural and human life exist in a pristine condition and indigenous cultural expression flourishes. In this way, Fr Allan was firmly placing himself within the conventions of Gaelic poetry concerned with praise of place, such as Duncan Bàn

³⁸ The version of the poem used for this commentary is found in Black, 2002, 172-185.

³⁹ Fr Allan served as priest in Eriskay from 1894 until his death in 1905 (Black, 2002, 9).

⁴⁰ Black’s translation of these lines: “But what has made it all the more lovely, / Each wee bit hill of it and glen, / is the ring of waves all around it / That keeps unpleasantness outside” (2002, 185).

MacIntyre's "Moladh Beinn Dòbhrain" (MacLeod, 1952, 197-225), as well as within the trope of the "romanticism of rural life" common in nineteenth-century Scottish literature (Fenyő, 2000, 165).

This view of Eriskay as an island paradise can certainly be seen as idealized, considering the material poverty that the islanders faced at this time, of which Fr Allan would have been acutely aware. However, it appears that Fr Allan was making a particular point with the poem. What Black labels as the "dynamism" expressed in "Eilein na h-Òige" (2002, 37) stands in contrast to the common nineteenth-century view that Gaels were lazy and shiftless (Fenyő, 2000, 1). In a letter that Neil Munro cites in a tribute to Fr Allan, published in the *Oban Times* shortly after the priest's death, Fr Allan alludes to the need to contrast this view by portraying the people of the Western Isles as industrious: "To speak of the Hebrides cheerily, and to allude to the activity of the people are new things, but to those who read what is before them true things" (Black, 2002, 58). "Eilein na h-Òige" was originally published in 1904 in *Guth na Bliadhna* (1904-1925), a bilingual periodical produced by Ruairidh Erskine of Marr (1869-1960).⁴¹ Presenting a glowing view of Gaelic culture in its island heartland to the literate Gaels who read the magazine was a confidence bolsterer and therefore ultimately conducive to the project of raising the profile of Gaelic society within Scotland.⁴²

It is evident that Fr Allan, despite being an incomer and learner of Gaelic, did not remain a disinterested spectator in the Gaelic cultural life of South Uist and Eriskay. His contemporary, Neil Munro, characterized Fr Allan's role in Eriskay as a "a sovereign in his tiny kingdom" (2002, 57). In his posthumous 1905 tribute to Fr Allan, he wrote, "he proved... an inexhaustible mine of information regarding the ancient Highland customs and beliefs that linger yet in Eriskay, the best of them encouraged eagerly by himself" (Ibid., 59). In his role as cultural gatekeeper, as a collector, composer and popularizer of Gaelic prayers and hymns, Fr Allan raised the profile of Gaelic as a language of religious devotion in South Uist and Eriskay and

⁴¹ Erskine of Marr, who used the Gaelic style Ruairidh Arascain is Mhàirr, was an aristocratic Scottish Nationalist and Gaelic learner who founded several Gaelic publications (Thomson, 2004) and promoted Gaelic language rights and the "re-Gaelicization" of Scotland (Hutchison, 2005, 63).

⁴² Also worthy of note is that *Guth na Bliadhna* provided a Catholic voice at the time that most Gaelic periodicals were of a more Protestant orientation (Correspondence with Dr. Sheila Kidd, University of Glasgow, 2017).

therefore can be seen as playing a key role in the nineteenth-century “Gaelic Revival” as it pertained to the Catholic Gaels of these islands.

It can be seen from this examination of Fr Allan’s life, work, and motivations that the Gaelic prayer corpus we have on record today is the result of a particular time period and a particular personality. These prayers were collected by a figure who was, to some extent, part of the network of intellectuals which sought to revive Scottish Gaelic language and traditions at the end of the nineteenth century. Evidence such as the poem “Eilein na h-Òige” point to Fr Allan’s desire to manage the image of the Gaels of the islands in which he served. This agenda, which was pursued through improving islanders’ confidence in their language and encouraging adherence to local Gaelic tradition, was inward-looking and concerned with the communities in which he served.

Alexander Carmichael: Alasdair MacGillemhicheil

Alexander Carmichael, one of the most well-known collectors of Hebridean folklore, and a contemporary of Fr Allan, also used the publication of items he collected to further a particular agenda which was influenced by and contributed to the intellectual culture of the time. However, his agenda was more outward-looking. His characterization of the people of the Hebrides as “spiritual Gaels” (Bradley, 1999, 137) was a major contribution to the zeitgeist of the “Celtic Christian revival” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Born in 1830 in the Isle of Lismore, Alexander Carmichael was an exciseman and spent time early in his career in Dublin, where according to Dòmhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart, he became aware of the emerging discipline of Celtic Studies and “the wider context of Gaelic language and culture” (2008, 2-3). After being posted to the Isle of Islay, he began working with John Francis Campbell’s (1821-1885) team of folklore collectors gathering material for *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (Ibid., 3-4). From Campbell, Carmichael received training in folklore collecting technique, but as Stiùbhart points out, Campbell’s rigorous methods were in contrast to Carmichael’s “conviction that it was his duty not only to record the present, but also to retrieve

and reconstruct a glorious Gaelic past already vanishing before his eyes” (Ibid., 4). In this way, Carmichael was very much in step with the late nineteenth-century “Celtic Twilight” movement in which “the Gaels were represented as a vanishing, ‘twilight’ people, on the edge, disappearing” (Fenyő, 2000, 182).

In 1864, Carmichael was posted to North Uist and as Stiùbhart recounts,

over the following decades he was to scribble down in a series of field notebooks an extraordinary diversity of material ranging from long Fenian tales and ballads, through historical narratives, songs, hymns, and charms, to anecdotes, observations, proverbs, riddles, and unusual words (Stiùbhart, 2008, 5).

By 1872, Carmichael had married Mary Frances MacBean (1841-1928) from the Black Isle, and was living with his young family in a house they had rebuilt in Creagorry, Benbecula (Stiùbhart, 2008, 6-7). The house’s location at the South Ford between Benbecula and South Uist gave Carmichael the opportunity to collect material from people waiting for the tide to change in order to cross the ford (Ibid., 7). John Randall explains, “it is evident that Carmichael found a particularly rich treasure-house of traditional hymns, incantations, stories, and folklore in Benbecula and Uist” (2008, xi).

Financial and family circumstances eventually necessitated a permanent move to Edinburgh in 1882 (Stiùbhart, 2008, 15). Although Carmichael’s previous collecting activities had not been heavily focused on spiritual items, when asked to contribute two appendices on agrarian customs to the 1884 *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the condition of the crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, also known as the Napier Report, Carmichael included a selection of prayers and blessings (Ibid., 15-17). His stated intention with this was to “indicate... the wonderful natural refinement of the people who could appreciate, preserve, and repeat these, and whole libraries of similar oral literature throughout the past ages” (Carmichael, 1884, 481 in Stiùbhart, 2008, 17). It is evident that Carmichael had come to believe that by highlighting the “natural refinement” and spirituality of the Gaels, he was making a case against the popular stereotype of the Gael as “barbarous” and “inferior” (Fenyő, 2000, 1). In 1888, Carmichael presented a paper, entitled “Uist Old Hymns” to the Gaelic Society of

Glasgow. Both contributions were well-received (Stiùbhart, 2008, 18). In his collecting and publishing, Carmichael believed that he was working against the clock, stating, “The oral lore of the old Highland people is rapidly dying out with the old people themselves” (1884, 473). This of course, had a basis in reality, as the number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland was in decline throughout the nineteenth century, but it also ties closely with the Romantic notion, common at the time, that “the Highland Gaels were doomed irreversibly” (Fenyö, 2000, 172).

In 1900, the first two volumes of Carmichael’s *magnum opus*, *Carmina Gadelica*, appeared in a 300-copy run, three years after Carmichael’s retirement from the civil service and after two earlier aborted attempts to publish the collection (Stiùbhart, 2008, 21). These volumes contain, as is given on the title page:

Hymns and Incantations
 With Illustrative Notes on Words, Rites, and Customs,
 Dying and Obsolete: Orally Collected in the Highlands
 and Islands of Scotland and Translated into English
 By Alexander Carmichael (Carmichael, 1900, iii)⁴³

The first volume of *Carmina Gadelica* contains 54 “invocations,” mainly prayers said at particular times of the day, 27 seasonal prayers and hymns, and 40 work prayers and blessings (ix–xvii). The second volume consists of a collection of 73 charms, headed “Incantations,” and 23 additional miscellaneous items (ix–xv). Both volumes include introductory and explanatory notes and the second volume contains a list of the names of the reciters of the items in both volumes (Ibid., 374-381).

Four other volumes of *Carmina Gadelica* were to follow, all published after Carmichael’s death. While Carmichael’s daughter Elizabeth (Ella) Carmichael Watson edited the 1928 reprint of these volumes (Thomson, 1983, 36), Carmichael’s grandson, James Carmichael Watson, edited

⁴³ “Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that a good number of items in the first two volumes of the *Carmina* were in fact gathered by other hands, such as Father Allan McDonald of Eriskay ..., the Rev. John Gregorson Campbell of Tiree (1834-91) and most notably John Ewen MacRury (1853-1909) from Torlum in Benbecula” (Stiùbhart, 2008, 19).

volumes 3 and 4, which appeared in 1940 (Stiùbhart, 2008, 28). The two final volumes, 5 and 6, were edited by Angus Matheson and appeared in 1954 and 1971, respectively (Ibid., 32).

During the last century, *Carmina Gadelica* became a well-known collection.⁴⁴ Its enduring popularity is remarkable. As Donald Meek states, “It is no more and no less than the Bible of ‘Celtic Christianity’ and its role in the re-rooting of the so-called “Celts” in a new spiritual landscape has been immense” (2008, 82). However, Alexander Carmichael’s immediate concern was less to do with compiling a source text for future “Celtic Christians” and more with how *Carmina Gadelica* presented a portrait of the Gael that was more palatable to the public than conventional images of the time. Randall explains:

Essentially, Carmichael and those who influenced him were engaged in a grand project to demonstrate to a wider and often skeptical outside audience that Gaelic culture was worthy of the deepest respect. There was a conscious attempt by the literati to present the Gael in an appropriately dignified and Christian light” (2008, xii).

This is evidenced in a 1905 letter Carmichael wrote to Fr Allan MacDonald, cited by John Lorne Campbell, in which Carmichael states:

Everything Highland is becoming of interest. Let us try to meet this interest and to show the world that our dearly beloved people were not the rude, barbarous, creedless, godless, ignorant men and women that prejudiced writers have represented them (Campbell, 1978, 1; MacInnes, 1992, 12).

Meek takes this a step further and states that it was not just that Carmichael was concerned with presenting Gaels as “dignified.” In contrast to the “godless” image Carmichael claims was presented by earlier writers:

The agenda driving the creation of *Carmina Gadelica*... was therefore to present a particular view of the Gaels as essentially spiritual beings, who accommodated in their religion both sacred and secular, ‘pagan’ and Christian, perspectives in an harmonious

⁴⁴ In 1992, an English-only compilation of the first two volumes was published with a new preface by John MacInnes (1992, 7-18). Previous to this, excerpts from the collection had been published, again, solely in English translation, in books such as *The Sun Dances: Prayers and Blessings from the Gaelic*, edited by Adam Bittleston (Carmichael, 1940).

style. The key point was the ecumenical, tolerant, syncretistic – and also civilized and cultured – nature of the ‘Spiritual Celt’ (2008, 82).

This construct is problematic as it is more concerned with a romanticised image than with reality. At the end of the twentieth century, controversy arose as to how far Carmichael had gone to present this idealized picture of the ‘Spiritual Celt’ in *Carmina Gadelica*. In 1976 Hamish Robertson claimed that Carmichael had doctored original texts he collected in order “to present the material he had collected in the best possible light” (Ibid., 226).⁴⁵

A rebuttal to Robertson’s claims over the authenticity of *Carmina Gadelica* was written by John Lorne Campbell and published in *Scottish Gaelic Studies* in 1978 (1-17). In it, Campbell points out that at the time Carmichael published *Carmina Gadelica*, it was an accepted practice of Gaelic editors to “mend” texts (Ibid., 2). Campbell states:

Presumably Carmichael had the idea that what he was taking down were often but corrupt versions of fine originals, which it was his duty to restore if possible. Such an approach is frowned upon now, but a writer cannot be blamed for failing to conform to the standards of a different age from his own (Ibid., 2-3).

