Carmina Gadelica
Reading a Spiritual Classic

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Quotes from *Carmina Gadelica* are numbered according to the 1992/4/7 Floris Books edition.

Reading a Spiritual Classic - *Carmina Gadelica*

Carmina Gadelica - literally *Gaelic Songs* - is a gathering of hymns and incantations originally collected in six volumes by Alexander Carmichael[i] in the late 1800s around the highlands and islands of Scotland. A Civil servant, working for the Excise Service, Carmichael started his collection of the oral tradition of poetry and songs 'of our dear lovable people'[1], including prayers, charms, rituals, omens & auguries; fearing that without being recorded, many of the '*genii* of the Highlands are disappearing before the spirit of modernism, as the Red Indian, once bold and courageous, disappears before the white man'[2]. It is as though the spark of first coming across the literature, that 'first *naïveté*'[3] of initial discovery and interest, fired a life-long quest for him.

The first two volumes of the collection, edited with his notes and translations, printed with the Gaelic parallel to the English, were published in 1900, with a further four volumes being published by his daughter and grandson, and others, after his death. The material was collected mainly from Roman Catholics in the islands, but Carmichael records that these prayers were equally common among the Protestants, and on the mainland (or at least until the Evangelical Movement c.1800 onwards).[4]

With the current resurgence of interest in all things Celtic (historically a rather cyclical affair[5]), *Carmina Gadelica* has become a valuable source document for writers, particularly of the recent anthologies of Celtic Christian Spirituality - David

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[1] Quoted by MacInnes, J, in Preface to *Carmina Gadelica*, 1992, p9
[2] Carmichael, Introduction to the original edition, 1992, p30
[3] Paul Ricoeur, quoted by Wright, W, 1992, pp 37,38
[4] De Waal, E, 1988, p4; Carmichael, 1992, p17

Adam, Ian Bradley, Oliver Davies & Fiona Bowie, Esther de Waal, Brendan O'Malley, Ray Simpson, and Robert van de Weyer among others.

Gathering The Material

Contrary to our own times where a *ceilidh* is a musical dancing reverie, Carmichael reports that 'The "*ceilidh*" is a literary entertainment where stories and tales, poems and ballads, are rehearsed and recited, and songs are sung, conundrums are put, proverbs are quoted, and many other literary matters are discussed. This institution is admirably adapted to cultivate the heads and to warm the hearts of an intelligent, generous people.'[6] But it was clearly not going to last. 'Gaelic oral literature has been disappearing during the last three centuries. It is now becoming meagre in quantity, inferior in quality, and greater isolated.'[7] In contrast with the Irish situation, where many texts were recorded in manuscript and already in written form, most of the Scottish traditional songs were handed down simply in the vocal oral tradition.[8] (It could also be noted that although Carmichael collected primarily religious material, he could well, as Douglas Hyde[ii] had in Ireland, have recorded other oral material including love songs, drinking songs, tales of heroic battles and inter-clan rivalries, had these been of interest.[9])

Part of the reason for this 'meagre quantity, inferior quality' Carmichael lays at the feet of the Reformation, which was much less tolerant of the beliefs and cults that the Celtic and Latin churches had more easily tolerated and assimilated. He quotes examples of teachers and ministers who actively discouraged he use of Gaelic, made

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[5] This is the main thesis in Bradley 1999, pviii
[6] Carmichael, 1992, p21
[7] Carmichael, 1992, p24
[8] Davies & Bowie, 1995, p18

them break and burn their pipes and fiddles, and considered 'the people of Lewis were little better than pagans until the Reformation.' (He wryly notes that if that was the case then, they had clearly since atoned, being the most rigid Christians in the British Isles![10]) The parishioners often embraced this attitude too.[iii]

He clearly felt that these were traditions being lost to a false piety - graphically illustrated by the story of an old fiddler from the Isle of Eigg, denounced from the pulpit, who eventually gave his violin (evidently a famed instrument of the school of Stradivarius) to a passing peddler, with faltering voice, and falling tear, and was never seen to smile again.

Carmichael is conscious of not being able to *record* much in terms of the music: 'The music of the hymns had a distinct individuality, in some respects resembling and in many respects differing from the old Gregorian chants of the Church. I greatly regret that I was not able to record this peculiar and beautiful music, probably the music of the old Celtic Church.'[11] Within a very few years of writing this, Percy Grainger[iv] (1882-1961) was indeed *recording* English Country and Folk music, both as notation and re-worked within his own compositions, and also with the aid of the early sound recording devices available at the beginning of the 20th Century.

