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WRITE TO:

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Lost lexicon of piety recovered

HAVING been a referee to the process, I am thrilled Unesco have granted Memory of the World status to the Carmichael Watson Collection ("Unesco recognition for Gaelic collection", The Herald, June 19).

This archive of Hebridean spiritual folklore gathered by Alexander Carmichael (1832-1912) has been described by the Lewis-born Dr John MacInnes as "a lost lexicon of piety" and by the Colonsay-born Professor Donald Mackinnon as containing work "of rare literary beauty as well as of religious value".

The South Uist-born Canon Angus MacQueen concludes a book of conference proceedings from the Islands Book Trust, saying: "I realise how sensitive his approach to our prayer life was, as if he were

eavesdropping on the private life of those old folk who included their God in every passing moment of the day."

Unesco's recognition brings honour on Edinburgh University's Centre for Research Collections and especially, on this collection's principal researcher Domhnall Uilleam Stiubhart who is acutely aware of the further research opportunities the resource affords. But above all, this is a world spiritual resource. It reveals the tender beauty of an underlying Hebridean spirituality, one that has increasingly found multi-denominational expression as a recovered lexicon of piety.

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