Campbell had other issues to raise with Carmichael’s work, however, suggesting that he did not have the background knowledge of Catholicism to discern between Gaelic folk prayers and Gaelic versions of common Catholic devotional prayers:

As Colm Ó Lochlainn pointed out in an unpublished review of vol III of *Carmina* privately communicated to me, neither Carmichael nor James Carmichael Watson was sufficiently acquainted with Catholic devotional literature to realise that some of the items they were printing were Gaelic versions of well-known Catholic hymns, such as the *Veni Sancti Spiritus* on page 88, St Bernard’s Memorare on page 118, and one of the stock congregational prayers popularised by Redemptorist missionaries “I must die, I do not know when”, on page 372 (1978, 3).

⁴⁵ A full discussion of this controversy can be found in Ronald Black’s “I Thought He Made It All Up: Context and Controversy” in *Stiùbhart* 2008, 57-81.

The challenge that Carmichael faced in demarcating the difference between what material was of local origin versus what was common to universal Catholic tradition points to the complex interplay between indigenous Gaelic culture and popular Catholic devotion within the Gaelic prayer tradition in South Uist. This relationship will be explored further in Chapter 3.

Although relatively recent scholarship has called into question some aspects of Carmichael's methodology (Robertson, 1976), his altruistic motives for the publication of Gaelic prayers and hymns cannot be doubted. As well, his vast collection of material provides a wealth of knowledge about the lives of Gaels in the nineteenth-century Hebrides, especially when his original notes can be examined, as will be seen in Chapter 4. Carmichael's work provides a snapshot of a time and a place, coloured by the collector's own agenda, which is in turn influenced by the larger culture in which he collected and published.

Conclusion

As the two primary collectors of religious folklore in South Uist in the late nineteenth century, working in what Ronald Black terms "a golden age of Gaelic folklore collecting" (2008, 60), Fr Allan MacDonald and Alexander Carmichael share commonalities. Both were simultaneously outsiders and insiders in the Gaelic communities of Benbecula, South Uist and Eriskay. Fr Allan was a respected clergyman who cast himself in the role of cultural and moral guardian of his flock, while at the same time perceiving an element of personal inadequacy as a learner of Gaelic. Carmichael was a native Gaelic speaker, albeit with a formal education, government job, and Protestant background that differentiated him from the majority of the Gaels of the southern Outer Hebrides from whom he collected. Yet he also recognised himself as an interpreter of sorts, through his long familiarity with the people from whom he collected. In a draft introduction for later volumes of *Carmina Gadelica*, written between 1904 and 1906, Carmichael states:

Many words phrases and lines in these poems are old worn and unintelligible to the listener. It is only long intercourse among the people that enables me to place many of

these words and phrases on paper and to render them with more or less accuracy (Stiùbhart, 2008, 31).

For both collectors, their unique position in the communities in which they collected led them to play the role of mediator of Gaelic religious folklore. Different priorities shaped both collectors' activities. Fr Allan was able to collect, glean and re-present Gaelic hymns and prayers to Catholic Gaels through the publication of two Gaelic hymnals, as well as his use of Gaelic language and aesthetic in his own compositions and translations of hymns, many of which remain in liturgical use today.⁴⁶ Carmichael, in contrast, was concerned with presenting his collection to an audience outside of the Gàidhealtachd by mediating to a wider public the image of what Donald Meek labels "The Spiritual Celt" (2008, 83). Yet both collectors can be seen as popularizers of the folk prayer tradition of the Gàidhealtachd, as both succeeded in raising its profile, whether that was within or outside of its Hebridean heartland. It is important that when we now go on to consider the prayers themselves in the remaining two chapters, that we are aware of the historical and ideological context of their collection. These prayers are an important witness to the history of Catholic faith in Scotland but also witness to Gaelic culture's history within Scotland.

⁴⁶ The Catholic Gaelic hymnal, *Seinnibh dhan Tighearna*, published in 1986, contains a number of hymns composed or translated by Fr Allan: "Slighe na Croise" (No 19); various parts of his Gaelic verse commentary on the Mass (Nos 34-43); "Iesum Dominum" (No 59); his translation of the Latin "Te Deum," "Cliu Dhia sna Flathas" (No 60); "Fàilt' air Reul na Mara" (No 66); his translation of Faber's hymn, "Sweet Star of the Sea," "Reul Àlainn a' Chuain" (No 67); his translation of Wyse's "I'll Sing a Hymn to Mary," "Gu Seinn Mi Laoidh do Mhoire," (No 69); his two translations of the Latin "Stabat Mater," "Sheas a' Mhàthair" (No 74) and "Tha Moire fo Bhron" (No 75); "Laoidh an Iasgair" (No 80). Through my own experience attending Mass in South Uist in the twenty-first century, I can state that many of these hymns are now considered "traditional" in South Uist.

Chapter 3

Folk Prayers in South Uist: Oral and Printed Sources

This chapter will consider how oral and literary sources, both local and more universal, shaped the corpus of Gaelic prayers that were collected in South Uist between the late nineteenth century and the mid twentieth century. Evidence in this chapter will show why the common supposition that the Gaelic prayers collected in South Uist and surrounding areas are ancient, indigenous, unchanging, and solely orally-transmitted is problematic. Through an exploration of printed devotional resources available to Catholic Gaels of the Hebrides during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as an examination of twentieth-century informants' own assessments of how they learned Gaelic prayers, this chapter aims to contribute to the scholarly debate about the roles of orality and literacy in Gaelic tradition and add to the understanding of the “synergistic relationship between the literary and oral traditions” (Nagy, 1986, 280; Innes, 2016, 271).

Several commentaries on Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica* have suggested an ancient origin for many of the items that appear in the collection, as did Carmichael himself, in his introduction to the first volume of the collection, where he states:

Some of the hymns may have been composed within the cloistered cells of Derry and Iona, and some of the incantations among the cromlechs of Stonehenge and the standing stones of Callarnis (1900, xxxiv).

Although Carmichael is clearly incorporating romanticised imagery into his claim, modern scholars have made similar assessments. For example, Diarmuid O'Laoghaire, with reference to *Carmina Gadelica*, states:

There is no doubt that the majority, if not the vast majority, of the Scottish prayers, are of quite ancient origin or tradition, and that is the common Gaelic tradition of Scotland and Ireland (1989, 283).

However, Martin MacGregor calls the acceptance of claims to an archaic nature for the religious material collected by Alexander Carmichael and published in *Carmina Gadelica* a “huge and unexplored question” (1998, 6). It is beyond the scope of this study to pass judgement on the possibility that some folk prayers collected in South Uist may have a basis in early medieval texts. Nevertheless, part of this original claim by Carmichael is that items in his collection “were composed by the learned, but they have not come down through the learned, but through the unlearned – not through the lettered few, but through the unlettered many” (1900, xxxiv).

This is not the only time that Carmichael stresses the illiteracy of his informants, and consequently, the implied improbability of an influence of literary or non-indigenous material on their contributions. In his introduction to *Carmina Gadelica*, he mentions “Hector Macisaac, Ceannlangavat, South Uist,” “blind old Hector Macleod, cottar, Lianacuithe, South Uist,” and “old Roderick Macneil, cottar, Miunghlaidh, Barra,” stating that “none of the three men knew any letters, nor any language but Gaelic, nor had ever been out of his native island” (1900, xxiv).

While there were no doubt illiterate people in the nineteenth-century Hebrides who acted as informants to collectors such as Carmichael, what Carmichael does not mention in his depiction of the “unlettered many” is that there were printed devotional resources available to Catholic Gaels at the time of his collecting, and that they therefore could have had an influence on the oral prayer tradition of areas including South Uist. Before an examination of how literary and non-indigenous sources did impact the oral prayer tradition in South Uist, an overview of some of the main devotional texts available to Catholic Gaels of the Hebrides is included here, as well as a brief discussion of the ecclesiastical movement from which they emerged.

“Devotional Revolution” in the Gàidhealtachd

The “devotional revolution” was a movement within the nineteenth century Catholic church in which official extra-liturgical devotions were emphasized.⁴⁷ Scholars have since identified this as a trend that was not solely confined to Ireland, and can be seen as playing a part in development in the devotional practices of Scottish Catholic Gaels in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Ray Burnett states:

Novenas, octaves, benediction, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and October devotions transformed the practice of religion, in the Catholic Gàidhealtachd no less than elsewhere, as it felt the impact of this far-reaching ‘devotional revolution’ (1998, 169).

Significantly, the majority of these extra-liturgical devotions popularized in the nineteenth century, such as litanies and novenas, although originally Latin in origin, were translated into the vernacular, and the method of their propagation was through print media. In an article entitled “Devotions and the Old Rite,” Sheridan Gilley credits Emmet Larkin with highlighting the importance of prayer books to the nineteenth-century “devotional revolution” (2012, 37; Larkin, 1972, 645). Gilley gives examples of the genre such as *The Path to Heaven* (2012, 38), an English language prayer manual with a cumbersome subtitle that gives an overview of its content, which is typical of the genre:

A complete collection of all the public and private devotions in general use: comprising the authorised prayers for the different confraternities; novenas, litanies, and hymns for the whole of the year; a large number of devotions translated from various languages and never before published in an accessible form; to which is added the most copious collection of hymns hitherto brought together in one book (1866, title page).

⁴⁷ The name for this movement was coined by Emmet Larkin in a 1972 article, “The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875.”

Prayer manuals were also being produced in the Gaels' vernacular as well.⁴⁸ The earliest and most ubiquitous example of the genre is the *Iùl a' Chrìostaidh* ("The Christian's Guide"), first published in 1834. A comprehensive Gaelic prayer book and missal, it went through eight editions in the United Kingdom and Canada between its original publication and 1963 when the changes to the Mass after Vatican II made the missal portion obsolete (*Iùl a' Chrìostaidh* 1963; Johnston, 1972, 399). It has been claimed that *Iùl a' Chrìostaidh* was compiled by Fr Ewan MacEachen (1769-1849)⁴⁹ (Ritchie, 2016, 25), also author of a Gaelic dictionary and translator of other spiritual books such as *An Cath Spioradail*, ("The Spiritual Battle"), a Gaelic version of Lorenzo Scupoli's *Il combattimento spirituale* (1589), originally published in Gaelic in 1835 (RC Diocese of Argyll and the Isles, 2008). Despite 1844 being given as the date of the first edition of the manual by some sources, an 1834 edition of *Iùl a' Chrìostaidh* is extant and the compiler is given as "Raonull McRaing, M.A., Am Baideanach" ("Ranald Rankin of Badenoch") (1834, title page).⁵⁰

It appears that *Iùl a' Chrìostaidh* was at least partly based on an Irish Gaelic prayer manual with an English title, *The Spiritual Rose*, which first appeared in 1800 (McKenna, 1991, 53).⁵¹ Further research may present us with more information on its source material. The prayers *Iùl a' Chrìostaidh* contains are for widespread Catholic devotions, rather than prayers particular to the Gàidhealtachd, evidence of the trend towards standardization of local prayer traditions effected by the "devotional revolution".⁵² Further research into the oral and written records may indicate to what extent this standardization took place in South Uist. Certainly, the Gaelic formulae given for the recitation of the Rosary and attendant litanies in *Iùl a' Chrìostaidh* are being used in

⁴⁸ Evidence from nineteenth-century Nova Scotia also illustrates the availability of printed catechetical materials to ordinary Catholic Gaels. A.A. Johnston cites an 1862 circular letter from Bishop Colin MacKinnon (1810-1879) of the Diocese of Antigonish, in which he recommends two Gaelic catechisms to the Gaelic-speaking members of his flock (1972, 394). His successor, Bishop John Cameron (1827-1910) personally wrote and published a Gaelic catechism (1972, 552).

⁴⁹ More information on Fr MacEachen can be found on Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's website: (http://www2.smo.uhi.ac.uk/gaidhlig/faclair/maceachainn/Ewan_MacEachen.html).

⁵⁰ This was the same Fr Ranald Rankin (1799-1863) who composed the well-known Gaelic Christmas hymn, "Taladh Chrìosta," ("The Christ-Child's Lullaby") A version of this hymn was printed in Colin Chisholm's "A Collection of Unpublished Gaelic Songs, with Notes" in *TGSI* 15, 239-242).

⁵¹ Interestingly, McKenna gives an account of material from *The Spiritual Rose* passing into Irish oral tradition (1991, 62-65).

⁵² The 1963 edition of *Iùl a' Chrìostaidh* does contain "Urnuighean air son Alba" ("Prayers for Scotland") (232-233) and "Urnuigh ri Baintighearna nan Eileannan" ("Prayer to Our Lady of the Isles") (233-234), but these prayers are formal and formulaic rather than indigenous in origin.