Gathering the material was not always easy - and not just geographically. Individuals were in fear of telling the ancient stories to outsiders; or when doing so of being afraid that others overhear the tale, or the telling.[v] Friend and admirer, Rev

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[9] Davies & Bowie, 1995, p239
[10] Carmichael, 1992, p25
[11] Carmichael, 1992, p29

Dr Kenneth MacLeod, recorded in *Carmina IV* an appreciation of what Carmichael achieved, saying:

> *[Others]* could get the heroic tales and ballads, the things which were recited in public at the *ceilidh*; only Alexander Carmichael could have got the hymns and the incantations, the things which were said when the door was closed and the lights were out … many curious rites, embodied in unusual language … were revealed to him under a strict pledge of secrecy.[12]

The skill Carmichael demonstrated in gently milking the best of material from so many individuals was due in no small part to his being able to convince them of his own genuine deep personal interest, not simply to use them as exhibits for some distant commercial or other purpose. 'We thought of him rather as one who saw with our eyes, who felt with our heart, and who reproduced our past because he loved it himself and was proud of it.'[13]

Carmichael knew that he was not alone in making such collections - indeed he quotes from the French historian of religion, Ernest Rénan's *Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Studies,* 1854; Carmichael also contributed to a number of other collections and journals.[vi]

Carmichael was also conscious of only being able to collect such a small part of the available material - he notes that Hector Macleod of South Uist, and Roderick Macneil of Barra 'repeated stories and poems, tales and ballads, that would have filled many books. Yet neither of them told more than a small part of what they knew.'[14] Aware of the rate they were vanishing, he pleads 'Let an attempt be made even yet to preserve their memories ere they disappear for ever'[15]; and 'I have three

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[12] Quoted by MacInnes, 1992, p9, 10
[13] Recorded by Rev Dr Kenneth Macleod, *Carmina* iv, xxix; quoted in De Waal, 1988, p4
[14] Carmichael, 1992, p23
[15] Carmichael, 1992, p30

regrets - that I had not been earlier collecting, that I have not been more diligent in collecting, and that I am not better qualified to treat what I have collected.'[16] This rather discursive exploration of what the material was, and the context of where it came from, is quite important in terms of fully grasping its purpose, and our understanding of the quality of its claim to being a spiritual classic.

What Did Carmichael Think He Was Collecting?

He saw the roots of the material he was perhaps most interested in, as being from the old Celtic Church[17]. The religious, spiritual side, and its integration into life was his personal driving force, and he waxes lyrical in describing it:

> Perhaps no people had a fuller ritual of song and story, of secular rite and religious ceremony than the Highlanders. Mirth and music, song and dance, tale and poem, pervade their lives, as electricity pervades the air. Religion, pagan or Christian, or both combined, permeate everything - blending and shading into one another like the iridescent colours of the rainbow. The people were sympathetic and synthetic, unable and careless to know where secular began and the religious ended - an admirable union of elements in life for those who have lived is so truly and intensely as the Celtic races everywhere have done, and non more truly and intensely then the ill-understood and so-called illiterate Highlanders of Scotland.[18]

He had a high regard for the people and their oral literature. The first two volumes of the material contained the hymns charms and prayers, demonstrating these were his areas of greatest concern and interest.[19]

The concept that the Celts were instinctively a religious people is an idea that Carmichael would have inferred, or rather had his own thinking underlined, by elements of Rénan's book - 'that little race (the Celts) was naturally Christian'. This sense of the golden age of Celtic Christianity is strong:

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[16] Carmichael, 1992, p32
[17] Carmichael, 1992, p29
[18] Carmichael, 1992, p29

> When we seek to determine the precise moment in the history of the Celtic Races at which we ought to try to place ourselves in order to appreciate their genius in its entirity *(sic)*, we find ourselves led back to the sixth century ... Few forms of Christianity have offered an ideal of Christian perfection so pure as the Celtic Church of the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries'. [20]

Sheldrake notes that Carmichael similarly 'thought rather romantically that the origin of the material lay centuries back in the monastic settlements of Derry or Iona,[21]. Though happy to acknowledge links back as far as the first half of the seventeenth century, Sheldrake does not find the evidence to make direct connections further back with the old monastic traditions, and 'the ascetic hermit cells of the ninth century'.

