

■ FORUM

Youth Conference Summer 2016 on the Isle of Mull: “Can science be Christian?”

Cosmic Christianity is the connection of the Celtic love of nature and the vision of Christ as the Sun Spirit in the etheric. In his lectures on the Hibernian mysteries and their association with King Arthur Rudolf Steiner pointed out that people in pre-Christian times perceived the Christ by entering deeply into the elements (fire, air, water, earth). Nature became the new home of the Christ and the heart the organ where he could be found.

This might sound “typically Steiner” and like pure theory, but it is exactly this mood that one can still strongly sense on Iona. It was here where, in the fourth century, the Irish monk St Columban founded a monastery from which many movements radiated out to the east, taking this kind of Christianity to Central Europe. What Rudolf Steiner tells us of the druid mounds of Penmaenmawr or of Tintagel, King Arthur’s castle, is also particularly true of Iona: the natural spirituality there still fires our spiritual search.

Sinking into materialism or trying out new ways?

The current thinking habits will not open up future perspectives for us. The same applies to ecology in as much as it is subjected to the materialistic science that prevails in a reputedly objective world “out there”. The soul has been squeezed out of the world and my own part in the world seems purely subjective. This leads to a sense of decline and of not seeing a way out – a mood that young people today grow into.

But there are alternatives: a love of nature, for instance,

that strives to learn how the spiritual can be experienced in the sensory world. This love of nature has its roots in Celtic Christianity and we find it also in Goetheanism – in a kind of Goetheanism, however, that does not just lovingly observe the phenomena but sees itself as a gateway to the real world of the spirit.

A group of researchers, artists and social activists are holding a nature camp on the Isle of Mull (which is directly adjacent to Iona): a week in nature, exposed to the elements. We will stay in tents in the Highlands, but there also some roofs to sleep under. We will have workshops during the day where we observe nature, meditate, experience, digest. In the evening we all gather for a festival. There will be music, storytelling and drama yurts and a bonfire on the beach, where seals peep out of the water and white-tailed eagles swoop through the air. We will look towards the volcanic island of Staffa where druids experienced the force of nature as they passed through their initiation rites in a cave where the waves came rushing in.

‘I’ and world belong together

Nature is still a place of initiation. We just need to learn again, through practice and understanding, to experience strongly that our ‘I’ and the world are one – in an atmosphere of love, community and spirit knowledge that is turned towards the senses.

We still need funding! The conference is open to anyone interested. | *Renatus Derbidge, Dornach (CH)*

For more information, to register or for our newsletter visit: sehenundschau.ch/summercamp-iona-2016

Contact: info@sehenundschau.ch

■ ANTHROPOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

22 March 1910 – 12 September 2015

Constance Peggy Mary Macpherson

After a long and fruitful life lived with clarity and purpose to the very last days, Constance “Peggy” Mary Macpherson has crossed the threshold, aged 105.

Peggy Macpherson was a pioneer in bringing the philosophical and spiritual work of Rudolf Steiner to Australia. It was through this understanding of the picture of human development that Peggy lived her life and found personal nourishment and inspiration.

Peggy was born on 22 March 1910 in Berrigan, New South Wales, as one of six children to parents Sydney and Catherine. She was delivered at home by the wife of the boundary rider who happened to be working on the property at the time her mother went into labour.

Growing up on a large property in the country, Peggy’s life was strongly shaped by her love of the natural world and the native animals she met and kept as a young girl. Her early years were spent riding horses, and contributing to the work of the farm. After an initial education via correspondence and with a governess, the children moved with their mother to Melbourne to pursue a formal education. Through income derived from a boarding house operated by Mrs Macpherson, Peggy attended Ruyton Girls School. When her secondary schooling finished she returned to the property her father rented in Jerilderi, New South Wales, where the whole family congregated, to look after her father and the farm.

On the way to becoming a children’s nurse

A turning point in Peggy’s life came when she left the country to holiday in Melbourne with her Aunt Mable who lived on Punt Road. Her aunt advised her not to “bury herself in the bush” and suggested that she consider nursing and further education. At age 17, Peggy commenced training at the Old Melbourne Hospital. After a six week preparatory course, Peggy went on her first ward placement in a men’s surgical ward, where she saw her first naked man, who was being treated for syphilis.

Perhaps this initial experience helped pave the way for the switch she made to

nursing children: in this she found her purpose in life, spending most of the rest of her career caring for sick children, and supporting their parents. She completed Mothercraft Training at the Tweedle Baby Hospital in Footscray, and later went on to establish a respite house for babies and children to relieve families in crisis called “The Little Folks Home,” Peggy worked in private children’s nursing and was on call at the Mercy, St Andrew’s and Freemason’s hospitals. In 1962 she commenced at the Aftercare Hospital in Collingwood, where she remained for 17 years until her retirement at the age of 70.

Meeting anthroposophy

The other significant turning point in Peggy’s life came in 1939 when immediately after graduating from her nursing training she travelled to Europe as a companion to her Aunt Ruby, who had a long standing interest in Anthroposophy. Visiting the Goetheanum, the seat of Anthroposophy in Dornach, Switzerland, Peggy and Aunt Ruby undertook as many courses as they could, in anthroposophical study, and in artistic work including Eurythmy, painting and sculpture. This meeting of a spiritual picture of the human being confirmed for Peggy what she intuitively sensed in her nursing of children – that they needed to be nursed for their immediate physical needs, but also in a way that recognised their spiritual reality.

From this experience in Europe, Peggy joined the Anthroposophical Society, the Michael Group in 1962 and was an active member, bringing speakers out, coordinating events and expanding the membership of the Society. From this growth the seeds were planted for the establishment of the first Steiner School in Victoria. Combining her interest in health and nursing, with her commitment to Anthroposophy, she was instrumental in bringing the Anthroposophical Weleda medical treatments to Australia, by working with the relevant countries’ regulations to import and distribute these accordingly.

Peggy also was connected to biodynamic farming through her cousin Ileen Macpherson, who had been a forerunner in establishing biodynamic gardening in Wonga Park and Dandenong in Melbourne.

Always ready to help

A life on the land with no luxuries,