South Uist up to the present time.⁵³

Another Gaelic language prayer manual that had an impact on the Catholics of South Uist was *Lòchran an Anma*, (“The Lantern of the Soul”), published in 1906 by Sands and Co. of Edinburgh. Archibald Campbell, S.J. (c. 1849-1921)⁵⁴ served as the *ensor librorum* for *Lòchran an Anma*, and according to the *Catholic Who’s Who of & Year-Book* of 1908, Erskine of Marr was the compiler this “excellent Catholic prayer-book for Scottish Gaels” (Burnand 1908, 135). Burnett characterizes *Iùl a’ Chrìosdaidh* and *Lòchran an Anma* as “both in essence collections of translations of the Rosary, litanies, the Stations of the Cross, and other ‘official’ prayers” (1998, 169). This statement is not fully accurate, as *Lòchran an Anma* does contain a selection of Gaelic folk prayers which can be traced to previously-published works by folklore collectors. *Lòchran an Anma* includes four Gaelic prayers that appear to be wholly or partly of indigenous origin: “An t-Altachadh Leapa,” (“The Lying Down Prayer”) (26-27); “An t-Altachadh Maduinneach,” (“The Morning Prayer”) (25-26); “Moire an Dubh-bhroin,” (“The Morning Prayer”) (159-162); and “Beannachd Buachailleachd,” (“The Herd Blessing”) (18-20). A fifth Gaelic prayer, “Ùrnaigh ri Naomh Colum Cille,” (“Prayer to Saint Columba”) (10-12), appears to be a pastiche of Gaelic folk prayers and will be examined separately.

When comparing the above prayers to extant printed versions at the time of its publication, the *Lòchran an Anma* version of “An t-Altachadh Leapa” is most similar to Carmichael’s version of the prayer, printed in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*, Vol. 1 (1887-91, 36-37). Only a few differences can be noted, such as variation in the grammatical cases used for “ceann.” Similarly, “An t-Altachadh Maduinneach” is almost exactly the same as Carmichael’s version printed in the same publication, with the exception of a substitution of the word “Dia” for “Dòmhnach” (1887-91, 37).

⁵³ This assessment is based on personal experiences in South Uist from 2003 to 2017.

⁵⁴ These are the dates given by J. G. Gibson in *Old and New World Highland Bagpiping* (2002, 267). Gibson describes Campbell as “a snuff-using Scottish Jesuit priest who made an extensive mission in Gaelic Nova Scotia in 1907” (Ibid.).

The *Lòchran an Anma* version of “Moire an Dubh-bhroin,” barring a few typographical changes, is exactly the one found in both Colin Chisholm’s “Old Gaelic Songs” in *TGSI*, Vol. 11 (1884-85, 237-239) and in Fr Allan MacDonald’s *Laoidhean Spioradail* (1893, 47-50).⁵⁵ A very close version of “Beannachd Buachailleachd” collected by Carmichael appears in the *Northern Chronicle* 1884, in which only a few words are adjusted to fit typographical and grammatical conventions (Carmichael Watson Project, 2010). The prayer also appears in *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (182), the same year *Lòchran an Anma* was published. The inclusion of these folk prayers, the majority of which show evidence of being based on versions published by Alexander Carmichael, indicates the influence that the publication of *Carmina Gadelica* had on the canon of Catholic prayers in the Gàidhealtachd, even based on the fact that these particular prayers were the ones selected for inclusion.

“Ùrnaigh ri Naomh Colum Cille” from *Lòchran an Anma* differs from the above prayers in that it contains both Gaelic and Latin elements. It is prefixed with the traditional Latin opening, “*In nomine Patris et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen*” as well as a formulaic Latin prayer of praise for the Trinity (1906, 10). What follows is a “coisrigeadh nan caol,” a consecration of the reciter’s wrists, waist, and ankles in honour of St. Columba and all Gaelic saints (Ibid.). The prayer then alternates between formulaic Latin sections and Gaelic sections such as “Guidh mar Éirig,” a Gaelic prayer of reparation, which invokes various parts of Christ’s body in poetic terms, such as “casan Chrìosda cho geal ris a’ bhainne” (“feet of Christ as white as milk”) (Ibid., 12). The Latin *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria* are included (Ibid.) and the prayer concludes with a Gaelic section in which various numerical formulae are invoked, such as “Sìth nan seachd Eaglaisean ’gam cuairteachadh (sic)” (“Peace of the seven Churches surround me,”) as well as petitions to the Holy Spirit and the reciter’s Guardian Angel for protection (Ibid.).

⁵⁵ J.L. Campbell has noted the Fr Allan used Chisholm’s *TGSI* versions of several orally-transmitted hymns and prayers in his *Laoidhean Spioradail* (1956, 103).

This prayer appears in *Guth na Bliadhna*, Vol. 1, No. 2., which dates before the publication of *Lòchran an Anma* (1904, 165-168).⁵⁶ In this iteration, it is attributed to “Mòrlamh,” indicating that it is likely not of traditional origin. “Mòrlamh” is also given as the contributor of a Gaelic translation of a devotional prayer to the Infant of Prague, “Crabhadh do Leanaban Naomh Phrague” that appears in Vol. 1, No. 1 of *Guth na Bliadhna* (73-74). It is likely that the “Ùrnaigh ri Naomh Colum Cille” was composed by Erskine or one of his collaborators in an attempt to combine Gaelic folk prayers popularized by *Carmina Gadelica* and more standardised devotions that had become common as part of the recent “devotional revolution.” The first two volumes of *Carmina Gadelica* had been published six years earlier in 1900 and the series of Gaelic invocations included in the prayer are reminiscent of items found in *Carmina Gadelica* in their formulaic listing of the qualities of Christ and the use of numerical formulae. As a Scottish Nationalist, Erskine would have no doubt considered a prayer to St. Columba in the tradition of devotions such as those to the Infant of Prague, yet with a Gaelic “spin,” to be a fitting prayer for Catholic Gaels in Scotland. By juxtaposing Gaelic verses with venerable Latin prayers, “Ùrnaigh ri Naomh Colum Cille” can be seen as in keeping with the turn of the century Celtic Revivalists’ project to “restore dignity to the language” (Hutchinson, 2005, 36).

There is evidence in the oral record that points to *Lòchran an Anma* having an effect on the local prayer tradition in South Uist. In 1959, Calum MacLean of the School of Scottish Studies recorded Angus MacKay, Aonghas mac Aonghais 'ic Iain Mhòir (1889-1965)⁵⁷ of Cille Pheadair, South Uist, discussing what he calls the “Beannachadh Buachailleachd” (Tobar an Dulachais, SA1960.14.B2), a blessing that he explains was used against the effects of the evil eye on cattle, in conjunction with a “snàithlin.”⁵⁸ He attributes the “Beannachadh Buachailleachd” (“Herd Blessing”) to Fr Allan, and also explains that the prayer was said with a handful of earth or a small stone in one’s hand, which may break in two due to the power of the evil eye. MacKay then recites the blessing, which is given below with a parallel English translation.

⁵⁶ Coincidentally, this edition of *Guth na Bliadhna* is also the first publication of Fr Allan MacDonald’s poem “Eilein na h-Òige,” which appears unattributed (116-122). There has been no evidence yet uncovered that suggests Fr Allan MacDonald himself composed “Ùrnaigh ri Naomh Colum Cille.”

⁵⁷ See: (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/person/5117>)

⁵⁸ A knotted piece of thread, used in Gaelic folk tradition to cure disease in cattle (Shaw, 1955, 7-8).

| | |
|--|---|
| 1 Cuiream-sa an sprèidh seo romham | 1 May I put this herd before me |
| 2 Mar a dh'ordaich Dia an domhainn | 2 As God ordered the world |
| 3 Dia gam feitheamh, gan glèidheadh, gan coimead air bheinn, | 3 May God wait on them, save them, and watch them on the hill, |
| 4 Air ghleann, air chòmhnard, air charra chaban neo allt | 4 In the glen, on the plain, on the rocky pass or the stream |
| 5 O charra cam nam mìle sluic | 5 From the crooked rock of the thousand hollows |
| 6 O charra cam nam mìle sluic | 6 From the crooked rock of the thousand hollows |
| 7 O theangadh nam ban-sitheach sith | 7 From the tongue of the fairy-woman of the fairies |
| 8 O chridhe mhi-rùn, o shùil an uilc | 8 From the tongue of the fairy-woman of the fairies |
| 9 O chridhe mhi-rùn, o shùil an uilc | 9 From the ill-disposed heart, from the evil eye |
| 10 O Mhoire Màthair, cuallaich-sa an t-àl-sa gu lèir | 10 From the ill-disposed heart, from the evil eye |
| 11 Agus dìon-sa mo sprèidh | 11 O Mother Mary, tend the all of the young And protect my herd |
| 12 A Chalum chaoimh nan naomh is fear buidh' | 12 O dear Calum of the saints and the fortunate ones |
| 13 Comaraich-sa cròdh an t-àl, bàirig am buar | 13 Protect the cattle and the young, endow the herds |
| 14 Comaraich-sa cròdh an t-àl, bàirig am buar | 14 Protect the cattle and the young, endow the herds |
| 15 O mo Bhanighearna, o mo mhàthair | 15 O my Lady, o my Mother, |
| 16 Cuimhnich gur leat fhèin mi | 16 Remember that I belong to you |
| 17 Mar do chuid 's do sheilbh fhèin | 17 As your portion and your own property |
| 18 Ò Ìosa ro-naomh, dèan tròcair oirnn | 18 O Jesus most holy, have mercy on us |
| 19 Coisrich thu fhèin | 19 May you bless us |
| 20 An ainm an Athar, agus a Mhic, agus an Spioraid Naoimh. | 20 In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. |
| 21 Amen | 21 Amen. |

Maclean then questions MacKay as to the provenance of the prayer, although MacKay has already attributed it to Fr Allan.

CIM: Bhiodh sin aig na seann daoine.

The old people would have that.

AMK: Bhitheadh, gu dearbha fhèin!

Yes, definitely!

However, another man present when the interview is taking place, who is unnamed in the School of Scottish Studies record, interjects:

A Dhia, bha an leabhar agam.

God, I had the book.

MacKay then interrupts him to qualify his previous statement:

Bha, bha e aig... aig an leabhar... a rinn Maighstir Ailein.

Yes, it was in the book that Fr Allan made.

The other man present adds:

'S ann à leabhar a dh'ionnsaich sinn e.

It's from a book that we learned it.

MacKay agrees:

'S ann. 'S ann ann an leabhar ris an canadh iad – *manual* beag laghach – *Lòchran an Anma* an t-ainm air.

Yes, it was in a book that they called – a nice wee manual – Lòchran an Anma, it was called.

There are several aspects worthy of comment in this excerpt which point to the “synergistic relationship between the literary and oral traditions” (op. cit.) evident in Angus MacKay’s version of this prayer. The prayer is given by MacKay in the context of local folk practices to remove the effects of the evil eye. The prayer is then credited to a religious figure whose memory remains strong in the Uist oral tradition⁵⁹ and who is associated with the composition

⁵⁹ For stories from South Uist informants about Fr Allan, see Tobar an Dualchais:

Peggy MacRae: “Mgr Ailean agus a’ griùthrach” (CW0162C.870)

John Campbell: “Tobar Thiobartain” (SA1960.8.A3) and “Maighstir Ailean, an nighean agus an droch spiorad” (SA1960.19.A1)

and publication of religious material. However, MacKay seems to contradict this with his assertion that the prayer was known to “the old people,” indicating an older and more localised provenance. When his companion mentions that the prayer was learned from a book, MacKay does not deny this, but gives the title *Lòchran an Anma*. Fr Allan was not the compiler of *Lòchran an Anma*, but it may be that MacKay is conflating this book with Fr Allan’s *Laoidhean Spioradail*. MacKay’s confusion may also be related to the probability that Fr Allan was a populariser of Gaelic prayer manuals in Uist, as a copy of the 1885 edition of *Iùl a’ Chrìostaidh*, held in the MacLean Room Collection in Celtic and Gaelic at the University of Glasgow, has an inscription that indicates that the book was gifted to the writer Neil Munro by Fr Allan in 1901.