Is The Material 'Christian'?

Not all compilers of Christian anthologies find it easy to deal with some of the evidently pre-Christian/pagan material in *Carmina*. Individuals coming from a more conservative Christian perspective struggle with terms such as *incantations* and *charms*, and are suspicious of talk of fairies. Ellis & Seaton hardly dare mention *Carmina*. Mitton says that in his view some of the poems and chants *are* fairly superstitious, and a few appear occult. He cautions, however, of too swiftly applying English suburban evangelical rationalistic presuppositions on to the minds and hearts of the inhabitants of the Western Isles, and he advocates rather 'a humble sense of exploration, rather than the censor's pen'[22].

De Waal explores the theme a little further, quoting the presence of God in the gifts of nature:

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[19] MacInnes, 1992, p7
[20] Rénan, quoted in Bradley, 1999, p120
[21] Sheldrake, 1995, p77
[22] Mitton, 1995, p173

There is no plant in the ground
But it is full of His virtue,
There is no form in the strand
But it is full of His blessing…

There is no bird on the wing,
There is no star in the sky,
There is nothing beneath the sun
But proclaims His goodness… *(*part of *Carmina* 14*)*

'This is no sentimental or romantic pantheism. It is a recognition that everything good comes from God, to be enjoyed for itself and as a reflection of its creator and giver' and 'That simple phrase of a prayer "Bless the handling of my hands" expresses a desire to consecrate each thing they did to God.' [23] For De Waal the material demonstrates the deep link between the creation and the Creator, reclaiming for the Christian faith much that, with false piety, had been lost through its supposed pagan origin.

Is Carmichael's Methodology And Handling Of Material 'Sound'?

Indeed, the whole area of the accuracy of Carmichael's material, method of collection, and style of editing, has long been in contention. The reality of history has sometimes 'been obscured by Celtic mists and golden sunsets' as Sheldrake puts it[24], where occasionally with good intentions, accurate, true collecting has been sacrificed on the altar of 'reclaiming' an over-romanticised memory, particularly as there was a real fear this could be the final Celtic Twilight[25].

Yet the context and quality of the material has a strong bearing on its function as a spiritual classic. Understanding the historical context of the original text, and

[23] De Waal, 1988, pref.p8
[24] Sheldrake, 1995, p3
[25] MacInnes, 1992, p11

that of our own - what Sheldrake calls the meeting of two horizons[26] - is what clarifies the interpretation of the work.

Even before his death, and certainly soon afterwards, his friend Rev Dr Kenneth Macleod was defending the accusation that Carmichael had 'idealised' some of the 'beautiful material he had collected'[27]. Calum Maclean, reviewing Volume V of *Carmina* in 1955, forgave Carmichael much on the basis that he 'was in a sense more a *littérateur* than a student of folk tradition'[28]. Not so Hamish Robertson in 1976. He accused the collector-editor of consistent, large-scale fabrication of material. "Incomplete" or "inferior" incantations were simply remade…"words are substituted, lines shortened or lengthened, new lines appear, verses are switched round and what was once a poem-piece…can swell to two or three in *Carmina*"[29].

However, not even all experts of Gaelic folklore would agree with Robertson's hostile stance, and MacInnes quotes a critical but much more sympathetic response from Dr John Lorne Campbell. He makes points about both editorial method, and motivation, noting his opinion that Carmichael's motives were entirely honourable. He quotes Carmichael's openness about his methodology, sometimes trying to dovetail together ten or twelve versions of the one song. To list them all individually would be 'ruinous', giving reason and purpose to collate them and give a single product. Campbell claims this was no more than normal editorial practice at the time. He concludes that Carmichael's work in the first three volumes of *Carmina* should

[26] Sheldrake, 1992, p175
[27] MacInnes, 1992, p10
[28] Maclaren, quoted by MacInnes, 1992, p11
[29] Robertson, quoted by MacInnes, 1992, p12

be taken more as 'literary rather than literal representations of the material'.[30] Wright also points out that working from translations rather than the original, need not be a barrier to developing a critical consciousness to the material.[31]

MacInnes, in his helpful introduction to the combined edition of *Carmina*, concludes that though there remain unanswered questions, it is clear that *Carmina* is *not* a 'monumental exercise in literary fabrication'; *nor* is it a literal transcript of ancient poems and spells reproduced in exact form. The core of the material remains a treasure-trove of Scottish Gaelic oral literature. He finally sides with Ronald Black "*Carmina Gadelica* is by any standards a treasure house … a marvellous and unrepeatable achievement. There will never be another *Carmina Gadelica*"[32].

Themes in Carmina Gadelica

The success of a classic has a lot to do with its literary genre. Sheldrake lists some of the characteristics that would probably be included: 'they avoid technical language, provide practical advice (especially for help) and effectively translate Christian ideas into life-style so that the connection between theory and practice are made explicit.'[33] That is particularly so for the material in the Celtic oral tradition.

Space precludes listing many examples, but I have included a number of examples in the Appendix[vii] that point in the direction of key themes or genres. There are themes of blessings involved in the things to be done at various times of the day[viii]; or labour with various animals[ix], or the countryside and sea[x]. For myself, as for many others, the emphasis on the Trinity is powerful and influential. 'Perhaps it

[30] Campbell quoted by MacInnes, 1992, p12,13
[31] Wright, 1992, p41
[32] Black quoted by MacInnes, 1992, p18

is in their seeing God as Trinity that this warmth and sense of constant presence is most forcibly expressed' says de Waal.[34] [xi]

Measuring A Spiritual Classic

What might constitute a classic text? 'Most of us can recall,' says Tracey, 'for example, recalling a novel, poem or essay that had great impact on our lives. Years later we re-read it. If it is a candidate for classic status, it will still have that power.'[35] This is a theme that is picked out by a number of commentators. Another effect that a classic should have, says Wright, is that it should provoke strong reactions to the material. 'I felt myself to be directly addressed by the author…the book was a numinous and longed for companion, teasing me deeper into some unfolding part of myself that I knew to be connected with God.' [36] De Waal also talks about 'a moment of true conversion' when the high crosses at Monasterboice, the written material, and her own experience all met in a powerful new way. 'I got no further than the early pages *(of a book by Etta Gullick)* when I was arrested by a quotation that she used' *(including a blessing of fire at the start of the day)*. [37]

What is going on as one reaches into a classic? The power of *Carmina* over the years to touch and to move people is evident by the way it is currently so often quoted and anthologised, and delved into as a pattern or manual for life, even in the 21st century. Tracey sheds some light by saying 'What we mean in naming certain texts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons "classics" is that here we recognize nothing less than the disclosure of a reality we cannot but name

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[33] Sheldrake, 1992, p173
[34] de Waal, 1988, p10, 11
[35] Tracey, 1981, p116
[36] Wright, 1992, p36

truth…some disclosure of reality in a moment that must be called one of "recognition" which surprises, provokes, challenges, shocks and eventually transforms us…'[38]

Transformation of the individual coming to contact with the material is a pattern that is recognised by Sheldrake too: 'Undoubtedly classics have a capacity to surprise and challenge…to bring us into transforming contact with what is enduring and essential in our religious tradition.'[39]

Not all texts labelled as classics *are* necessarily so for some people, either. For some individuals, the received wisdom about a 'classic' does nothing to move them at all. Perhaps they have been invited to look at *The Cloud of Unknowing*, or something from Augustine's *Confessions*, or part of Wesley's *Journal* - sometimes the expectations built up about a piece actually have an opposite effect. No matter how much of a 'classic' that text may be, for this individual it cannot be so. Tracey observes 'The text can become a classic for the reader only if the reader is willing to allow that present horizon to be vexed, provoked, challenged, by the claim to attention of the text itself.' [40]

Obversely, it is possible for someone to be so moved by a text that for them - even possibly them alone - that this indeed makes it a classic text: 'every classic lives as a classic only if it finds readers willing to be provoked by its claim to attention'.[41]

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[37] de Waal, 1997, p7, 9
[38] Tracey, 1981, p108
[39] Sheldrake, 1992, p172
[40] Tracey, 1981, p105
[41] Tracey, 1981, p102

A classic 'makes the presence of divine truth accessible in our world' [42] says Sheldrake, and there is ample anecdotal evidence to demonstrate ways in which *Carmina* has done this for individuals, anthology compilers and buyers alike.