Interestingly, the version of the prayer then given by MacKay is not exactly as is printed in *Lòchran an Anma*, as the order of some lines are changed and others are omitted. It may be that MacKay did not recall the prayer exactly as learned from the book. Also worthy of consideration is the fact that the prayer was known in the oral tradition of the Uists before the publication of *Lòchran an Anma* in 1906 and therefore MacKay’s version could have been affected by pre-existing variants. Carmichael’s version, upon which the *Lòchran an Anma* version was based, when it appeared in *Carmina Gadelica* (Vol. 1, 274-275), was attributed to “Donald MacDonald, Cattleherd, Baile nan Cailleach, Benbecula” (Vol. 2, 377). A shorter cattle blessing, possibly related, was recorded by Fr Allan in his notebook known as CW 58 A (26v). This is given below with a parallel English translation.

| | |
|--|---|
| 1 Siubhal beinne! Siubhal coille! | 1 Traverse the mountain! Traverse the forest! |
| 2 Is blianagan fada! | 2 And the long level plain! |
| 3 Siubhal gu rèidh fada farsuinn! | 3 Travel safely far and wide! |
| 4 Buachaille Mhoire fo d’ chois! | 4 The protection of Mary under your foot! |
| 5 ’S gu bu slàn a thig thu as! ⁶⁰ | 5 And may you come out of it whole! |

⁶⁰ Transcribed by Flòraidh Komori (2004, p.14).

Given that Fr Allan was collecting in MacKay's home parish of Daliburgh around the time that MacKay was born, it is likely that the above variant was more local to MacKay's area and it is possible that he heard it as a child. Of course, it is also possible that both variants existed side-by-side in southern South Uist in the late nineteenth-century, and further research may find an example of a version similar to Carmichael's collected in that area. An interesting possibility is that for MacKay and his companion, Carmichael's variant, learned from *Lòchran an Anma*, superseded the local variant known by "the old people." This would not be out of the question, as Dòmhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart has stated:

Literary influences serve to stabilise and canonise traditions, to spread, reinforce, and preserve them – but they can also transform and revise them, fabricate them, encourage their forgetting, and indeed dispense with the necessity of memorising them in the first place (2007, 127).

If it is the case that the printed version of the prayer has superseded the orally-transmitted one for MacKay and his companion, Mackay's iteration of the *Lòchran an Anma* version of the "Beannachadh Buachailleachd" has now entered the oral tradition of South Uist simply through MacKay's recitation of it. This also means that a Benbecula version of the cattle blessing has possibly replaced the local variant due to its being printed in an official prayer manual. Virginia Blankenhorn has presented an observation about the Gaelic oral tradition that reinforces this hypothesis:

John MacInnes tells me that he often encountered, in the course of his fieldwork, informants who revered the printed word, and who would declare their own version of a song 'wrong' if it did not accord with a printed version subsequently shown to them (2014, 18).

However, Angus MacKay's acquiescence to the printed word is not quite as straightforward as this. He admits he learned the prayer from a specific book, but only after his companion brings it up. Prompted by his interlocutor, he first acknowledges the existence of the prayer amongst "the old people." It may be that he is aware that this is the more appropriate answer given the interviewer's role as a researcher of folklore.

Further insights into the interaction of literary and oral sources for prayers and their effect on local tradition in South Uist can be gleaned from an interview conducted with another South Uist informant, Donald Alasdair Johnson⁶¹ of Ardmore, also born in 1889.⁶² Johnson gives a detailed explanation of how oral transmission of prayers worked in South Uist in his youth (TanD, SA1971.102.B2). His interviewers, Donald Archie MacDonald and Angus John MacDonald of North Uist, question him extensively on how the prayers of the Rosary, a universal Catholic prayer, were learned by people of his area:

DAM: A-nist, thathar ag ionnsachadh nan ùrnaigh tha sin nuair a tha sibh òg, nuair a tha sibh nur cloinn, a bheil?

Now, those prayers are learned when you are young, when you are children, are they?

DAJ: O, tha, tha.

O, yes, yes.

DAM: Agus 's ann a-staigh anns na taighean fhèin a tha iad gan ionnsachadh, an ann?

And it's in the homes themselves that they are learned, is it?

DAJ: O, 's ann, 's ann.

O, yes, yes.

DAM: An e na pàrantan a tha iad gan ionnsachadh?

Is it the parents that teach them?

DAJ: 'S e; bidh thu gan togail nuair a chluinneas tu d' athair 's do mhàthair... is an fheadhainn a tha a' fàs sean agad, bha thu nad phàiste, nad chnapach. Tha thu ag èisteachd rith' is tha thu ga togail mar sin.

⁶¹ According to MacDonald and Bruford in 1970, Johnson was also “probably the best storyteller now living in the Hebrides” (133).

⁶² See: (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/person/487>)

Yes; you pick them up when you hear your father and your mother, and the older people, when you were a child, a youngster. You listen to it and you pick it up like that.

Similarly, other interviews conducted by School of Scottish Studies fieldworkers with informants from South Uist and Barra, which has a similar longstanding indigenous Catholic prayer tradition, show that prayers were often transmitted orally within families, and that this is the mode of transmission emphasized by informants when speaking about more local prayers as well. In a 1974 interview conducted by Emily Lyle with Mary MacLeod (dates unknown) of Ardveenish, Barra, MacLeod recites the Gaelic prayer known as the “Altachadh Laighe” (TanD, SA1974.100.B6). Lyle questions MacLeod about the transmission process for this prayer:

EL: Where did you get that one now? Is that your mother’s and your father’s too?

MML: Yes.

EL: And did you say that as children?

MML: That’s a long one. That’s a long one. That’s when you lie in bed. It’s a good prayer.

In this excerpt, MacLeod acknowledges the prayer as being passed down from her parents, although she does not directly comment on when she learned the prayer from them. Lyle’s phrasing of her first question is significant as well, as it indicates a sense of family ownership of this folk prayer, which MacLeod does not refute. This ties in with observations made by Carol Zall in her article, “Mouth to Mouth: Gaelic Stories as Told Within One Family,” in which Zall introduces the concept of “loyalty to a remembered original,” which contributes to the conservative nature of oral transmission within families (2006/2007, 215). This concept of oral transmission within families will be explored more fully below as well as in Chapter 4.

The oral transmission of prayers in families is also highlighted in an interview conducted by Mary MacDonald of the School of Scottish Studies with Morag MacNeil (dates unknown) of Bruernish, Barra, in 1970 (TanD, SA1970.167.B15). Before reciting her version of the “Altachadh Laighe,” MacNeil prefaces it with the statement, “Seo an t-Altachadh Laighe, a dh’ionnsaich mi bhom sheanmhair” (“*Here is the Night Offering, that I learned from my grandmother*”). Again, remembrance of the prayer and of the family member from whom it was learned is intertwined. If a prayer is considered something that belongs to one’s parents, then not

only respect for the prayer itself but respect for one's family is implied in the accurate remembrance and recital of the prayer.⁶³

In the interview with Donald Alasdair Johnson previously cited, the interviewers also question Johnson about the involvement of clergy in the transmission process and the consistency of prayers within the community. Johnson's responses further emphasise the privileged role of the family in the transmission process, in contrast to the "professionals," i.e. priests.

DAM: Chan e na sagairt, mar gum bitheadh againne.

It's not the priests, like we would have.

DAJ: Ò, chan e, chan e na sagairt a tha gan ionnsachadh. 'S e a tha iad gan ionnsachadh, na pàrantan.

Oh, no, it's not the priests that teach them. It's the parents that teach them.

DAM: Agus an e an aon ùrnaigh aig a h-uile duine a-measg an t-sluaigh?

And is it the same prayer that everyone has in the community?

DAJ: Ò, 's e, 's e. An aon ùrnaigh.

Oh, yes, yes. It's the same prayer.

DAM: Direach an aon fhaclan mar sin.

Just the same words, like that.

DAJ: 'S e an aon fhaclan, an aon fhaclan a th' ann.

It's the same words, the same words.

Later in the interview, MacDonald continues with his line of questioning.

⁶³ This concept has been reinforced in personal communication with a native Gaelic speaker who told me that when she recited the "Altachadh Laighe" prayer, she thought of her mother, a native of South Uist, who first taught her the prayer.

DAM: Ach tha na h-ùrnaighean sin cho math am measg an t-sluaigh agus nach leig thu leas an sagart a bhith gan ionnsachadh do dhuine sam bith.

But those prayers are so strong in the community that you don't need the priest to teach them to anyone.

DAJ: Ò, tha, tha – cha leig, cha leig. Ò, cha leig.

O, yes, yes – there's no need, no, no.

DAM: Agus tha fhios mar sin gur e seann ùrnaigh a thàinig a-nuas bhur sinnsearachd.

And it's therefore obvious that it's an old prayer that has come down from your ancestors.

DAJ: Sin a th' ann, o shinnsearachd, thàinig iad bho shinnsearachd gu sinnsearachd. 'S e seann ùrnaigh a bhiodh ann. 'S e, cha leig. Chan eil na sagairt ag ionnsachadh ùrnaighean do dhaoine dhen taobh againne. Bhiodh iad fhèin gan ionnsachadh, na daoine fhèin.

That it is, from our ancestors; they came from ancestor to ancestor. It would be an old prayer. Yes, there's no need. The priests don't teach prayers to people in our area. They themselves would teach them, the people themselves.

Even though Johnson is speaking here about the transmission of the prayers of the Rosary, a universal Catholic devotion, he highlights both the independence of families from the clergy in the transmission process and the ancestral link that community members have to these prayers. The tradition of families handing down prayers without support from clergy, in Johnson's description, is because clergy are superfluous to this transmission process. However, as seen in Chapter 1, in the period after the Reformation, priests were scarce or absent from South Uist. Therefore it would be of necessity that family members took over this catechetical role in order to ensure the survival of the faith.⁶⁴ Johnson's attitude towards the role of clergy

⁶⁴ This sense of independence from clergy in the matter of prayers learned and recited in a domestic setting is connected to O'Laoghaire's suggestion that the seventeenth-century shortage of priests in the Highlands may have caused the development of lay baptism and death blessing rituals and attendant prayers (1989, 274, 280).

may stem from the folk memory of these times.

Johnson is also questioned by Angus John MacDonald about the consistency of prayers in different areas, presumably within the confines of Uist and the surrounding islands with a Catholic tradition such as Benbecula and Eriskay:

AJM: Agus saoil a-nist an e na h-aon ùrnaighean a bhios agaibh ann a' sheo, car, agus a bhiodh aca ann an àite eile, air falbh, can.

But do you think that it's the same prayers that you have here, say, that they would have in another place, somewhere else, say.

DAJ: Uell, tha, 's e. Car dhe na h-aon ùrnaighean a th' ann.

Well, yes, it is. They're sort of the same prayers.

AJM: Seadh.

Right.

DAJ: Tha, ma dh'fhaodte gum faigh thu atharrachadh beag air choireigin annta, ach chan eil mòran a bhiodh ann. Tha e a' ciallachadh an aon bhonn, a h-uile gin aca.

You may find some sort of minor change in them, but not much. They have the same meaning, all of them.

Johnson's assessment of the consistency of the prayer tradition in Uist in this excerpt, as well as in the previous excerpt dealing with the consistency of prayers within his community, is in keeping with Zall's demonstration of consistency between versions of stories told by related tellers. (2006/2007, 208-209). William Lamb also points out that:

Oral language of a formal or ritualistic nature has been found to resemble written prose in certain ways, for instance in tendencies towards fossilisation of language and formulaic expression (2013, 8).

Therefore, the consistency of the oral prayer tradition in South Uist can be attributed to factors beyond the family relationships intertwined in the transmission process; the formulaic nature of the prayers themselves and their ritual function contributes to the prayers' consistency.

In the same interview, Johnson mentions other means of transmission of prayers when he is questioned about prayers other than the Rosary.

DAM: A-nist, a bheil ùrnaighean eile sam bith agaibh fhèin a bharrachd air an fheadhainn tha sin?

Now, do you have any other prayers besides those ones?

DAJ: O, tha, gu leòr.

O, yes, plenty.

DAM: Agus cà' an do dh'ionnsaich sibh iad sin?

And where did you learn them?

DAJ: Tha feadhainn ann a rinn mi fhìn is feadhainn a dh'ionnsaich mi.

There are some I composed myself and some I learned.

DAM: Seadh. Agus cà' an do dh'ionnsaich sibh iad seo, a Dhòmhnail Alasdair?

Right. And where did you learn them, Donald Alasdair?

DAJ: À leabhar, is anns an eaglais.

Out of a book, and in church.

DAM: Seadh.

Right.

DAJ: Ga togail.

Picking it up.

DAM: Seadh. An do dh'ionnsaich sibh gin o na seann daoine, na...?

Right. And did you learn any from the old people, or...?

DAJ: O, dh'ionnsaich, dh'ionnsaich mi gu leòr o m' athair.

Oh, yes, I learned a lot from my father.