The hermeneutics, the interpretation of the text, is something that Tracey sees as a dialogue, a conversation between the text and the individual.[43] It contains a backward and forward movement, and the ability to listen, to reflect, to correct, to speak a point, and the material in *Carmina* allows much opportunity for this in daily life and simple ritual. Coming back to material in this way is also part of the approach that Wright advocates: to move past a first casual encounter of the *first naïveté*, even past an overly critical approach, to the level of what she calls the *second naïveté*[44] and the chance to allow the text to speak afresh to the reader, rediscovering a first love.

Reflections On Reading A Classic

Looking at the material from *Carmina*, we are aware that there are few places in the world today where the text can be used in the ways and style it was originally composed for. Society, and its attitude to creation and spirituality, has changed so radically. Sheldrake notes that there is a 'difference in reading historical texts creatively from within the community which is the bearer of the texts, …*[and the subsequent re-]*… interpretation and reading from outside that community.'[45] He also identifies that there is no single true interpretation of a classic text - which is probably why such a wide range of people are able to *pick-and-mix* from *Carmina*.

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[42] Sheldrake, 1992, p172
[43] Tracey, 1981, p101
[44] Wright, 1992, p46
[45] Sheldrake, 1992, p176

Celtic material attracts a fascinating mixture of people from diverse backgrounds, from fundamentalist Christian to pagan, from Celtic nationalist to 'green' ecologists; each discovering different things from within the material. Because of its 'collected short items' nature, allowing people to choose the bits they like, *Carmina* perhaps does not challenge in the same way as other classic spiritual works, which demand that the whole needs to be acknowledged before the benefit of the parts can be fully realised.

Tracey maintains that where there is a public shared discourse on a classic, especially if the classic is a religious classic, the discourse is named systematic theology[46]. Although that is what is happening to some extent with Celtic spirituality, and the creation theology it is linked to, I am not sure that one could say that a *systematic* theology is yet growing out of it. Particularly as the conclusions of those writing on the subject are so diverse - sometimes even a single writer changing their opinion of what Celtic theology may be all about in the first place[47].

There are also some who see *Carmina*, and some of the wider Celtic literature, as being a profound influence still - de Waal says that the explorations could even be prophetic[48] in a number of areas to do with spirituality, relationship, and the global environment. When Carmichael was collecting his material in and around the highlands and islands, could he have ever envisaged the impact that the work would have over a century later? Perhaps it was in the knowledge that it *could* and *would* have such a spiritual impact that he collected and published it in the first place.

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[46] Tracey, 1981, p134
[47] See especially the change in Bradley's position between his 1993 and 1999 books, quoted in the introduction to the second.
[48] de Waal, 1996, p6; 1997, p12

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Appendices

not included in the word count

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[i] CARMICHAEL, Alexander *[in Gaelic: Alastair MacGilleMhìcheil]* (1 Dec 1832 - Oct 1912), Civil servant Customs and Excise; collector of Gaelic oral tradition in Highlands and Islands of Scotland, born Isle of Lismore. Educated Greenock Academy and collegiate school Edinburgh. Accepted by Commissioners of the Civil Service with duties in Skye, Uist and Oban. Many articles in journals; main literary work: *Carmina Gadelica* (I & II 1900, III 1940, IV 1941, V 1954, VI 1971, all based on his original notes, though edited by others).

[ii] HYDE, Douglas (1860-1949), first President of Independent Ireland (1938-45), and founder of the Gaelic League, born in County Roscommon into an Anglican family. He had extensive interests and talents, and wrote plays, poetry and academic works, especially *The Songs of Connacht*, and *The Religious Songs of Connacht*, 1906.

[iii] He records a middle-aged housewife from near Ness:
"The people have forsaken their follies and their Sabbath-breaking, and there is no pipe, no fiddle here now," said the woman with evident satisfaction. *[Carmichael]* "And what have you now instead of racing, the stone-throwing, and the caber-tossing, the song, the pipe, and the dance?"
[House-wife] "Oh, we have now the blessed Bible preached and explained to us faithfully and earnestly, if we sinful people would only walk in the right path and use the our opportunities."
Carmichael, 1992, p27

[iv] GRAINGER, Percy Aldridge (1882-1961), American pianist and composer, born in Melbourne, Australia. He studied with his mother and later with the Italian pianist and composer Ferruccio Busoni. He established his reputation as a piano virtuoso at a London recital in 1900. A friend of the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg, Grainger was a self-taught composer. He wrote about 400 compositions, many based on folk music, particularly that of the British Isles. His works for orchestra include *Shepherd's Hey* (1922); his chamber music includes *Green Bushes* (1921) and settings of British folk songs.