Johnson's statement that he learned prayers from a written source and at church somewhat contradicts his previous assertion that "outside" resources, such as the involvement of priests, were not needed for the prayers to be learned. This seems to indicate, as in the case of Angus MacKay, a privileging of the oral transmission of prayers over learning prayers from books. Yet, like MacKay, Johnson acknowledges this literary influence when questioned. Johnson's comment about composing prayers himself is also significant, as extemporized vocal prayer is not a prominent feature in the Catholic tradition. However, it should be considered that Johnson may be referring to an internal dialogue with God rather than more formalized compositions. Further research may shed more light on this subject.

Conclusion

As has been examined here, the interaction between printed and oral sources in regard to the folk prayer tradition in South Uist is complex. An examination of common printed prayer resources from the turn of the twentieth century reveals both a trend towards standardization of the prayer tradition precipitated by the nineteenth-century "devotional revolution," as well as the increased legitimacy of local Gaelic prayers through their inclusion in publications aside venerable Latin prayers. The influence of the wider "Celtic Revival" can also be seen in works such as *Lòchran an Anma* which includes a prayer to St. Columba that combines traditional Latin prayers with indigenous Gaelic influences. Clearly, the prayer tradition in late nineteenth and twentieth-century Gàidhealtachd, as demonstrated in the oral and written record with particular reference to South Uist, is one that shows evidence of both consistency and change, of indigenous and "outside" influences.

Through the analysis of archival interviews from the School of Scottish Studies, it is possible to examine twentieth-century informants' privileging the oral tradition of transmission of prayers within families over influences from printed prayer resources, although both have clearly played a role in the shaping of the Gaelic prayer tradition in twentieth-century South Uist. These interviews also reveal some contradictions concerning the notion of consistency within the Gaelic prayer tradition, as well as the role of clergy in the transmission process. The transcription and analysis of these interviews appears to be the first work of its kind undertaken in regard to the Gaelic prayer tradition in Uist, and there remains much opportunity for further exploration that builds on this preliminary work. Chapter 4 will continue to explore the relationship between oral and literary sources as seen in particular examples of Gaelic prayers and religious poetry collected in South Uist.

Chapter 4

Case Study: “An t-Altachadh Laighe” (“The Lying Down Prayer”)

Introduction

This chapter will examine in depth a particular Gaelic prayer, the “Altachadh Laighe.” As one of the most common Gaelic folk prayers in the written and oral record, there are a number of examples in print, in collectors’ field notes, and in archival recordings from which to draw from. It is the aim of this chapter to use this examination of the “Altachadh Laighe” in its printed and oral forms, as well as the context in which informants recited the prayer, to bring together various themes introduced in previous chapters that impact the folk prayer tradition of South Uist and the Catholic Gàidhealtachd in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In particular, the editorial decisions of collectors who published this prayer will be explored. The “synergistic relationship” between literary and oral sources will be also be shown here, in connection with insights into the oral transmission process and how the distinction between folk prayers and “official” prayers is not always maintained by informants.

Printed Sources

The “Altachadh Laighe,” (“Lying Down Prayer”), also known as the “Altachadh Leapa” (“Bed Prayer”) or by its first line, “Laighidh Mi A-Nochd,” (“I Lie Down Tonight”), is one of the most common Gaelic folk prayers collected from informants and included in publications. Fr Allan MacDonald collected several versions of the prayer, about which more will be said below, and included a version in his *Laoidhean Spioradail* of 1893. The prayer had earlier featured in Colin Chisholm’s article in *TGSI*, Vol. 11, “Old Gaelic Songs” (1884-85, 216-240). Alexander Carmichael’s *Carmina Gadelica* included several night prayers, some more similar to the “Altachadh Laighe” to others. Previously, a version entitled “An t-Altachadh Leapa” was one of the folklore items Carmichael included in his Appendix to the 1884 Napier Report (451-482),

with the same version featured in an article by Carmichael for the *Northern Chronicle*, “Hebridean Hymns and Popular Lore” (1884, 3). Carmichael also included a version of the prayer in his “Uist Old Hymns” article in *TGSG*, Vol. 1 (1887-91, 34-47). A version was printed in William MacKenzie’s “Gaelic Incantations, Charms, and Blessings of the Hebrides” in *TGSI*, Vol. 18, 1891-92 (97-182), and in the reprint of the article as a serial in *The Highland Monthly*, Vol. 4, 1892-93 (444). As mentioned in Chapter 3, “An t-Altachadh Leapa” was one of the indigenous prayers included in Erskine of Marr’s 1906 Gaelic devotional, *Lòchran an Anma*. This information is given in the form of a table below, and each version has been assigned a reference number. For republished versions, a letter has been added.

| Source | Page | Name | Reference | Date |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Napier Report Appendix Alexander Carmichael | 474- 476 | “An t-Altachadh Leapa” | AC 1A | 1884 |
| <i>Northern Chronicle</i> Alexander Carmichael | 3 | “An t-Altachadh Leapa” | AC 1B | 1884 |
| <i>TGSI</i> 11 Colin Chisholm | 239- 240 | “An t-Altachadh Laidhe” | CC 1 | 1884-85 |
| <i>TGSG</i> 1 Alexander Carmichael | 36-37 | “An t-Altachadh Leapa” | AC 2A | 1887-91 |
| <i>TGSI</i> 18 William MacKenzie | 182 | “An t-Altachadh Leapa” | WMK 1A | 1891-92 |
| <i>Highland Monthly</i> William MacKenzie | 444 | “An t-Altachadh Leapa” | WMK 1B | 1892- 1893 |
| <i>Laoidhean Spioradail</i> Fr Allan MacDonald | 26-27 | “An t-Altachadh Laidhe” | AMD 1 | 1893 |
| <i>Carmina Gadelica, Vol. 1</i> Alexander Carmichael | 88-89 | “Beannachadh Leapa” | AC 3 | 1900 (1928 ed.) |
| <i>Lòchran an Anma</i> Ruaraidh Erskine of Marr | 26-27 | “An t-Altachadh Leapa” | AC 2B | 1906 |

A survey of the printed versions of the “Altachadh Laighe” reveals a degree of consistency in their content, despite the slightly different names the prayer is given. John Lorne Campbell observes that the version used by Fr Allan MacDonald in his *Laoidhean Spioradail* was based on the one included in Colin Chisholm’s piece, despite Fr Allan having collected versions of the prayer himself (1978, 103). Chisholm’s and Fr Allan’s published versions are compared below, with the lines adjusted by Fr Allan in bold print. A translation of Fr Allan’s version is also given.

| TGSI 11: Chisholm version (CC 1) | Laoidhean Spioradail: Fr Allan version (AMD 1) | Translation of AMD 1 |
|---|---|--|
| 1 Laidhidh mis' a nochd 2 Le Moire, 's le' Mac; 3 Mathair mo Rìgh 4 Ga 'm dhion bho'n olc. 5 Laidhidh mi le Dia, 6 'S laidhidh Dia leam: 7 Cha laidh mi leis an olc, 8 Cha laidh an t-olc leam. 9 Eiridh mi le Dia 10 Ma 's ceadaidh le Dia leigeil leam. 11 Deas-lamh Dhia, 12 A Chrìosta, gun robh leam. 13 Bha throidhean mo bhuinn 14 Gu mullach mo chinn 15 Guidhim Peadar, guidhim Pol, 16 Guidhim Moire oigh agus a Mac, 17 Guidhim air an da Ostal deug 18 Gun mise dhol eug a nochd. 19 A Chrìosta chumhachdaich na gloire 20 A mhic na h-Oighe 's gloine cursa 21 Seachainn sinn bho thigh nam pian, 22 Tha gu h-ìosal, dorcha, duinte. 23 Fhad 's a bhios a' cholluinn na cadal 24 Biodh an t-anam air bharraidh na firinn 25 An co-chomunn nan Naomh. <i>Amen.</i> | 1 Laidhidh mis' a nochd 2 Le Moire, le Mac 3 Màthair mo Rìgh 4 Gam dhion bhon olc 5 Laidhidh mi le Dia, 6 Laidhidh Dia leam: 7 Cha laidh mi leis an olc, 8 Cha laidh an t-olc leam 9 Eiridh mi le Dia, 10 Ma 's ceadaidh le Dia leigeil leam. 11 Deas-làmh Dhia 12 Is Chrìosta gun robh leam, 13 Is crois nan naoi Aingeal fionn 14 Bho thraidhean mo bhonn 15 Gu mullach mo chinn 16 Guidheam Peadair, guidheam Pòl, 17 Guidheam Moire Oigh 's a Mac, 18 Guidheam an dà Ostal deug 19 Gun mise 'dhol eug a nochd. 20 A Chrìosta chumhachdach na glòire 21 A Mhic na h-Oighe 'tha glan is cùbhraidh 22 Seachainn sinn bho thigh nam pian, 23 'Tha gu h-ìosal, dorcha, dùinte. 24 Na reacham an eucoir nan geasach; 25 'S fhad 's a bhios a choluinn 's a chadal chaomh 26 Biodh an t-anam air bharraidh na firinn' 27 'An co-chomunn nan Naomh. <i>Amen.</i> | 1 I lie down tonight 2 With Mary and her Son 3 Mother of my King 4 Who protects me from evil 5 I will lie down with God, 6 God will lie down with me: 7 I will not lie down with evil, 8 Evil will not lie down with me 9 I will arise with God, 10 If God permits me. 11 The right hand of God 12 And Christ be with me, 13 And the cross of the nine fair angels 14 From the soles of my feet 15 To the top of my head 16 I implore Peter, I implore Paul, 17 I implore the Virgin Mary and her Son, 18 I implore the twelve apostles 19 That I would not die tonight. 20 O powerful Christ of glory 21 O Son of the Virgin who is pure and fragrant 22 Spare us from the house of pains, 23 That is low, dark and enclosed. 24 May I not fall prey to the misdeeds of enchantment; 25 As long as the body is in gentle sleep 26 May the soul be at the apex of truth 27 In the communion of saints. <i>Amen.</i> |

As can be seen, Fr Allan's version is not completely identical to Chisholm's, as he inserts two additional lines. After Line 12, which Fr Allan gives as "Is Chrìosta gun robh leam," he adds, "Is crois nan naoi Aingeal fionn" (1893, 27, 1.13). He changes the line, "A mhic na h-Oighe 's gloine cursa" ("O Son of the Virgin of the purest path") to "A Mhic na h-Oighe 'tha glan is cùbhraidh" (Ibid., 1.21). In addition, he inserts a new line after "Tha gu h-ìosal, dorcha, duinte" – "Na reacham an eucoir nan geasach" (Ibid., 1.24). These changes are minor, but demonstrate that Fr Allan was not just replicating Chisholm's version, but rather adapting it to create a version that he wanted published. "Na reacham an eucoir nan geasach" (Ibid., 1.24), which translates as

“May I not fall prey to the misdeeds of enchantment,” is worthy of comment, as it appears to be an unusual line for inclusion in this prayer, and appears in no other extant published version.

Further research may demonstrate that Fr Allan did collect a version of the “*Altachadh Laighe*” including this line, but the preliminary research undertaken for this study did not uncover written evidence of a source. As Campbell notes about *Laoidhean Spioradail*, “Unfortunately, the correspondence that preceded the publication of this book has entirely disappeared, as well as the original manuscript of it” (1978, 101). However, Fr Allan’s knowledge of variants of the prayer is evidenced in his notebook held in the Carmichael Watson Collection, CW 58 A. Campbell suggests this notebook was compiled over the period from 1887 to 1890 (1978, 102). It contains five variants and fragments of the “*Altachadh Laighe*” that Fr Allan collected from informants in South Uist and Eriskay over this period.⁶⁵ One of the versions does contain the line, “*Na leigibh mi ’n eucoir le’r cead*” (“Please do not lead me into wrongdoing”) (CW 58 A, 24r), which has similar phrasing, but does not make mention of “*geasach*.”

Significantly, Fr Allan did collect a short prayer of petition, which runs as follows: “*Na reacham an eiginn n’an geasabh n’an cunnart nan gabhadh nan cruaidh-fhulangas*” – “May I not fall into hardship, enchantment, danger, peril, or great suffering” (CW 58 B, 45v).⁶⁶ It appears that he may have adapted the part of this petition pertaining to enchantment and inserted it into his published version of the “*Altachadh Laighe*.” The collection of this short prayer indicates that Fr Allan was aware of the local practice of using prayer as a protection against curses and enchantment. It could be that Fr Allan added the petition to avoid enchantment to the “*Altachadh Laighe*” as a pastoral response to a concern about the effects of enchantment and curses among the people he served in Uist and Eriskay. As evidenced in the School of Scottish Studies interview with Angus MacKay featured in Chapter 3, folk belief in the effects of the evil eye was prevalent in the area in which Fr Allan served at least until the late 1950s.

Regardless of his reasons for his additions to the prayer, these adjustments on Fr Allan’s part point to the role of collectors’ editorial decision making in shaping the published versions of folk prayers, and which then may possibly re-enter the oral tradition, as discussed in the case of the

⁶⁵ These versions can be found in CW 58A on the following pages: 24r-24v; 89v; 92r; 100r; 100v.

⁶⁶ Transcribed by Komori (2009, 10).

“Beannachadh Buachailleachd” in Chapter 3. As seen in Chapter 2, where Carmichael’s “improving” of original items was discussed, heavy-handed editing can be problematic, even if undertaken for altruistic motives. However, it appears that Fr Allan was not as prone to highlight the “Celticness” of items he published as Carmichael was. Roberston points out that in *Carmina Gadelica*, “there are more than a score of personal names that may be associated, more or less safely, with saintly figures of the Irish and Scottish Celtic churches” (1976, 242).

In comparison, Fr Allan collected at least one version of the “Sloinntearachd Bhrighde”⁶⁷ or “Genealogy of St. Brigid,” a prayer imploring St. Brigid’s protection (CW 58 A, 10r). He never published a version of this prayer, but the version that appears in William MacKenzie’s article in *TGSI* 18 is credited to him (1892-1892, 121; MacInnes, 1992, 14). Perhaps even more tellingly, Fr Allan’s published version of the “Altachadh Laighe” does not include the mention of “Bhrighde fo brat” (“Brigid under her mantle”), featured in several of the alternative variants he collected in the 1887-90 period.⁶⁸ Again, this line is included in MacKenzie’s version, and may indicate that Fr Allan provided him with source material from his own notes. Possibly, Fr Allan believed that the version of the prayer featuring St. Brigid was suitable for publication as an item of folklore, but for Catholic devotional use, he preferred a more generic version of the prayer. This may indicate the standardizing influence of the nineteenth-century Catholic “devotional revival” on Fr Allan’s editorial decisions.

Important insights can also be gleaned from the information used by the writers of literary items concerning Gaelic folk prayers to preface their findings. The most obvious example of this is the extensive accompanying notes written by Alexander Carmichael to give context to the prayers included in *Carmina Gadelica*, some of which will be highlighted later in this chapter. Shorter pieces may provide key contextual information as well. Colin Chisholm’s introduction to his version of the “Altachadh Laighe” is prefaced with a personal note:

⁶⁷ A similar version of this prayer, entitled “Sloinntireachd Bhrìde,” can be found in *Carmina Gadelica*, Vol. 1, 174-175.

⁶⁸ For example, see CW 58 A, 89v.

In my young days in Strathglass the words of this *altachadh* were invariably the last words the people used after going to bed and before sleeping; and during the last 60 years I have never, on any night in my recollection, failed to say them myself (1884-1885, 239).

As well as locating the version of the prayer within a particular region of the Catholic Gàidhealtachd, Chisholm's preface highlights several features of the Gaelic folk prayer tradition as reflected in the context of the "Altachadh Laighe": the prayer was said privately in a domestic setting, and prayers such as this are passed to the next generation when they are young. In these aspects, his account follows closely comments made about the transmission of prayers by Donald Alasdair Johnson in the previous chapter.

Alexander Carmichael's published versions of the prayer give an insight into how collectors' editorial decisions may change over time. All Carmichael's published versions of this prayer are entitled "An t-Altachadh Leapa," which he translates as "The Bed Blessing" ("Grazing and Agrestic Customs," 1884, 474). Carmichael's first published version of the prayer, (AC 1 A/B) which appears in "Grazing and Agrestic Customs of the Outer Hebrides" in the Napier Report (1884, 474-476), as well as in *The Northern Chronicle* (1884, 3) contains eight verses, two of which are fragmentary. Carmichael's Napier Report version of the prayer (AC 1A) is included in Appendix A on page 75.

In an accompanying explanatory note, Carmichael states that "the IV and V verses were not in the first version I obtained of this beautiful hymn. I am not sure they originally formed part of it" (1884, 475). When Carmichael then published the prayer in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*, (AC 2), he apparently reverted to his original source material, as both of the verses in question had been removed, as well as the fragmentary verses, leaving only verses I, II, VI and VII from his 1884 version. It may be that his decision was influenced by Chisholm's version (CC 1), which had appeared in *TGSI* in the interim and did not contain verses similar to the two Carmichael had questioned in 1884. Through research conducted for this study, it can also be confirmed that in omitting the four verses in his *TGSG* version, Carmichael was reverting back to his original source material. In "Grazing and Agrestic Customs," Carmichael states, "the old man

from whom I first took it down, told me that he said it every night since he was fifteen years of age, and that it had been taught him by his father” (1884, 474).

This information is significant as it not only again confirms the domestic and intergenerational transmission of Gaelic folk prayers in South Uist, but that it also aids in locating the version to which Carmichael refers in his field notes. In Carmichael’s notebook, known as CW 106/99 in the Carmichael Watson Collection, there is a transcript of the “Altachadh Leapa” with a note that “Recit said it since he was 15yrs” (CW 106/99, f.31v). This reciter was, according to Carmichael’s notes, Archibald Currie, a 46-year-old shoemaker from Àird na Monadh, South Uist (Carmichael Watson Project, 2013). An examination of these field notes shows that the Verses IV and V that Carmichael questioned in his 1884 published version indeed were not in the original version he collected from Archibald Currie. However, one of the fragmentary verses, Verse VIII in the 1884 version, was given by Archibald Currie. The other fragmentary verse, Verse III, can be traced to, a version of the “Altachadh Leapa” taken from “Alexander MacMillan, Policeman, Edin, Fr Benbecula,” dated February 29, 1884, that appears in Carmichael’s notebook, CW 120/207, also in the Carmichael Watson Collection (Carmichael Watson Project, 2013). When Carmichael came to publish the prayer in *Carmina Gadelica*, Vol. 1 (AC 3), he made additional changes to the text that deviate from what can be gleaned from these (1900, 88-89). Carmichael’s version of the “Altachadh Leapa” in *Carmina Gadelica* has been discussed in Hamish Robertson’s article, “Studies in Carmichael’s *Carmina Gadelica*” (1976) and John Lorne Campbell’s response, “Notes on Hamish Robertson’s “Studies in Carmichael’s *Carmina Gadelica*” (1978), with Robertson seeing these changes as possible fabrication and Campbell being more magnanimous in his assessment, stating that he may have been drawing upon a further version of the prayer (1978, 10).

The conclusion that can be made from these observations is that the versions of the “Altachadh Laighe” and related prayers that were published during the period of 1884 to 1906 did not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they were the product of a network of collectors who were aware of each other’s work, often engaging in correspondence, and who were making editorial decisions based on their own source materials, other published versions, as well as trends in the Catholic Church and in wider Scottish intellectual circles, such as Celtic Revivalism and nationalism.

Re-publication of the “Altachadh Laighe” gave Carmichael a chance to reassess his original editorial decisions, while for the Fr Allan, publication of the prayer in a Catholic hymnal may have caused him to consider taking a standardizing approach towards popularising Gaelic folk prayers. Colin Chisholm framed his published version of the prayer with the nostalgia of his youth in the Catholic Gàidhealtachd, while William MacKenzie was aided in his literary work by contributions from fellow intellectual Fr Allan. Clearly, the publication of prayers such as the “Altachadh Laighe” was a complex undertaking, which would in turn have an effect on the oral tradition from which the prayer was originally drawn.

Oral Sources

The “Altachadh Laighe” prayer is also common in the collection of field recordings held by the the School of Scottish Studies, with at least seven different informants from South Uist and Barra reciting versions of the prayer between 1958 and 1970. Two of these versions, collected from informants in South Uist, will be examined, with a particular emphasis on how they point to the interplay between oral and literary sources in twentieth-century prayer practices in South Uist. Both versions of the “Altachadh Laighe” were recorded from South Uist informants in the late 1950s. One is from Angus MacKay, Aonghas mac Aonghais ’ic Iain Mhòir (1889-1965)⁶⁹ of Cille Pheadair, who was recorded by Calum Iain Maclean in 1959 (TanD, SA1960.14 B4). MacKay gives the name of the prayer as “An t-Altachadh Leapa.” The same prayer was recorded from Agnes Currie, Nighean Sheonaidh Ghallacher (1897-1970) of South Lochboisdale, who served as Margaret Fay Shaw’s and John Lorne Campbell’s housekeeper.⁷⁰ She was recorded by Campbell in 1958 (TanD, CannaOT.3). A new transcript of both versions can be found in Appendix B on page 76, with the versions placed side-by-side, along with the published *Lòchran an Anna* version for comparison, as well as an English translation.

⁶⁹ See Tobar an Dualchais: (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/person/487>).

⁷⁰ See Tobar an Dualchais: (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/person/5662>).

Other than a few grammatical differences, such as his use of “Laighidh” rather than “Tha mise laighe” (l.1), and a variation on the last line (l.16) – “le teine sior an oillt” (“With the eternal fire of evil”) as opposed to “S o’n teine shìorruidh mhùchta” (“And from the everlasting suffocating fire”), Angus MacKay’s version of the prayer is identical to the version printed in *Lòchran an Anma*, which is in turn based on Carmichael’s version printed in *TGSG* 1. This is not surprising, as MacKay’s recitation of the “Altachadh Laighe” comes from the same interview in which he gives the version of “Beannachadh Buachailleachd” discussed in Chapter 3, admitting that he learned the latter prayer from *Lòchran an Anma*. Both prayers are part of a succession of hymns and prayers that MacKay contributes to the interview: the “Beannachadh Buachailleachd” is followed by “Smàlaidh Mise a-Nochd an t-Aingeal” (“I Smoor the Fire Tonight”) (TanD, SA1960.14.B3); the “Altachadh Laighe” (TanD, SA1960.14.B4); the “Altachadh Maidne” (“Morning Prayer”), (TanD, SA1960.14.B5); “Laoidh an Spioraid Naomh” (“Hymn of the Holy Spirit”) (TanD, SA1960.14.B6); and the “Laoidh Ainm Ìosa” (“Hymn of the Name of Jesus”) (TanD, SA1960.14.B7). All six of these items can be found in printed resources that would be accessible to people in South Uist in the twentieth century. “Smàlaidh Mise a-Nochd an t-Aingeal” appears in Fr Allan’s *Laoidhean Spioradail* (1893, 107), while the “Altachadh Maidne” appears in *Lòchran an Anma* as “An t-Altachadh Maduinneach” (1906, 25-26). “Laoidh an Spioraid Naomh” is found in *Iùl a’ Chrìostaidh* (1834, 76-77) as well as *Laoidhean Spioradail* (Ibid., 6-7) and “Laoidh Ainm Ìosa” also appears in *Laoidhean Spioradail* (Ibid., 3-5). It is significant to note that these prayers and hymns have oral and literary origins. While the “Altachadh Laidhe,” “Altachadh Maidne” and “Smàlaidh Mise a-Nochd an Aingeal” can be considered local folk prayers, “Laoidh an Spioraid Naoimh” and “Laoidh Ainm Ìosa” are credited to Bishop John Chisholm (1752-1814) in Campbell’s “Sources of the Gaelic Hymnal, 1893” (1956, 104), despite the three hymns being included in Colin Chisholm’s *TGSI* Vol. 11 article “Old Gaelic Songs” as traditionally sung in Strathglass (1884-1885, 232; 1956, 103). The combination of literary and oral origins for MacKay’s selection of prayers and hymns, as well as their availability in printed sources suggests that for twentieth-century South Uist Catholics such as MacKay, there was no distinction made between literary and oral origins when it came to reciting Gaelic prayers and hymns; informants were content to include both in their own repertoire. As well, it appears that it was common for items taken from printed sources to enter the oral tradition, whether they had an indigenous or literary origin.

Agnes Currie's version of the "Altachadh Laidhe" gives a further insight into how oral versions of Gaelic prayers can act like magnets, picking up verses from other sources, similar to how Carmichael characterized his 1884 version of the "Altachadh Laighe" earlier in the chapter. Currie's version is again almost identical to the version printed in *Lòchran an Anma*, perhaps indicating that she too had access to printed resources, or that she learned a version of the prayer similar to the printed version that had already entered oral tradition. Her access to a printed version would not be an unrealistic supposition, however, as she was a contemporary of Angus MacKay and was brought up in the same parish. Therefore, it could be expected that she may have been exposed to similar printed devotional resources. In addition, as the housekeeper of John Lorne Campbell and Margaret Fay Shaw, she would have had possible access to extensive printed materials.