[v] Rev Dr Kenneth MacLeod records 'One evening a venerable Islesman, carried out of himself for the time being, allowed Dr Carmichael to take down a singularly beautiful 'going to sleep' rune; early next morning, the reciter travelled 26 miles to exact a pledge that his 'little prayer' should never be allowed to appear in print. " Think ye" said the old man "if I slept a wink last night for thinking of what I had given away. Proud, indeed, shall I be if it give pleasure to yourself, but I should not like cold eyes to read it in a book." In [Dr MacLeod's] presence, the manuscript was handed over to the reciter, to be burnt there and then - but for days and nights after, the music of that rune haunted two men!' (Quoted by **MacInnes** in the Preface to *Carmina*, and **de Waal** in *Celtic Vision*.)

Another shepherd, coaxed by Carmichael to come to him some 55 miles over land and sea to tell him a tale, was interrupted by the sheriff of the district calling on Carmichael. The shepherd upped and fled, and was a mile down the road before a passer asked him why he looked so scared, and why without his bonnet. The shepherd discovered in his haste to have left bonnet, plaid and staff. The other half of the tale never got told, and died with him. (From **Carmichael's** own original Introduction in *Carmina*.)

[vi] For example: **John Francis Cambell's** *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860-62)
Alexander Nicholson's *A Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Familiar Phrases* (1881)
Gaelic Society of Inverness *Transactions* Vols. 13 and 14 (1886-87; 1887-88)

[vii] There are numerous possibilities of quotes and examples from *Carmina* - these are just a smattering to give an idea of the breadth and wealth of material.
Examples of a number of quotations involving the Trinity are included as Appendix xi below.
Numbers below relate to the 1992 Floris version of *Carmina.*

[viii] Incantations through the day:

5 God be with us on this thy day
26 Sleep blessing
40 I lie in my bed
41 Morning prayer
24 Bathing prayer
43 Resting prayer
83 Kindling the fire
85 Smooring (covering to keep) the fire
86 Blessing the smooring

[ix] Incantations of labour with animals

93, 94 Milking croon
96, 97 Ho hoiligean, ho my heifers
100-102 Herding blessings
103 Protection of cattle
104 Guarding the flock
106 Hatching blessing
107 Marking lambs
108 Clipping (shearing) blessing
114 Hunting blessing
117 Fishing blessing
364, 365 Driving the cows
369 The highland bull

[x] Incantations of the countryside and sea

118, 119 Ocean Blessing
121 Sea prayer
362, 363 Abundance of seaweed
483 The apple tree

[xi] Invocations of the Trinity:

I am bending the knee
in the eye of the Father who created me,
in the eye of the Son who purchased me,
in the eye of the Spirit who cleansed me,
in friendship and affection… *Carmina* 1

…I send witness to Father
Who formed all flesh;
I send witness to Christ
Who suffered scorn and pain;

I send witness to Spirit
Who will make me as white;
Who will make me as white
As the cotton-grass of the moor… *Carmina* 258

The Three Who are over me,
The Three Who are below me,
The Three Who are above me here,

The Three Who are above me yonder,
The Three Who are in the earth,
The Three Who are in the air,
The Three Who are in the heaven,
The Three Who are in the great pouring sea. *Carmina* 245

From birth, and the 'birth baptism' (as opposed to the clerical or great baptism) following immediately, with three drops on the forehead, a mother would say:

The little drop of the Father
On thy little forehead, beloved one.

The little drop of the Son
On thy little forehead, beloved one.

The little drop of the Spirit
On thy little forehead, beloved one.

To aid thee from the fays,
To guard thee from the host;

To aid thee from the gnome,
To shield thee from the spectre;

To keep thee for the Three,
To shield thee, to surround thee;

To save thee for the Three,
To fill thee with graces;

The little drop of the Three
To lave thee with the graces. *Carmina* 217