After giving the *Lòchran an Anma* version of the "Altachadh Laighe," Currie adds an ending that is not found in any of the other printed or recorded versions of the prayer examined in this study. The author of this study has identified this conclusion, which is a translation of the Latin, "*Divinum auxilium maneat semper nobiscum / Fidelium animae, per misericordiam Dei, requiescant in pace*" ("May the divine assistance remain always with us / May the souls of the faithful, through the mercy of God, rest in peace").⁷¹ This is the same conclusion used at the end of a series of prayer said after the Rosary, according to the Gaelic catechism produced by Bishop John Cameron of the Diocese of Antigonish, Nova Scotia (1886, 48). The lines are also used in the 1844 version of *Iùl a' Chrìostaidh* to conclude the "Leadán Mhoire," the Litany of Mary (60). In universal Catholic tradition, these lines are used at the end of other Marian prayers such as the *Salve Regina* and the *Angelus*, as well as at the end of each of the Hours of the Divine Office⁷². The presence of these lines in Agnes Currie's version of the "Altachadh Laighe" represent a blurring of the distinction between "official" Catholic prayers, learned from written sources and clergy and absorbed through exposure to public liturgy, and the Gaelic folk prayers passed on intergenerationally in a domestic setting. In addition, a parallel can be drawn here

⁷¹ For a source for this translation, see: (<http://ccfather.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/latin-lesson-regina-caeli-and-nouns.html>)

⁷² For an example, see: (<https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/World/Article/TabId/718/ArtMID/13624/ArticleID/15732/Prayer-Petitions.aspx>)

between the oral prayer tradition and the oral storytelling tradition in the retention of what Lamb calls “clusters of fossilized language” (2013, 10). Just as verbal consistency over repeated tellings and even between related tellers can be observed in the Gaelic storytelling tradition, possibly connected to an aesthetic based on the literary origin of some tales (Ibid., 2-3), units of language connected with formalized liturgical prayer may become attached to prayers in the oral tradition, as demonstrated in Agnes Currie’s version of the “Altachadh Laighe.”

The persistence of the “Altachadh Laighe” in the written and oral record leads to the question of why the prayer remained popular during the time period covered in this study. Night prayer is a universal feature in the Catholic church, with monastics and clergy praying Compline before retiring and prayer manuals to the present day including some form of night prayer for lay people.⁷³ A connected reason for the prayer’s endurance may be explained by Niall Ó Ciosáin’s observation that what is highlighted in local oral tradition is what already conforms to the community’s expectations and remains “tellable” (2001, 107). Although Ó Ciosáin is concerned with narrative folklore, the concept is easily applied to Gaelic folk prayers like the “Altachadh Laighe.” Its use as a night prayer conforms to the Catholic Church’s pre-existing practice, and the prayer itself is relatively short and rhythmic, which makes it easily remembered and recited.

The “Altachadh Laighe” is also an example of a prayer imbued with significance for the reciter. An insight into the meaning and function of the “Altachadh Laighe” and other prayers said at particular times of the day by Catholic Gaels is found in a 1976 interview conducted by Donald Archie MacDonald of the School of Scottish Studies with Annie MacKinnon of Barra (TanD, SA1976.174.A1-A7).⁷⁴ MacKinnon recites her version of the “Altachadh Laighe” for MacDonald, who comments, “S e ùrnaigh bhrèagha a tha sin.” (“That’s a lovely prayer.”) MacKinnon agrees:

⁷³ An example of a modern source for night prayer intended for Catholic laypeople can be found in the prayer manual and missalette, *Magnificat*, an American-based monthly publication (<http://us.magnificat.net/>).

⁷⁴ As stated in Chapter 2, Barra is culturally and geographically very close to South Uist, and is also a Catholic island. Although a Barra native, Anne MacKinnon had South Uist connections through her grandfather, a Kildonan Morrison known as “Eòghann Dhòmhnail Mhòir Uibhistich” (<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/82218/1>).

'S e. Tha an ùrnaigh tha siud, ma chuireas duine ùidh innte, gu bheil cuideachadh mòr innte. Nuair nach eil thu a' faireachdainn ro mhath. A' dol a chadal.

Yes. That prayer, if someone takes an interest in it, it's a great help. When you're not feeling too well. Going to sleep.

MacKinnon's comment here indicates the some of the functions the "Altachadh Laighe" has for her. The prayer situates the reciter in the presence of God, the angels, and the saints in a concrete, physical way, seen in lines such as "Tha mise laighe a-nochd / Le Moire is le Mac" -- "(I lie down tonight / with Mary and her Son)" and "Crois nan naomh aingeal taiream sìos / O mhullach mo chinn gu iochdar mo bhuinn" -- "(Cross of the holy angels across me and down / from the top of my head to the soles of my feet)" (Ibid.). She mentions that the reciter has to take "interest" in the prayer, perhaps suggesting that the prayer is only effective or meaningful if it is said with intent and with faith. MacKinnon also sees the recital of the prayer as an aid to one's well-being. She elaborates on this approach earlier in the same interview:

AMK: Mura biodh tu a' faireachdainn ro mhath, no nam biodh dragh inntinn ort, chanadh tu riut fhèin, "Uell, cha bhi an gnothach cho dona idir a-màireach. Bha na seann daoine ag ràdh sin riamh. 'S ma dh'fhaodte gum biodh iad gu math fallain cuideachd, ged nach biodh mòran aca...

If you weren't feeling too well, or if your mind were troubled, you would say to yourself, "Well, the thing won't be so bad at all tomorrow." The old people were always like that. And it may be that they were very healthy as well, although they didn't have much...

DAM: Ach bha na seann daoine na bu toilichte nan dòigh, na tha na daoine a th' ann an-diugh. *And the old people were happier in their way than people today.*

AMK: Uell, bha na seann daoine, bha an creideamh cho daingeann annta. Bha e annta. *Well, the old people, the faith was so strong in them. It was in them.*

In this excerpt, MacKinnon equates the faith-filled worldview of the older generation as contributing to their mental and physical well-being, as their faith was a source of optimism for them. For her, this world-view of the older generation is intimately connected with the recitation of prayers for at different times of the day and in different situations, such as the “Altachadh Laighe” and other similar prayers. In the same interview, she states:

Faodadh tu ùrnaigh a ghabhail do rud sam bith. Nuair a thig thu a-mach ris a’ ghealaich, no sgath den t-seòrsa sin. ’S nuair a choimheadas tu suas air a’ fhlatas, ’s a chì thu a’ ghealach, ’s a chanas tu riut fhèin, “A Dhia, soillsich do sholas oirnn.” Rud sam bith ann mar sin. O, bha sin aig na seann daoine air fad. A h-uile gin aca.

You can say a prayer for anything. When you come out into the moonlight, or anything like that. When you look up to the heavens, and you see the moon, and you say to yourself, “O God, shine your light on us.” Anything like that. O, all of the old people had that. All of them.

MacKinnon’s mention of the short prayer connected with the moon is significant, as thirteen separate prayers connected to the appearance of the new moon are included in the third volume of *Carmina Gadelica* (1940, 275-305). It seems reasonable to conclude that this was a common genre of prayer in parts of the nineteenth-century Gàidhealtachd and that MacKinnon’s prayer is a remnant of this tradition. MacKinnon’s short prayer “A Dhia, soillsich do sholas oirnn” echoes a line in the first verse of the previously mentioned “Laoidh an Spioraid Naoimh,” a hymn addressed to the Holy Spirit, “Leig soillsein dhe d’ sholus oirnn” (“Shine the brightness of your light on us”) (op. cit.). Again, an example of the interplay between literary and oral sources of prayer can be seen here.

MacDonald’s interview with MacKinnon is also valuable as it gives information on the context in which prayers such as the “Altachadh Laighe” were said. Before she recites the “Altachadh Laighe,” she explains:

Nuair a tha thu a’ dol a chadal, uell, mar a tha e na chleachadh againne, nuair a chuireas tu dhìot d’ aodach, tha thu a’ dèanamh do choisricheadh. Tha thu an uair sin a’ dol a-staigh dhan leabaidh. ’S tha thu ag ràdh gu socair, sàmhach riut fhèin – cha ruig thu leas èigheachd sam bith a dhèanamh – tha thu a’ gabhail na h-ùrnaigh tha sin...

When you go to sleep, well, it was our habit, when you take off your clothes, you bless yourself. You then get into bed. And you say quietly to yourself – you don't have to do any shouting about it – you then say that prayer...

This account matches Alexander Carmichael's description in *Carmina Gadelica*, Vol. 1 of the Hebridean people at prayer: "They generally retire to a closet, to an outhouse, to the lee of a knoll, or to the shelter of a dell, where they may not be seen nor heard of men" (1900, 2-3). From these two accounts, it appears that domestic prayers such as the "Altachadh Laighe" were said privately and individually. However, Annie MacKinnon qualifies this when questioned by MacDonald about a prayer used when lighting a lamp:

DAM: Agus a-rithist, cha ruigeadh iad a leas seo a ràdh a-mach...

And again, you don't have to say this out loud...

AMK: Cha ruigeadh tu leas sin a ràdh a-mach, mura biodh an teaghlach timcheall ort. Nuair a bhiodh tu airson 's gun ionnsaichheadh iadsan bhuaat. Tha ùrnaighean ann airson a h-uile sgàth.

You don't have to say that out loud, unless the family is around you. When you want them to learn it from you. There are prayers for everything.

This insight into the transmission process of prayers within families in a domestic setting indicates that the way in which prayers were said was not completely fixed, but adaptable to the functions for which they were being used in a particular situation. A prayer like the "Altachadh Laighe" may be said to provide private spiritual comfort, as well as a sense of physical well-being, but a domestic prayer could also serve as a vehicle through which a faith-based worldview and identity is passed on to one's children. In this way, the prayer has the same functions as Margaret Read MacDonald ascribes to stories in folklore that "pass on specific information the group considers important" and that socialize members of the group, in this case, the younger generation of a family (2005, 413).

Conclusion

An exploration of the “Altachadh Laighe” in its printed and oral iterations shines a light on many of the themes that surround the oral prayer tradition in South Uist, and in particular, how orally transmitted domestic prayers are influenced by literary sources and the official, public prayers of the Catholic Church. An insight into the functions of the domestic folk prayers such as the “Altachadh Laighe” for reciters is also gained by the consideration of archival interview material.

Chapter 1 of this study provided the historical context of the modern folk prayer tradition in South Uist and Chapter 2 showed how the activities of the collectors of folk prayers in South Uist shaped the extant corpus of these prayers. Chapter 3 examined the symbiotic relationship between literary and oral versions of these prayers, while Chapter 4 took a close look at the “Altachadh Laighe” as an example of a prayer where many of the factors explored in the previous chapter came into play. This study has presented a picture of the folk prayer tradition of South Uist from 1880 and 1960 as containing individual prayers, each with its own layers of meaning that pertain to the history of South Uist and of the Catholic Gàidhealtachd. It has been proven that folk prayer tradition in South Uist is not one that is fixed and unchanging, but one that was influenced by both the reciters of the prayers, their collectors, and literary sources. These prayers represent the everyday faith of the Catholic Gaels of South Uist, but also touch upon persecution and resistance in the history of the Catholic faith in Scotland, transmission through close family and community bonds, the work of scholars and priests during the Celtic Revival period of Scottish history, and the interplay between literary and oral facets of Gaelic culture in the modern Gàidhealtachd. This study has shown that the Gaelic folk prayer tradition of South Uist does not consist of a corpus of fixed, unchanging prayers which are unaffected by outside influences, but of oral prayers that are in a dynamic relationship with the surrounding culture and in particular with the printed word. Furthermore, the reciter and the collector both play an important role in the shaping of this tradition and of the functions that these prayers carry. Future research will build on these findings and provide additional insights into the folk prayer tradition of the modern Catholic Gàidhealtachd. Through the exploration of the dynamic, interconnected relationship of oral and printed versions of Catholic folk prayers in South Uist,

this study has covered ground previously unexplored by modern Gaelic scholarship, and has contributed to the corpus of research concerning the interplay between literacy and orality in Gaelic culture. It is hoped that further exploration building on this study will continue to shed light on this under-researched area.

Appendix A: Published Versions of “An t-Altachadh Laighe”

| Carmichael, 1884: <i>Napier Report</i> (AC 1A) | Chisholm, 1884-1885: <i>TGSI 11</i> (CC1) | MacKenzie, 1891-1892: <i>TGSI 18</i> (WMK 1A) | Fr Allan, 1893: <i>Laoidhean Spioradail</i> (AMD 1) | Carmichael, 1900 (1928): <i>Carmina Gadelica</i> (AC 3) | Erskine of Marr / Carmichael, 1906: <i>Lòchran an Anma</i> (AC 2B) |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>I.</p> <p>1 Tha mise laidhith noc, le Moire 's le' Mac, 2 Le Mathair mo Rìgh, tha ga-m' dhion o gach lochd; 3 Cha laidh mi leis an olc, cha laidh an t-olc leam, 4 Ach la' idh mi le Dia, 'us la' idh Dia leam.</p> <p>II.</p> <p>5 Lamh dheas De fo m' cheann, 6 Soillse an Spioraid os mo chionn; 7 Crois nan naogh aingeal tharam sìos, 8 O mhullach mo chinn gu iocar mo bhonn.</p> <p>III.</p> <p>9 10 11 Crois Mhoire 's Mhicheil, ma-rium ann an sìth, 12 M' anam a bhi 'm fhirinn, gu'n mhirum am chom.</p> <p>IV.</p> <p>13 O Ios gu'n lochd, a cheusadh goirt. 14 Fo bhinn nan olc a sgiursadh Thu; 15 A liuthad lochd a rinn mo chorp, 16 Nach faod mi nochd a chunntachadh</p> <p>V.</p> <p>17 A Rìgh na fola firinnich, 18 Na dibir mi o d' mhuinntireas; 19 Na tasgair orm mo mhi-cheartas; 20 Na di-chuimhnuich ad' chunntadh mi</p> <p>VI.</p> <p>21 Guidheam Peadair, guidheam Paul, 22 Guidheam Moir Oigh agus a Mac, 23 Guidheam an da ostal deug, 24 Gu'n mise dhol eug a noc.</p> <p>VII.</p> <p>25 A Dhia agus a Mhoire na glorach, 26 Ios a Mhic na h-Oighe cubhraidh, 27 Cumaidh sinne o na piantaidh; 28a { 'S o'n teine dhorcha dhuinte. 28b { 'S o'n teine shiorraidh mhuchta.</p> <p>VIII.</p> <p>29 30 31 M' anam aig fear shorchar na frithe 32 Micheil Geal an codhail mo anama.</p> | <p>1 Laidhidh mis' a nochd 2 Le Moire, 's le' Mac; 3 Mathair mo Rìgh 4 Ga 'm dhion bho'n olc. 5 Laidhidh mi le Dia, 6 'S laidhidh Dia leam: 7 Cha laidh mi leis an olc, 8 Cha laidh an t-olc leam. 9 Eiridh mi le Dia 10 Ma 's ceadaich le Dia leigeil leam. 11 Deas-lamh Dhia, 12 A Chriosta, gun robh leam. 13 Bha throidhean mo bhuinn 14 Gu mullach mo chinn 15 Guidhim Peadar, guidhim Pol, 16 Guidhim Moire oigh agus a Mac, 17 Guidhim air an da Ostal deug 18 Gun mise dhol eug a nochd. 19 A Chriosta chumhachdaich na gloire 20 A Mhic na h-Oighe 's gloine cursa 21 Seachainn sinn bho thigh nam pian, 22 Tha gu h-iosal, dorcha, duinte. 23 Fhad 's a bhios a' cholluinn na cadal 24 Biodh an t-anam air bharraidh na firinn 25 An co-chomunn nan Naomh. <i>Amen.</i></p> | <p>1 Laidhidh mi nochd 2 Le Moire 's le 'Mac; 3 'S le Brighde fo brat 4 Le Domhnach nam feart 5 Le Mathair mo Rìgh 6 Ga m' dhion bho gach lot; 7 Cha laidh mi leis an olc; 8 Cha laidh an t-olc leam; 9 Eiridh mi le Dia 10 Ma 's ceadaich le Dia leigeil leam, 11 Deas-làmh Dhia 12 Is Chriosta gun robh leam; 13 Crois nan Naomh 's nan Aingeal leam, 14 Bho mhullach mo chin 15 Gu traighean mo bhuinn 16 A chionn Dia agus Moire 17 A chuideachadh leam; 18 A Rìgh, agus, a Mhoire ghloirmhor, 19 A Mhic na h-Oighe cubhraidh, 20 Saoir sinn bho phiantainean 21 'S bho thigh iosal dorcha duinte. 22 Dion ann a's as ar colunn 23 Ar n-anama bochda 24 A tha air fios chor-oisinn na firinn. 25 Guideam Peadar, guidheam Pól, 26 Guideam Moire Oigh 's a Mac, 27 Guideam an da Ostal deug 28 Gu'n mi dhol eug gun 'ur leas. 29 M'anam a bhi air do laimh dheis a Thighearna; 30 Bho 'n 's Tu a cheannaich e; 31 Micheil Naomh a bhi 'n comhail m'anama 32 Nise agus aig uair mo bhais. <i>Amen.</i></p> | <p>1 Laidhidh mis' a nochd 2 Le Moire, le Mac 3 Mâthair mo Rìgh 4 Gam dhion bhon olc 5 Laidhidh mi le Dia, 6 Laidhidh Dia leam: 7 Cha laidh mi leis an olc, 8 Cha laidh an t-olc leam 9 Eiridh mi le Dia, 10 Ma 's ceadaich le Dia leigeil leam. 11 Deas-làmh Dhia 12 Is Chriosta gun robh leam, 13 Is crois nan naoi Aingeal fionn 14 Bho thraidhean mo bhonn 15 Gu mullach mo chinn 16 Guidheam Peadair, guidheam Pòl, 17 Guidheam Moire Oigh 's a Mac, 18 Guidheam an dà Ostal deug 19 Gun mise 'dhol eug a nochd. 20 A Chriosta chumhachdach na glòire 21 A Mhic na h-Oighe 'tha glan is cubhraidh 22 Seachainn sinn bho thigh nam pian, 23 'Tha gu h-iosal, dorcha, dùinte. 24 Na reacham an eucoir nan geasach; 25 'S fhad 's a bhios a choluinn 's a chadal chaomh 26 Biodh an t-anam air bharraidh na firinn' 27 'An co-chomunn nan Naomh. <i>Amen.</i></p> | <p>1 LAIGHIM sìos an nochd, 2 Le Moire mhin is le Mac, 3 Le Mathair mo Rìgh, 4 Tha da m' dhion o gach lochd.</p> <p>5 Cha laigh mi leis an olc, 6 Cha laigh an t' olc liom, 7 Ach laighidh mi le Dia, 8 Is laighidh Dia liom.</p> <p>9 Dia agus Moire agus Micheal caon, 10 Agus crois nan naodh aingeal fionn 11 Da m' dhion mar Thri is mar Aon, 12 Bho chlar m' aodainn gu faobhar mo bhuinn.</p> <p>13 Guidheam Peadail, guidheam Pol, 14 Guidheam Moir Oigh, guidheam am Mac, 15 Guidheam an da Ostal dochaidh deug 16 Mo ghleidheadh bho bheud 's bho lochd; 17 O gun mi a dhol eug a nochd, 18 Gun mi a dhol eug a nochd!</p> <p>19 A Dhia, agus a Mhoire na glorach, 20 Ios, a Mhic na h-Oighe cubhraidh, 21 Siantaidh sinn bho phiantaidh siorruidh, 22 'S bho theine diantaidh dubhraidh, 23 Sinn bho phiantaidh siorruidh, 24 'S bho theine diantaidh dubhraidh.</p> | <p>1 Tha mise 'laighe an nochd le Moire 's le 'Mac, 2 Le Mâthair mo Rìgh, 'tha 'gam dhion o gach lochd; 3 Cha laigh mi leis an olc, cha laigh an t-olc leam 4 Ach laighidh mi le Dia, is laighidh Dia leam. 5 Làimh dheas Dè fo mo cheann 6 Soillse an Spioraid os mo cheann 7 Crois nan naoidh Aingeal tharam sìos 8 O mhullach mo cheann gu iochdar mo bhonn. 9 Guidheam Peadar, guidheam Pòl 10 Guidheam Moir' Oigh, agus a Mac 11 Guidheam an dà Ostal deug 12 Gun mise dhol eug an nochd. 13 A Dhia, agus a Mhoire na glòrach, 14 Ios' a Mhic na h-Oighe cubhraidh 15 Cùmaidh sinne o na piantaidh, 16 'S o'n teine shiorruidh mhùchta.</p> |

Appendix B: Oral Versions of “An t-Altachadh Laighe”

| <i>Lòchran an Anna</i> version, 1906 (AC 2B) Translation ⁷⁵ | <i>Lòchran an Anna</i> version, 1906, 26-27 (AC 2B) | Angus MacKay version, 1959 | Agnes Currie Version, 1958 |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>1 I lie down tonight with Mary and with her Son, 2 With the Mother of my King, who shields me from all harm ; 3 I will not lie down with evil, nor will evil lie down with me 4 But I will lie down with God, and God will lie down with me. 5 The right hand of God under my head 6 The light of the Holy Spirit above my head 7 The cross of the nine angels across me 8 From the top of my head to the soles of my feet. 9 I implore Peter, I implore Paul 10 I implore the Virgin Mary and her Son 11 I implore the twelve apostles 12 That I may not die tonight. 13 O God, and Mary of glory, 14 O Jesus, Son of the fragrant Virgin 15 Keep us from the pains, 16 And from the everlasting suffocating fire.</p> | <p>1 Tha mise 'laighe an nochd le Moire 's le 'Mac, 2 Le Màthair mo Rìgh, 'tha 'gam dhìon o gach lochd; 3 Cha laigh mi leis an olc, cha laigh an t-olc leam 4 Ach laighidh mi le Dia, is laighidh Dia leam. 5 Làimh dheas Dè fo mo cheann 6 Soillse an Spioraid os mo cheann 7 Crois nan naoidh Aingeal tharam sìos 8 O mhullach mo cheann gu iochdar mo bhonn. 9 Guidheam Peadar, guidheam Pòl 10 Guidheam Moir' Oigh, agus a Mac 11 Guidheam an dà Ostal deug 12 Gun mise dhol eug an nochd. 13 A Dhia, agus a Mhoire na glòrach, 14 Ios' a Mhic na h-Oighe cùbhraidh 15 Cùmaibh sinne o na piantuibh, 16 'S o'n teine shiorraidh mhùchta.</p> | <p>1 Laighidh mise a-nochd le Moire le Mac 2 Le Màthair mo Rìgh, gam dìon o gach olc. 3 Cha laigh mi leis an olc, is cha laigh an t-olc leam. 4 Ach laighidh mi le Dia, is laighidh Dia leam. 5 Làimh dheas Dhè fom cheann 6 Solas an Spiorad Naoimh os mo cheann. 7 Crois nan naomh aingeal thaiream sìos 8 O mhullach mo chinn gu iochdar mo bhonn. 9 Guidheam Peadar, guidheam Pòl 10 Guidheam Moire Òig agus a Mac 11 Guidheam an dà ostal deug 12 Gun mise dhol eug a-nochd. 13 A Dhia, agus a Mhoire na glòrach 14 Ìosa a mhic na h-Òighe cùbhraidh 15 Cum sinn bho na piantan 16 Agus le teine sìor an oillt. Amen.</p> | <p>1 Laighidh mise a-nochd le Moire 's le Mac 2 Le Màthair mo Rìgh, gam dhìon o gach h-olc. 3 Laighidh mise a-nochd le Dia, is laighidh Dia leam. 4 Cha laigh mi leis an olc, cha laigh an t-olc leam. 5 Làmh dheas Dhè fo mo cheann 6 Solas an Spiorad os mo chionn. 7 Crois nan naomh aingeal orm sìos 8 O mhullach mo chinn gu troighean mo bhonn. 9 Guidheam Peadar, guidheam Pòl 10 Guidheam Moire Òig 's a Mac 11 Guidheam an dà ostal dheug 12 Gun mise dhol eug a-nochd. 13 A Dhia, agus a Mhoire na tròcair 14 Ìosa a mhic na h-Òigh chùbhraidh 15 Cumaibh mise bho na piantan 16 Agus o teine shiorraidh mhùchte 17 Còmhnaidh Dhè gun robh daonnan maille rinn 18 Agus fois shiorraidh aig anamman nam marbh- cruiteach 19 Tro iochd Dhè. Amen.</p> |

⁷⁵ This translation is based on Carmichael's which appeared with his version of the prayer in *TGSG* 1 (1887-91, 36-3). However, some amendments have been made in order to remove archaisms and adhere more closely to the original Gaelic.

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